

MONKEY IN THE MIDDLE

Don parked his van in the driveway, got out, slid the door to the side and gently lifted a gift-wrapped box. He took it to the front porch and set it on the wide planks; something grunted inside the sparkly paper. He quietly unlocked the front door and peeled inside: Amy, Amanda, and Carter occupied the living-room couch watching some TV show. From time to time, they fished handfuls of popcorn out of two big buckets set on the low coffee-table in front of them. Don opened the door wider, picked up the box and tiptoed into the house.

“Kids, I’ve got something for you!”

Three heads turned towards him, the eyes full of anticipation.

“What is it, Dad?” The girls jumped to their feet and rushed towards the big box. “What IS it?”

“A present for all of you,” said Don, unzipping his raincoat. “A gift I’ve got for your graduations.” Don smiled, hugging each one of his children.

“Let’s unwrap it then,” said Amy, impatiently. “Come on, guys! Let’s see what’s inside.”

Six little hands tore the colorful wrap-paper off. Three pairs of eyes looked incredulously at the cage with something alive inside. Don flipped the switch, and the fixture on the ceiling cast light on—

“A monkey!” screamed Carter. The girls giggled. “A live monkey! Where did you get it, Dad?”

“First of all, it’s a he,” Don reasoned. “Second of all, yes, it’s a monkey. You three have been bugging me for a pet so I decided to give you something that is not a cat, or a dog, or a hamster.”

“Hamsters are stupid!” Amanda injected. “I hate them.”

“I like them!” Amy, the eldest, just had to contradict her sister. “I’ve had a hamster once. Remember?”

“Uh-huh!” Amanda grinned. “It died ‘cause you forgot to feed it.”

“She! Not it!” Amy pushed her sister lightly. “And it wasn’t ‘cause I forgot to feed it.” She screamed at the top of her lungs.

“Whatever!”

“Kids! Kids!” Don intervened. “You’ll have to promise me that you’ll take care of the monkey.”

“Yes, Da-a-ad!”

“Aren’t we supposed to come up with some soft of a name for him?” Carter squatted by the cage looking through the metal grid. “He *has* to have a name.”

All four of them looked at the animal: a pair of black, beady eyes was staring at them from a black leathery face(?) haloed with straight dark whiskers(?).

“Let’s call him... Robert!” Amy sounded excited. “He looks exactly like that monkey in that movie.”

“What movie?” Amanda turned towards her sister. “I don’t remember any movies with a Robert the Monkey!”

“OF COURSE, you don’t! You can’t remember what guy is your boyfriend at the moment!”

“Shut up! I don’t have a boyfriend!”

“Yeah, yeah, you don’t. *Of course* you don’t!”

“Kids! Let’s call him Robert then! Carter?”

“I don’t care, Dad. Whatever they say,” Carter shrugged and away from the cage. “I don’t like this thing.”

“It’s not a thing, stupid!” Amanda yelled at her brother. “It’s a MONKEY!”

“I know it’s a monkey! Just because I’m younger, you think you can push me around, eh?” He lowered himself onto the sofa. “I don’t care about this monkey at all! If you want, you can take care of it. I’m out!”

“No, no, no,” Debbie entered the room. “Your Dad and I thought it would be a nice present for you, Carter, on your elementary school graduation. For you, Amanda, on your finishing the fifth grade. And for you, Amy, on your finishing the seventh grade. It will also teach you responsibility and how to take care of animals. And you’re raising all the Hell possible!”

“But, Mom! Cart doesn’t want to take care of Rob!”

You’ve already given him a name! It’s great!” Debbie kissed her husband softly. “They’re such a bunch!” She laughed.

“Yes, they are,” Don said. “Yes, they are.”

“Dad, Rob will need a leash. And where is he gonna sleep? Will he need some sort of diapers, or what?” Amy opened the door, and the monkey stepped out of the cage, dragging its knuckles on the ground. It sniffed the air with its upturned flat nose with huge nostrils.

“Do you think he’s hungry?” Amy touched the monkey on its head; the animal grinned. “What should we give him? Bananas?”

Before long, Rob had become a family member. The girls were taking care of him giving him baths, changing his diapers, braiding his hair. Don could never predict, what style they would fashion the unruly shrubbery in - sometimes, it looked like a poisonous mushroom; sometimes, the highly elaborated braids ran up and down its head. Sometimes, and it made Don laugh hysterically, the girls styled the hair in what he called ‘Poofs!’ – the popcorn-like balls all over the monkey’s head.

Then, the food started to disappear. At first, it was something left on the kitchen counter or on the table. Then, this or that box was found torn open, its contents missing and crumbs were all over the place. They blamed Carter, but wasn’t him.

Early in the morning, Don went to the kitchen for a glass of water and stopped dead in the doorway: The door of one of the upper cabinets were wide open, a box of

cookies torn, and Rob the Monkey was presiding over a heap of cookies stuffing them in his mouth and munching on them loudly.

