

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF DAVE AND JOAN

“Well, I’ve finished all my chores, the garden’s weeded and the garage is spick and span. We’ve finished lunch and we’re not allowed to go anywhere, so what are we supposed to do now?”

“Dave, stop complaining. You have that jigsaw you wanted to finish and there’s the James Patterson book that you’ve been meaning to read for months.”

“I don’t feel like reading and I don’t want to work on the jigsaw either. I feel like doing something different.” Rummaging through the cupboard in the spare room, Dave called out, “Maybe I’ll find something in here to do.”

A few minutes later a loud shout echoed from the spare room, causing Joan to look up from her knitting. “I’ve found it.”

Dave’s cheeky grin beamed at her from the doorway. “Look what I’ve found. The old PlayStation that James left here last year. C’mon, let’s have a go?”

Placing her knitting on the couch, Joan frowned at her smiling husband. “I have no idea how to play those things, do you?”

“One way to find out,” was the reply. “I’ll connect it up and we can try it out.”

Mumbled mutterings filled the silence as Dave plugged and unplugged cords, trying to attach the games machine. After what seemed an age, he let out a loud whoop as the TV screen lit up with a number of oddly named games on display.

“Here,” he said turning towards Joan as he patted the floor. “Grab some cushions. The chords are too short for us to sit on the couch, so we’ll have to sit on the floor.”

Joan studied the control that Dave placed in her lap. It was a strange looking thing, oval shaped with two wings that spread out like a bird, each wing housing a large black button with arrows on the sides. She tentatively placed each thumb on the black buttons and pressed one gently, calling out in surprise as one of the cars on the screen moved forward.

“That’s it.” Dave’s excited voice rang through the room. “You’ve got the idea. Let’s go.”

Their cars raced around and around the track, a red one for Dave and the blue one for Joan. As their game skills improved, they started to race against each other, Joan’s car at times crashing into Dave’s. Their loud bursts of laughter mingled with the almost manic music blasting from the games machine.

“Let’s get more adventuresome.” Dave lent towards Joan, wrapping his arm around her shoulder. “Let’s try two cars each and see what happens.”

With frowning faces and straightened shoulders, they both leaned forward towards the screen. The game was becoming serious and their competitive spirits were sharpened. Drawing her knees up towards her chest, Joan’s face was strained in concentration as her two cars raced around the track, one of them slightly in the lead. Dave’s knobbly fingers bounced around his remote, but he was not fast enough as Joan’s car was the first to cross the finishing line.

“I did it.” She yelled in delight, flopping back on the floor. “I won.”

“God, that was fun,” Dave stretched his arms in the air. “Do you want to try another game?”

“Goodness, no”, Joan replied, looking at her watch. It’s 5 o’clock already. I’d better hop up and start cooking dinner. Do you want a coffee?”

Dave smiled into her eyes. “No, let’s break our rules and have a glass of wine instead.”

Joan returned his smile but as she rolled onto her knees and tried to push herself upward from the floor, she called out, “oh hell. I can’t get up.”

“Try crawling over to the couch.” Dave suggested. “I can give you a push up from there.”

Crawling on all fours towards the couch, Joan suddenly realized how ridiculous she must look. She collapsed in a heap, her whole body shaking with peals of laughter.

“Keep crawling,” Dave’s voice could be heard over the laughter. “Get to the couch and I’ll give you a shove.”

Laughing and crawling Joan eventually made it and as she carefully placed her elbows on the seat, Dave knelt down behind her and heaved hard with both hands on her bottom.

“Oh, my knee.” Dave yelled, leaning on Joan’s back. “I’ve strained my sore knee,” and as he fell against Joan’s back, she lost her balance, falling sideways onto the floor, with Dave tumbling down beside her. At first, they looked at each other in shock, but realizing neither of them were hurt, they again burst into fits of laughter. Holding onto each other, Joan managed to pull herself onto the couch before pulling Dave towards her so that he could sit down.

“I have never laughed so much in years.” Dave wiped the tears from his eyes as he cautiously straightened his leg. “This has been so much fun. Hey, I’ve got a great idea. As it’s a warm night, let’s forget about watching TV and have a BBQ. We could eat out on the patio.”

After preparing the salad and popping the potatoes into the oven, Joan decided to freshen up. After her shower, she reached for her usual grey slacks and pink jumper, but then thought *No*, as she reached for one of her prettiest dresses. *I’ll wear this instead.* As she dabbed perfume behind her ears, she was surprised to see her reflection smiling back at her from the mirror. Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes shone brightly. “Why, I actually think I look a little younger,” she whispered to herself.

After dinner, the evening shadows crept across the sky and as the gentle perfume from the gardenias wafted through the patio’s open doors, the light from the candles flickered on the wine glasses and the room was bathed in a warm glow. As Joan sipped her wine, her gaze rested on her husband, taking in the blueness of his eyes, the deep character lines in his face and his silver-grey hair. She suddenly realized that although she saw him every day, it had been a long time since she had really looked closely at him. He was growing older and his appearance was changing but he was still the same Dave, her Dave, the man she had loved for so many years. Reaching across the table, she took his hand, feeling the roughened skin, noticing the age spots and the bumpy joints of his fingers, now so bent from arthritis.

“It’s hard to believe we are 76.” She smiled gently at him. “It was so much fun today and what a wonderful life we have had so far. It’s been a long time since we laughed like that together.”

“So true,” Dave held her hand to his lips. “Life goes by so quickly, but we must never forget to have some fun.”

Joan chuckled to herself. “Remember all the tricks we played on the kids when they were teenagers? Can you remember the time we returned from Canada where we both bought exactly the same T-shirts and jeans? Do you remember how we stood together arm in arm right outside the movie theatre doorway, wearing our identical clothes, waiting for them to come outside?”

“Oh yes,” Dave laughed out loud, as the shocked look on our children’s faces flooded his memory. “And what about the time you met them after the Blue Light Disco. After parking right near the front entrance, which they hated, you did not let the clutch out properly as you drove off, so you bunny-hopped the car all the way down the driveway, with the kids sitting in the back seat, hiding their faces.”

“And the time we waited to collect them from a party,” Joan continued. “when we parked outside the front door and I played my Julio Iglesias CD as loudly as I could, with all the car windows wound down.”

Dave’s eyes softened as he studied Joan’s face. “Do you still have that CD?”

“Why, yes.” Joan answered. “I haven’t played it for years.”

“Well, let’s put it on.”

As the soft, romantic sounds of Julio Iglesias floated around the patio, Dave held out his hand. Joan drifted into his arms and on slightly stiffened legs, they slowly danced around the table and chairs, with Dave humming slightly off tune. Holding Joan close, he whispered “This has definitely been the best social distancing day so far.”

THE END