

'Turned out Fine'

by Pam Weaver

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Amy banged the pillows and sighed. It was no use. No matter how hard she tried to go back to sleep, she was wide-awake now. Why did Mark find it so impossible to be quiet? It was the middle of the night, for goodness sake! He'd 'crept' out of bed at five o'clock and banged the handle of the bedroom door against the wall.

'Whoops, sorry.'

Amy had been annoyed about the fishing trip. 'But we're trying to get the house ready to put it on the market,' she complained. 'You promised you'd paint the living room.'

'It's only a couple of days,' he'd shrugged. 'I'll do it next week.'

'That's what you always say.'

'I'll do it soon. I promise. Anyway, you can have a lovely long lie in.'

Fat chance! she thought acidly as he trod on the cat's tail. That was

followed by the thump of the loo seat against the cistern. Amy tossed and turned as he banged around in the kitchen. Harvey meowed like mad until he fed her.

As soon as Mark slammed the car door and roared up the driveway, Amy crawled out of bed. She was so wound up, a cup of tea seemed like the only solution.

The kitchen looked as if a bomb had dropped. He'd made sandwiches. At first it appeared as if he'd made a whole loaf of sandwiches, but when she saw the pieces of hacked about loaf all over the worktop, she realised he'd only taken a few. Amy put the salad stuff back in the fridge, gathered three handfuls of crumbs from the worktop and put the empty tin of salmon in the recycling bin. There was no milk for her tea but she discovered a messy puddle on the floor by the sink in the utility area and the empty milk bottle standing in the sink.

Ah well, at least she could have a bath.

She was still luxuriating under half a bottle of Tropical Nights when she heard the milkman coming up the drive. She smiled. What perfect timing. A couple more minutes in the water and then she could slip downstairs and make that cup of tea.

Then amazingly, the milkman rang the bell!

'Did I forget the milk bill?' she wondered. But there was no way she was going to get out and find out. Defiantly she slid further down under the water.

The doorbell rang again. Long and loud.

Amy dragged herself out of the bath but by the time she'd padded downstairs, the milkman was crunching his way down the path. Amy threw open the back door and gasped in horror. Her cat lay motionless across the doorstep.

'Harvey! Whatever's wrong?'

There was froth around his mouth and he flopped in her arms. She laid him gently in his basket and then he was sick.

During the next few panic-stricken minutes, she phoned the vet who told her to bring him over immediately. Amy was still getting dressed when she realised... no car. Never mind, there was still time to ring Mark. He couldn't have got that far. But when she dialled the number she heard the familiar tune coming from his jacket inside the wardrobe.

'A couple of days day by the river bank,' he'd said. 'No e-mails, no phone calls.'

Oh, Mark!

The taxi fare was a whopping £18.65. Living in the country certainly had more than its fair share of drawbacks. Nigel, their vet, unshaven and tousle-haired, drew a blank.

'I can't find anything obvious,' he said prodding the cat's abdomen. Harvey was sick again. 'Has he eaten something different?'

Amy shook her head. 'He only eats Chicken Chunkies.'

'This looks like fish,' said Nigel.

'Mark must have given him the rest of a tin of salmon.'

'Then it was probably off,' said Nigel. 'I'll keep him in for observation. If it is food poisoning, and he's this ill, it doesn't look good.'

Amy's knees began buckled.

'Try not to worry,' said Nigel, grabbing her arm.

'You don't understand,' said Amy. 'Mark has the rest of the salmon in his sandwiches.'

Jan didn't have a clue where Mark and Roger were going to fish but she came around at once and the pair of them toured all of Roger's usual haunts. It was over two hours later before they spotted Mark's car. The two men were sitting on the bend of the river, about half a mile from the road. Amy and Jan waved and shouted, but they made no attempt to come or even acknowledge them.

When Amy finally blurted out her story, Mark went white.

'But I've already eaten most of the sandwiches,' he said. 'All this fresh air, I was starving.'

'Do you feel sick?'

'Now you come to mention it...'

They left Roger and Jan to pack up, while Amy rushed Mark to A& E. In no time at all he'd had his stomach pumped and was in the observation ward.

'We'll keep him until this evening,' the Doctor explained. 'Hopefully, we've got it in time.'

Later that day, both patients, one from A&E and the other from the Vet's were ready to come home.

That night, Amy slept like a top. She woke as someone rang the doorbell. Mark was singing in the shower.

'I just wondered how your cat was,' the milkman said as she opened the door.

Amy yawned. 'Thanks to you ringing the bell yesterday, I was able to get him to the vet's quite quickly.'

She heard a footfall as Mark came up behind her dressed in his old working jeans.

'I was really worried,' said the milkman. 'He went out like a light when he hit the deck.'

Hit the deck? Was she missing something? She turned to Mark but he was rummaging around in the cupboard.

'He fell off the roof,' the milkman went on. 'Usually right themselves don't they, cats. But he must have knocked his head on the way down. He was out cold so I laid him on the doorstep and rang the bell.'

Amy stared in disbelief.

'Anyway,' he added cheerily. 'Glad it turned out fine.'

'Oh yes,' said Amy as she watch Mark backing out of the cupboard with a paintbrush in one hand and the tin of paint in the other. 'It certainly did.'