

LA SILHOUETTE

A SHORT STORY FOR ADULTS

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The tyres on the lively blue sports car began to ping and crunch over the gravel as it turned in from the almost silent tarmac-covered B-road onto the long drive.

‘Well, there it is,’ said the driver, a pretty brunette with a permanent pink-lipped smile who worked for the letting agency. Way up ahead at the end of the yellow-brown gravel drive nestled a black silhouette against an almost cloudless blue English sky. ‘Now you know why it’s called La-Silhouette,’ said the brunette as the car finally skidded to a halt outside the front door of the honeysuckle covered cottage.

‘There won’t be much to disturb you here,’ she laughed, and pointing to her left, she said, ‘your nearest neighbours are over there.’

Jerry looked to where she was indicating and saw a few hundred yards away a small farmhouse that could just be seen nestling amongst the wind kissed trees. The excited shouts of children playing football in a field next to the low hedge that surrounded the cottage grounds faded in and out with the soft breeze but could barely be heard.

‘Just check out that amazing view,’ sighed the brunette as the last of the bags, boxes, bits and pieces were unloaded and placed on the well-worn front door stoop. ‘I hope you have a truly pleasant stay,’ she said, handing over the house keys.

‘We’ve had, ooh let me see, twelve people here before you, and they all found the place so comfortable they wanted to stay forever.’ She paused. ‘And I bet you will too! Look

all around and listen - no traffic, that's one serious bonus, only birds, happy children, and the wind in the trees, mmmm...

'Well, I must be off,' she said, 'back to the humdrum city.' She started the motor. 'Okay, see you in three months then.' And with a wave of a nail polished hand and a spraying of gravel, she sped down the drive, back onto the tarmac road, and away.

Jerry Hickey, who had rented the cottage in the desperate hope of finishing an important project that he was having problems with, turned his head and glared at the children before slotting in the key and opening the heavy old oak front door.

'Bah, ghastly things kids, all noise and nappies. Well, just so long as they keep away from here,' he muttered.

It didn't take him long to carry all his things, mostly clothes, bathroom essentials, food, laptop and half a case of his favourite Old McWhiting Special Reserve malt whiskey inside. 'Right,' he muttered, rubbing his hands. 'Let's get on with it. First of all, find the *'doins'* and light a wee fire just to warm the old place up a bit, it might be warm enough out there, but it's a bit draughty in here.'

Before long he had a couple of logs burning weakly but cheerfully in the old grate, and so he poured himself a snifter of whiskey, smacking his lips and savouring the warmth of the fiery liquid as it slid comfortably down into his engine room. Then, with a satisfied burp, he plugged in and booted up his laptop, took another sip of whiskey, rubbed his hands together and was soon fully engrossed in his first afternoon of work.

That was seven weeks ago!

Now he was finding it increasingly difficult to concentrate

fully on the article he had a deadline to finish. The place was beginning to irritate him.

The first flush of reasonably quiet weeks had been heaven; time had slid easily by and lots of uninterrupted work had been gained at last, but as he thought he was getting on top of it, he noticed more and more that the cottage seemed to be full of little squeaks, murmurs, and movements. Not disturbingly obvious, more in the back of his mind and the corner of his eye.

During the day the kids playing in the field, even though they could hardly be heard, were also beginning to wear him down a bit. Being someone who intensely disliked children, he'd rush out to yell and threaten them a few times, which in the end only added to his frustration.

The cottage was deceptively spacious, with a decent enough kitchen. A bathroom with a nice wide shower, and halfway along a narrow but longish hallway was a low door. Inside was a toilet with an old-fashioned chain pull flush that splashed water over you if you didn't scoot out of the way smartish enough, and if you didn't take care as you were scooting away, you'd bash your forehead on the low door frame too. One of those little battles you know you just can't win!

A little further along the hallway, an antique three-quarter-high, fat bellied, highly polished grandfather clock with a barely perceptible '*Sschock*, *Sschock*' stood to attention.

Finally, tucked away at the end, was a slightly rectangular bedroom with deep pile carpets, a big old four poster bed, and on one side a three-quarter size built-in wardrobe. On the other side were two surprisingly large windows with huge wide curtains that hung to the floor. They were white and covered with bright pink half- moons and bamboo sticks.

'Mmm,' he thought, opening one of the windows. 'That