

UNRECOGNIZED

By Athena Kontjonis

'Ten to three! How on earth did it get so late!'

I grab my handbag and call out behind me,

'See ya honey.'

I dash into Hair Cutz salon,

'Hi Sally, you're early. Penny won't be long, she's just finishing a blow dry.'

Early? How could I have gotten here so quickly? Time seems to be all over the place these days thought Sally. Yesterday she had arrived half an hour early at her friends place.

'How did it go darling?', Morgan's deep voice came to her from the kitchen.

'What do you think?' I did a twirl around the kitchen floor so he could see all the lovely new highlights in my hair !

'Simply gorgeous', he replied.

'I have dinner organized, a nice lamb roast, how's that sound?'

'De... licious', she laughingly responded. How lucky she was to have a man who could cook, she thought.

Morgan had moved in to Sally's unit two years ago. His thick, black curly hair hanging in its distinctive tiny ringlets which she loved to curl around her fingers. She often reflected on the cliché tall, dark and handsome and felt that she had just that.

The Little Dingos Day Care Center was like a second home to Sally. She loved her workplace and had poured her heart and soul into it over the past four years. It was a dream come true when they offered her the Directorship. This would be her first accreditation. It was a mammoth task to prepare for such and she had been cleaning, organizing, checking and re-checking for two months now. She felt she was almost ready. She would arrive an hour early and finalize the last few things before the inspectors arrived.

Sally hated being late. It stressed her greatly. Carefully she set her alarm by their bed and pondered how good it would feel when this huge inspection was over.

The hot shower was soothing on her shoulders. It had been a long day.

His long, slim fingers clasped the clock and quickly re-adjusted the time. He had become adept at changing it swiftly and frequently. Half an hour late, that should do it.

He would re-adjust it later.

After her shower Sally slipped into bed and with the warmth of Morgans embrace she was soon asleep.

'My God! Look at the time!!' I shrieked.

Jumping out of bed I started pulling on my clothes, hands shaking, my whole body trembled.

Morgan seemed to be struggling to wake up,

'What's up darling?' he said in a thick groggy voice.

'It's late Morgan, it's very late! I set the alarm last night, I know I did.'

'So you made a mistake, it's OK. Can I help?' He slowly sits up in bed, his leisurely pace was irritating, somehow mocking her. How unfair of her to think that way she chides herself. It's not his fault she's late.

'There's no time! Gotta run,' I shout over my shoulder grabbing my car keys and heading out the door.

Arriving at the centre she is so anxious she doesn't know where to start. All the tasks are not completed when the two inspectors arrive.

'Hello', she says in a shaky voice, beads of sweat have formed on her brow and upper lip, her stomach in knots.

She was home before Morgan. She went into the bedroom and pulled out her mobile. The times on it and her bedside clock were the same. I must have made a mistake when I set it. How could I possibly do that? I'm losing it ,she thought.

Why was she always late for things these days? Or too early? It seemed to be happening all the time. She never used to be like this. She used to be a relaxed person and now she's become confused and anxious.

And there were no excuses. At 32 years old she had a lovely small home, her ideal job and a loving and very supportive man in her life. Everyone liked him, well, most. A few of her friends thought he was too good to be true. Her best friend had reservations about him but couldn't quite put her finger on just what it was that she didn't like. It was more of a feeling really, she had said and probably nothing.

How foggy her mind seemed. How did she get like this? 'This isn't me ', she said out loud, hating the tense, whining voice that she hears.

Suddenly a bunch of flowers appears around the side of the couch where she is sitting. It startles her.

'So..... how did it go? Did you pass with flying colours?'

Morgan was cheerful as he sat down beside her handing her a bunch of colourful gerberas.

'What's up darling? Why the glum face? Did they find some dirty nappies tucked away in a cupboard. Or better still a child tied up from yesterday?'

His jocular teasing was grating.

'I was late, Morgan. I didn't get everything finished before they arrived. They weren't impressed.' The tears well up and spill down her pretty face as he gathered her into his warm inviting arms, her body crumpling into a sagging, crying heap.

'It's OK Sally. So you were a little late. It's not the end of the world darling. These things happen.'

From deep within she heard his condescending voice. How mean of her. Here he was supporting her as usual. How could she even think such a horrible thing.

She pulled away from him to face him. Her voice feeble and unsure.

'I'm sure I set the alarm right Morgan. I don't understand it.'

'We all get it wrong sometimes honey. Give yourself a break. Though it has been happening a lot lately hasn't it? You seem more anxious than usual.'

Her lovely face was distorted into an ugly mask of distress.

'It's alright Sally. It's just the stress of the accreditation.' His oily voice goes unnoticed as his comforting arms surround her as she slumps into him once again. How fortunate she was to have such a lovely man to comfort her.

Bio

Athena Kontjonis began my career in nursing in 1974. I became a RN (Registered Nurse) and Midwife. After having my three children I became a business woman and along with my husband we created a children's and Educational bookshop in Lismore, NSW, Australia. We sold it after 9 years and numerous jobs later I commenced my first Gap year (not wanting to miss out before I retired!). I am now in my third Gap year!