

Sue P. - Continuation

Of course, they had argued all the way home in the car about it, Connie concentrating hard on the road whilst Fred, having had a few beers followed by quite a few glasses of wine, had had quite a lot to say on the subject.

“It’s absurd! Whoever put forward that, that *boy* as a prize? I mean, what are people expected to do with him?”

“Well, I could think of a few things...”

“Don’t be ridiculous! You’re old enough to be his mother! His grandmother even! I bet he’s not much older than Josh. What is it, grab a granny night?”

Connie screwed up her face.

“Grab a granny? How old do you think I am? And Marcus is much older than Josh. At least fifteen years older I’d say.”

“Connie, you’re sixty -seven, and even if this, this *clown* was fifteen years older than our grandson, which I very much doubt, that would still only make him thirty- one!”

“Well, you hear of an increasing age gap between couples these days; a thirty-six -year age gap is nothing, nowadays.” Connie said, smiling to herself.

In the days that followed, Fred spent more and more time in the refuge of his shed, and when he *was* in the house he mooched about with as disapproving an air as he could muster. Connie, on the other hand, seemed to be in very high spirits, humming as she watered the plants in the kitchen and smiling secretly to herself, even whilst doing the Hoovering. He noticed she had started doing Slimming World online, again, and the fridge seemed to be heaving with Iceland Slimming World ready meals and heaps of fruit and veg. She actually seemed to be sticking to her diet as well, despite him having tried to tempt her with her favourite chocolates.

“I got some of these chocolates, love, at Waitrose. Special Offer. Do you want one?”

He held the box of truffles under her nose.

“No thanks, love; I’m trying to lose a few pounds. Special event coming up!”

“What?” Fred frowned, “What special event?”

“Well, there’s a few special events coming up but the first is, Marcus is coming round; ‘Slave for the Day’ remember?”

“You can’t be serious!” Fred spluttered “What are you thinking? It’s, it’s outrageous, and what’s more it’s undignified!”

“Of course I’m serious, you were there, I won him fair and square; not every day you get the services of a young man like him, for the day.”

“Well, I’d better not be in the house when he comes round!” Fred turned a worrying shade of purple.

“Don’t worry, you won’t be. It’s this Saturday and you’re out fishing all day, with Derek. Whereas I will be having a right steamy old time of it!”

They had barely spoken a handful of words to each other in the days running up to Saturday. The morning dawned, fair and clear, but Fred felt too depressed to really look forward to his fishing trip. Opening the front door as he heard the familiar toot of Dereks’ car horn, he slowly picked up his fishing tackle and his backpack containing his packed lunch and flask of tea.

“Bye then.” He called up the stairs to Connie, who seemed to be taking an inordinate amount of time blow drying and straightening her hair, this morning, *and* she had put on some of that expensive perfume he had bought her for Christmas, the one he knew she kept for special occasions. ‘Hot Love’ or something, it was called.

“Bye love, have a good day. See you later.” her voice floated down the stairs.

Freds’ shoulders sagged as he trudged up the drive to Dereks’ car.

Marcus turned up bright and early, an hour after Fred had left, with reinforcements it turned out, which was even better as far as Connie was concerned. He had helpfully picked up their ‘toys’ for the day, as he laughingly referred to them with a cheeky wink and a smile, and after a quick cup of tea they had got down to business. Connie couldn’t remember the last time she had had so much fun. Marcus was such a live wire, joking and laughing as they went along and she felt completely at ease with him as they romped from room to room, even having a go on the stairs and the settees and ending up on the living room carpet! They had just about finished when Connie heard Dereks’ car draw up outside.

Quickly tidying her hair and straightening her clothes, Connie hissed

“Fred’s back! He’s early. You’d better get the stuff together and go out the back door! Quick!”

A slow smile crept over Marcus’ lips.

“Listen, don’t worry sugar cake, I’ve dealt with worse than Fred before.”

The words were barely out of his mouth when Fred opened the front door and the two of them found themselves face to face. Fred’s mouth gaped and for once, he was lost for words.

“Fred, my man,” Marcus towered over Fred, putting a large bronzed and tattooed arm around his shoulder.

“Erm, who’s this?” Fred managed, looking at the other beautiful, bronzed young man standing next to Connie.

“I’m John Anthony, Marcus’ husband” the other beautiful bronzed young man said, with a shy smile and a slight wave of his left hand.

“And what’s all that, there?” Fred squeaked, pointing at all the equipment in a great pile in the hallway.

“That’s the steam cleaner, darling. We’ve had such a laugh today *and* we’ve managed to clean every carpet in the house and the settees in the living room. Thanks for your help, boys. Thanks, John Anthony for coming along, too. It’s very good of you.”

Connie was smiling from ear to ear.

“No problemo, glad to be of service as your ‘Slave for the Day’! We’ll take all this stuff out of your way. Fred, enjoy your time in Seville.” Marcus and John Anthony began to pick up the cleaning equipment as Marcus opened the front door.

“What? Seville?” Fred looked at Connie his face a picture of confusion.

“Don’t tell me she didn’t tell you about the other prize she won? A long weekend for two in Seville, of all places. Why do you think she’s been dieting? To get into that *gowjus* swimming costume! Well, enjoy! See you soon!” Marcus quipped, and with that he and his husband were gone, leaving Connie and Fred staring at each other.

“Your face Fred! What on earth did you think we would get up to? I’m so happy with all the carpets and furniture cleaned and a holiday in Seville to look forward to! It was supposed to be a surprise for our fortieth wedding anniversary, but never mind, the cat’s out of the bag, now.” She smiled at him.

Fred felt a smile begin to spread across *his* face, and for the first time in weeks his shoulders straightened as he pulled Connie into a warm embrace.

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