

Harmony in the Home.

Kate slammed the kitchen drawer shut. Opening the next one, she riffled through the contents. “Grrr,” she exclaimed, letting out her anger and frustration. She banged it closed with the heel of her hand. “Damn, damn, damn. Where did he put the potato peeler?” she muttered to herself. A quick glance at the microwave clock told her that Jack would be home any moment for supper. “Well, it’s just going to have to be late,” she said, voicing her irritation. Grabbing a packet of potato mash off the shelf, Kate then filled the kettle with water ready to boil and mix with the powder. She got the sausages out of the fridge then a can of baked beans from the cupboard. “Ah,” a sudden thought came to her. “Can opener. Wonder where that is?”

Luckily she didn’t have to hunt for it. Jack arrived home. ‘Hi honey,” he called as he closed the front door.

“Hi,” Kate answered as Jack walked into the kitchen to give her a kiss.

“Oh,” said Jack as he saw the packet of mash on the counter. “Run out of potatoes? Want me to go get some quickly?”

“No. I can’t find the peeler.”

“Where did you put it?” Jack asked.

“Where did I put it,” said Kate now feeling her hackles rise. “Where did you put it?”

“I’m sure you put it in here,” said Jack as he opened the drawer. The drawer that Kate had already searched a dozen times. “This is a bit of a mess isn’t it?”

“No.” Kate was defiant. “There’s not enough room for everything.”

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“Well, you know what Maria Kondo says. If there are too many things then something needs to go.”

“I’m not getting rid of anything in there. I need it all.”

“But you can’t find things,” Jack insisted.

“No. I need them. And I need to have things hung on the rack as before and the kitchen utensils back in a jar.”

“Now honey” Jack said slowly. “You know that we both agreed on the Maria Kondo method. Look how nice and tidy everything is.”

“Now honey,” Kate mimicked, “it may be nice and tidy but I can’t find anything and it takes me twice as long to cook a meal because I have to get everything out of cupboards. Nothing is at hand.”

“Okay,” said Jack. ‘Let’s just get on with the meal and we can talk about it.’”

“Well,” Kate smiled sweetly, “would you like instant creamy mash or European gourmet mash? And while you’re thinking, you can look for the can opener.”

“I’ll get a ‘take out’,” Jack sighed. “You want pizza or Chinese?”

Kate poured herself a glass of chardonnay while she waited for Jack.

“Bought a potato peeler and a can opener,” Jack said as he set the pizza on the kitchen counter.

“Why?” Kate admonished. “I thought we were trying to declutter, not add to our collection.”  
She got out a couple of plates.

“Things you always need,” Jack said taking a glass of the shelf.

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Kate shrugged. "When we find the others that'll give us about 4 potato peelers and 5 can openers."

They sat in the kitchen munching on pizza and drinking their wine, not wanting to nor knowing whether to broach the subject of Maria Kondo. Finally Jack said, "I'm going to tackle the books tonight. The library is having a sale so it's a good opportunity to get rid of some."

Kate sat up, "You not touching any of mine."

Jack was silent. Then he began slowly, "You know we both agreed to do this. We both saw Maria Kondo and bought the book. And..." he hesitated.

"Yes. And to begin with it was good. But now..." Kate wailed, "it's gone too far."

"How can it go too far? Look at the kitchen," Jack said with a sweep of his arm round the room.

"Yes. That's the problem. It looks good. Like a show room. But it takes me twice as long to do anything. I have to get out all the saucepans, hunt for utensils, sort through a stack of plates to find the right ones."

Jack frowned. "I think that's a bit of an exaggeration."

"No it's not." Kate folded her arms and scowled. "You do the cooking."

"I'll stick to the washing up," said Jack getting up from the table. "I'm going to sort through a few books."

"Remember," she warned, "don't touch any of mine."

While Jack sorted the books, Kate was determined not to check on him. She spent the evening watching an old film, 'American Graffiti', singing along with the well-loved songs as she indulged herself. She wanted to be happy.

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The next morning once Jack had set off to the golf course, Kate checked the stack of books ready for the sale. Even as she picked up the first book, she felt a rage sweep over her. "That's my book," she yelled. Quickly she shuffled through the pile. Three quarters of them were her books. Books from her childhood, books from College, texted books, novels, gardening books. "How dare you," she shouted, "how dare you."

Kate sat on the stairs and fumed. This was her life. She picked up a book and flicked through it. Yes it was a child's book, but she remembered looking at the pictures as her mother read her the stories when she was still a toddler. Her own children had loved it when she read it to them. Soon she would read it to her grandchildren. Kate was lost in memories as she sat going through the stack. Her history book from high school, the papers from the study group when she was in at college, the novels from her book club that she wanted to re-read, and along the way, she thought of all the good friends she had made in connection with the books. "No," she said as she straighten out the pile. "These as not going."

She sat and thought for a moment. Her anger had subsided and she wondered how she could explain to Jack that these books were her life, her friends, her memories.

Going into the garage, Kate began to sort through Jack's tools. At first she had no idea what she was doing. She opened cupboard doors, peered into tool boxes, prised the lid off jars of nails. "So much stuff," she uttered to herself. In her searching Kate had found at least ten screwdrivers, 6 hammers, 5 saws, 3 drills, 4 sets of drill bits and endless tins of nails and screws. "That's settled," she said as she dusted off her hands. She gathered together all the unnecessary tools. She would leave him with one of everything. That made sense.

By lunch time there was a neat pile of tools beside the few books she had left to go to the sale. Pleased with herself, Kate went into the kitchen to make a cup of coffee. She was just deciding what to make for lunch when she heard Jack's key in the door. She gave a little smile.

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“Hi honey,” she called. “Did you have a good game?”

Kate listened as Jack shuffled into the hallway, dropped his key onto the bench, then stop.

“What’s all this?” he called.

“Just sorted out a few things this morning. You know, following the Maria Kondo method.”

“But,” spluttered Jack. “These are my things.”

Kate was quiet. She heard him rifle through the tools. “But I need these hammers,” Jack cried.

“And my drills. They can’t go.”

Kate went into the hallway. “But you have 6 hammers. And the drills and bits and pieces. You have so many. I’ve left you one of everything.”

Jack frowned. “You don’t understand. I need all these. There’re for different jobs.”

“Like fixing the cupboard doors, the bathroom tap, and, what else was there,” said Kate as she furrowed her brows in mock concentration, “oh yes, the drain in the laundry.”

“Yes, yes,” muttered Jack. “It’s all on my list and will get done.”

“Been on your list a long time,” Kate mused as she went back into the kitchen.

Jack followed her and poured himself a cup of coffee. “Maybe we need to think about how we should set about decluttering.”

Kate beamed. “Yes, we certainly do.” She got up and pulled out the old utensil jar from the shelf. Then she open the draw and started filling it with kitchen gadgets. “Oh look,” she said as she held up a potato peeler and can opener.