

“AN UNFORTUNATE THING” by Alexander Lee-Rekers (StageMilk, 2024)

KATHY sits at the island in her modern kitchen. A laptop, closed, rests on the marble top, along with a half-open bottle of wine and two glasses. She hears a knock at the door, and then the muffled conversation of people being ushered into the house.

Enter her husband GREG, with their neighbours VIC and DELIA. Everybody settles. It's a little awkward.

KATHY: Thank you for coming.

VIC: *(Gesturing to the wine.)* I'm sorry- would it be possible-

GREG: Sure, Vic. Let me find you a glass...

DELIA: *(To GREG.)* None for me.

VIC: She's driving home.

The joke doesn't land. GREG pours a large glass of chardonnay.

DELIA: I think I know why we're here, Kath.

KATHY: You do?

DELIA: There's no need.

KATHY: No need?

DELIA: We can handle this like grown-ups. Like neighbours.

KATHY: I'd like that.

DELIA: Vic said some things. No excuse. He'd had a hard week at work, and-

VIC: It's not who I am. It's- *(To DELIA.)* I'll take this. *(To GREG.)* I had a hard week at work. Real nightmare of a week.

KATHY: We got your note.

VIC: I'm not like that when you know me. You know I don't mean it. *(Short pause.)* And I'm serious about the lawn. I will fix it first thing on the weekend.

GREG: You're a bully.

VIC: Excuse me?

GREG: You both are.

VIC: Wait a minute-

KATHY: Greg-

GREG: You're rude, you dominate conversations, you throw tantrums when things don't go your way.

DELIA: We've lived in this neighbourhood fifteen years. We've not had one complaint from anybody until you showed up. We want to like you. We really do. But this- this attitude, this holier than thou attitude? Makes it very difficult. You've had an apology. Take it. Let's please be civil.

Pause.

KATHY: We'd like to show you something.

KATHY opens up the laptop.

GREG: Brian, our eldest. Got us some motion sensor cameras for Christmas. For burglars, wildlife, when Amazon packages go missing...

VIC: You don't need to show me the damage, Greg. Like I said, I'll fix it-

KATHY: We're not talking about the front lawn. Watch.

She hits play on the laptop.

KATHY: This one points at the pool. Wildlife. Except a few weeks ago, the mechanism in the arm of it, it went slack, and so the camera swung around to your house ... and captured this.

VIC and DELIA are stunned. KATHY leans over and presses a button.

KATHY: Here's another clip. We kept the camera where it was, just in case there was more we needed to-

VIC: You-

KATHY: Document.

GREG sips his wine. KATHY presses a button again.

KATHY: We actually thought you might be onto us by this point. Because you seem nervous in this one. But not for long.

DELIA snaps the laptop shut.

KATHY: Doesn't look too good, does it?

VIC: You're fucked. We'll sue you. We will make this a police matter.

GREG: We don't think you want to do that.

KATHY: It's an unfortunate thing. To make your home where you can't count neighbours as friends. As people to be trusted.

DELIA: I understand. *(She thinks, then:)* I wonder-

KATHY: Yes?

DELIA: I do wonder what it might take to forget something like this.

KATHY and GREG look at each other.

GREG: We've wondered that as well. The lawn's a start.

KATHY: And after that? We'll keep in touch.