“You f***ing animal! You’ve been stealing our food!” he rushed towards the monkey and dragged it off the counter by its leather collar. “I’ll show you how to steal!”

Mumbling something, Don threw the monkey into the cage and locked the mesh door.

Debbie and the kids found Don in the garage. The doors of the kitchen cabinets were strewn all over, the power tools were plugged in each and every socket available in the brightly lit addition. Don was sweating profusely, drilling the holes and installing the looks in the bright light wood.

“Give me that Philips!” He addressed Carter who was looking at the mess with the curious eyes.

“What's the matter, honey? Why's Rob in his cage?”

“Why?” Don screamed at no one in particular. “Because this dumb animal's been stealing food! I've just caught this dumbass on the countertop pigging on the cookies! That's why!”

“You don't have to yell, honey. We all understand how upset you are.”

“Upset? Just upset? You think I'm JUST upset?” Don's face became as red as a beet. “I'm not upset! I'm totally— “

“You don't have to scream and shout in front of the kids.”

“I apologize,” Don calmed down. “Carter, get me some sandpaper. Fine grade will be okay.”

“I don't have my home-work, Miss Finch,” Amanda lowered her eyes. “Rob ate it.”

The class burst into laughter; the girl blushed and lowered her eyes.

“Who did what to your home-work?” Miss Finch looked at her student from under the half-moons of her glasses. “The monkey ate it,” Amanda whispered.

“Of all excuses, I've never heard THAT one! And I've worked at school for almost twenty years!”

“But it's true, Miss Finch! He tore my report into pieces and ate it,” the girl was at the verge of crying. “I couldn't do anything about it.”

“You'll stay after classes and do your home-work.”

“Yes, Miss Finch,” Amanda blushed.

“Where are my car keys?” Don was walking fast around the house lifting this or that cushion, looking behind the chairs and on all the surfaces. “Where the hell are my car keys? Where are my f***ing KEYS?!!!! I'm LATE for my f***ing work!!!”

The keys were nowhere to be found. Don was pacing through the first floor rooms, fuming and getting angrier and angrier. “WHERE ARE THE KEYS?!!!!”

It was a vacation time, and the kids, in their pyjamas, yawning and stretching, crowded the staircase. They were a bit worried, watching their father getting closer and closer to a heart attack. Amanda sat down on a stair and looked into the kitchen: Something was glistening in the rays of the morning sun that flooded the kitchen. Something was glistening—

“Dad, they are in the kitchen aquarium!” Amanda rushed towards the glass tank and plunged her hand into the water. “Look! Here they are!”

“What the ****! Who's put them in here?!!!” Don looked at the cage - Rob was giving him a huge grin. Don could catch a glimpse of an utmost satisfaction in the animal's eyes. Or, so it seemed to him. “Dumb animal! If I weren't in a hurry—“

And, grabbing his briefcase, Don stormed out of the house, and into the van.

“Dad! Rob is spying on me!” Amy lowered herself on the carpet by her father's legs. “He does it all the time. What should I do?”

“Lock your door,” Don resumed watching *The Little House on the Prairie*. “Keep your door locked and stop bugging me with all this nonsense.”

“It's not *this nonsense*! He spies on me!”

“Then put him into his cage and keep him there.”

Amy shrugged and left the room. The phone rang; she picked up the receiver, listened for a second, and yelled, “Amanda, it’s your boyfriend!”

“Shut up! I don’t have a boyfriend! Who is it?”

“Some guy... What's your name again?” Amy paused. “Sparky? He says his name is Sparky!”

“Mandy has a boyfriend! Mandy has a boyfriend!” Carter chanted, munching on the cookies at the kitchen table. “Mandy has a boyfriend!”

“Shut up, Cart! Go outside and roll in the snow, retard! Or, go and play in traffic!” Amanda descended the stairs and picked up the phone. “Stupid idiots!” she hissed. “Yeah?”

“Where's my cell phone?!!! Where the f*** is my cell phone?” Don was combing through the house. The task made him to get down on his knees to look under the chairs and arm-chairs, or to get on all fours to look into the narrow slits of the heavy furniture. “Has anybody seen my cell phone?”

“Why wouldn’t you call your cell and find out where it is?” With intelligence so characteristic to her, Debbie remarked in passing her husband who had star-fished himself on the office-room floor. There was nothing under the desk, except some pieces of paper, assorted paper clips, and thumbtacks.

“Call my cell phone?” He contemplated for a while. “I’m not sure it's on.”

He picked up the phone anyway and dialed the number. He heard a familiar ring tone somewhere in the house. Twice. And then, his voicemail kicked in. He went to the living room and pressed ‘Redial’.

Again, the familiar ring tone.

In a distance. Somewhere in the house.

And his voicemail kicked in.

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

