

DISSOLUTION

SHORT SHORT STORY NO.39

They had only ever lived together in this house, moving in two years before the wedding and remaining there ever since. The night before they moved out, they went for a walk together in their local park, something they had always enjoyed doing. They walked hand in hand. Alan was planning a special dinner for later that evening and Alice had bought two bottles of champagne to go with it. There was a definite, unspoken promise of after-dinner sex in the air.

'I could see myself working in America over the next couple of years,' said Alan, considering his future. 'I've always wanted to live in New York.'

'I remember you saying that on our first date,' replied Alice with a smile, recalling the evening five years before when they'd gone for a pizza together after meeting at a friend's wedding and spent much of the meal discussing how neither of them had liked the groom, who had shown up for the ceremony with a hangover.

'Boston, maybe,' he said, watching as a couple of children chased each other through the trees, screaming with delight when they caught up with each other in a tight embrace. 'Or New York. Look at them,' he added. 'Do you ever think we should have had children?'

'It would have made things complicated,' said Alice, looking away from him. 'Especially now.'

'That's true,' he replied. 'Although it might have been nice all the same. I think I'd have made quite a good father. And you would too, of course. A good mother, I mean.'

Alice smiled. There was no point discussing this now. It wasn't as if it had never come up over the previous five years. In fact she could remember at least three difficult, endless, torturous arguments about the subject, once when she had been desperate to have a child, once when he had, and once when neither of them had but were looking for something to argue about.

'Perhaps it'll happen someday,' said Alice. 'We're still young.'

'Perhaps,' said Alan, knowing it never would.

Their walk over, they returned home and the promised evening took place. The meal, however, was not a total success. A problem with the sauces, which had curdled. And he forgot to buy some cream for the meringues. The champagne went to their heads too quickly and the sex, while enjoyable, seemed a little more functional than exciting.

The following morning they drove to their solicitor's office together and stood outside for a moment, hesitant, nervous, but sure they were doing the right thing.

'You will stay in touch, won't you?' asked Alice and Alan nodded, promising that he would, even though he knew he would rather maintain a distance for the next few months at least. No more words were spoken, they released each others' hands, stepped inside, signed the final papers and were officially single again. A marriage dissolved.