

The Man in the Mirror

By Kathy Childs

I call him the man in the mirror as that's where he seems to appear. He started out being quite sociable, laughing at my jokes and generally being around when I felt like a chat but lately he's been overbearing. He followed me into the bathroom yesterday for God's sake, stood looking in the mirror. We had a chat after that him and I. Well I did. I asked him what was going on here and he just stood and looked straight back at me with a quizzical look on his face, like he was waiting for an answer. I'll have to get Margaret onto this. I'll make her a cup of tea before I raise it. She does like a nice cup of tea.

"Who the hell are you?" There's a strange old woman sitting at my kitchen table. "Are you a friend of Margaret's?" She makes that strange hmmfing sound that Margaret does – perhaps it's catching, or maybe hereditary. Maybe she's Margaret's mother or even grandmother – there is a family resemblance. Maybe that's what Maggs will look like when she gets older. We've only been married a few years, Maggs and I; she'll be 27 soon, only a year younger than I am. I must remember to buy her some flowers. Carnations I think. They're her favourite. She carried them at our wedding. Or was it roses? How could I not remember that?"

The old woman rises stiffly from her chair. She is watching me closely, her eyes are full of pain and I feel a surge of hate for whoever has done this to her.

"Sit down. I'll make you lunch." She moves around the kitchen, familiar with its layout. It seems she's been here before.

“No need to trouble yourself. I’ll wait for Margaret.”

“Suit yourself.” She sits back down, continues drinking her tea.

A thought strikes me. “Are you with the old guy who’s hanging around?”

“Silver hair, blue eyes, confused look?”

“Yes him.”

“He’s my husband.”

“Why are you here?”

“We’ve been married 56 years.” She ignores my question, keeps talking.

“And now some days I’m a stranger to him.” She has tears in her eyes.

“What’s wrong with him?”

“Alzheimer’s.”

“Poor chap.” She appears to need something more from me. “Maybe I can have a word with him.”

“Maybe you can.” She sips at her tea again. “But he won’t remember.” Tears splash into her tea.

I get up; walk over to the window, wondering how I can help.

The lawn outside needs mowing and the garden beds are full of weeds. My mind is foggy. I can’t shake the feeling that I’m missing something. Perhaps there is somewhere I’m meant to be. Maybe I’m just hungry. I turn back to the kitchen slowly to avoid twisting my knee and setting off my arthritis.

“Hey Maggs. What’s for lunch?” I am surprised to see her crying.