

ROBERT AND LISA

Lisa always became emotional, when she stepped into a bath, even though it had been five years now, since he had died. Her marriage had been seen by friends to be ideal, and with the steam rising from the bath, Lisa relaxed and allowed herself to luxuriate and fall into a deeper muse.

Remembering the courtship and the earlier years of the marriage, when things seemed permanent and solid, untouched by time. She soaped herself, her thoughts came forward to more recent events. A friend's wife had died and she had helped him, knowing how she had felt 5 years before. Her friend, her laughing friend she had called him, with whom she had joked and mildly flirted, whilst he would look at her with that half-amused smile on his face. That smile would not be there now and he too would be on his own.

He had phoned, just a brief message "this morning at yours" and then "see you", how long ago that seemed. He had arrived and talked quietly of the events with long silences, which told their own story, gradually relaxing, the tension slipping away. This pattern had continued for several weeks, with visits to mutual friends who had rallied round making life bearable for him, and still she had watched him seeking a change, as she knew a change had to come and he must find himself.

The change came in an unusual way, a phone call out of the blue. "Can you get away at the weekend" he had said in the old confident way she knew of old. So the change had happened and with it a new set of doubts entered into her mind.

Lisa reached for the hot tap, the water was getting tepid now, and she was in no hurry to break the reverie, although he was coming this morning and they were driving to see friends over the weekend. Would he be different now? Not so dependent on her? She began to feel depressed, and the adrenalin which had been flowing ebbed away, would he need her anymore; she was not sure of her feelings about him.

Telling herself sternly that she was helping him, she scrubbed hard on her forearms, but she knew there had been moments when they said "goodnight" that she wished he belonged to her, she thought she could be happy with him, but knew that he had found himself. Would he still need her as much?

Lisa stepped out of the bath, towelled briskly, powdered and proceeded to dress and, with a final check on the bathroom, pulled the plug, and with a soft gargle the mood and the water vanished.

Robert awoke as the phone broke the silence of the house, and he knew by the time that it could only be the hospital. So it had happened "suddenly" they had said. He had only seen her the day before, and once again he could feel the longing to take her in his arms and ease away the killing pain, but he would do that no more. Briefly he had rested, allowing time for the words to sink in "passed away", then he became organised, people to see things to do, but first he must phone her, the one who would understand, help, and share the grief with him.

He had made many visits to her and revelled in her company and any chore she wished was done with a willingness to please. She was important to him, but he needed space to think ahead and plan. He drew upon her strength and he could not escape the feeling that his life was about to change. Still deep in thought Robert arrived at the house, rang the doorbell and waited.

Robert and Lisa left for their weekend away—but that chapter has still to be written.

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