

RIPPLES IN ROMANIA
(SAMPLE)

By

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EXT. NORTON-SUB-HAMDON - MORNING

Picture-postcard English village on a sunny morning. Quaint cottages, narrow lanes and gardens exploding with flowers.

SUPER: NORTON-SUB-HAMDON (SOMERSET) - 1990

Our heroine LYNN ORCHARD (43) strides with purpose. A short no-nonsense woman with stylish 90s back-combed blonde hair, walking miniature long-haired Dachshund DANIEL.

She's queen of her domain, greeting villagers as she nears her pretty cottage, with 'The Village Salon' to the side.

A fire alarm beeps (PRE-LAP) into:

INT. LYNN'S HOUSE

A building site. Bare walls, dirty builder's tools lying around, plastic sheets covering furniture. Is it being rebuilt or demolished?

Sighing, Lynn lets Daniel off the lead as voices are heard over the beeping alarm:

AJ (O.S.)
I want Coco Pops!

MIKE (O.S.)
We don't have any!

INT. LYNN'S KITCHEN

Lynn enters a smoke-filled kitchen. Total chaos.

Husband MIKE ORCHARD (44), practical and known locally as 'Mr Grumpy', holds burnt toast in one hand, while wafting a tea towel at the beeping alarm with his other hand.

In school uniforms at the table are sons SIMON (15), and AJ (5) having the temper tantrum. Being ignored is MATTHEW (8) playing with a Mickey Mouse glove puppet.

The beeping stops. Lynn takes in the scene in dismay.

LYNN
I leave you alone for five minutes!

She grabs a box of Coco Pops cereal from a cupboard.

LYNN (CONT'D)

Simon? Give these to AJ. And Mike,
my nine o'clock is Ms Phillips so
please get your tools out my salon?

(beat)

Come on then! Chop chop!

The family jumps into action. Lynn rolls up her sleeves and starts on the washing up, staring wistfully out the window.

INT. THE VILLAGE SALON - LATER

This small salon is the centre of village life. Mike does paperwork at the till while Lynn patiently holds up a coat for Ms Phillips (60s), a snooty woman and always "Ms Phillips" never Gladys.

Ms Phillips inspects Lynn's work in a mirror: a Princess Diana 'tomboy' cut.

LYNN

The Diana cut is very 'in'!

MS PHILLIPS

Hmm. If you say so...

While Ms Phillips pays Mike, Lynn gives stylist ANNABEL (20s) an eye roll. Annabel smiles as she helps mousey BRENDA SWIFT (40s), under a blowdryer.

MIKE

I'll get on with the drilling.

Mike slips into the house. Lynn checks the appointments book.

LYNN

You've got Mrs Lansdale next.

ANNABEL

(shudders)

That bald patch... Can you help me?

CATHERINE LONGMAN (40s), a well-dressed rural housewife, enters taking off her wax Barbour jacket.

LYNN

Love to but I've got Catherine now.

Loud drilling commences (O.S.). Lynn's smile fades.

LYNN (CONT'D)

After I've shoved that drill up
where Mike won't find it!

Catherine takes her seat in a chair.

CATHERINE

Passed Old Gladys outside. Reminded me - why's Brenda running this year's fashion show?

LYNN

Yes. Me and Annabel are just doing the hair and make up this year.

CATHERINE

But you always organise our village fundraisers, Lynn. I mean, leaving it to Brenda?

LYNN

I'm sure she's got it all in hand.
(shouts)
Haven't you Brenda?

They all look at Brenda, oblivious under a roaring blowdryer. She's not heard them but looks up and smiles sweetly anyway.

CATHERINE

Looks like it. What's it in aid of?

LYNN

The church.

ANNABEL

Again? That roof must have more holes than Swiss cheese!

LYNN

(shrugs)
I've got enough going on, I can't run the annual charity drive as well. What with this place, living on a building site, and now Matthew's teacher has called us in for a meeting about him...

INT. VILLAGE HALL/ PRIMARY SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

Mike and MISS PRIMROSE (30s), a highly-strung teacher, sit in awkward silence on tiny children's chairs. She nervously watches Matthew playing with his Mickey Mouse puppet.

Lynn bursts in like a whirlwind, wearing a garish tracksuit.

LYNN

Sorry I'm late. Will this take long? Only I need to set up for my Keep Fit class.

MISS PRIMROSE

(smiles to Matthew)

Why don't you play while we talk?

(her smile fades)

Frankly, I'm at the end of my tether with Matthew's attention seeking. Drawing on walls, paint filled whoopee cushions. And he's falling behind in his work and disrupting lessons.

LYNN

That's because you're constantly chopping and changing the syllabus, isn't it? He's a bright boy, he's --

MISS PRIMROSE

-- The other children manage ok.

LYNN

So what you're saying is --

MIKE

-- What exactly are you getting at?

MISS PRIMROSE

I just think he needs more close attention. How are things at home?

LYNN

Fine. Right?

MIKE

(beat)

Yes. Everything's fine.

INT. LYNN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

In the half-decorated living room, Mike watches TV. Lynn enters in her sweaty tracksuit (but perfect hair!).

She trips on a toy and swipes others off the sofa.

LYNN

Don't those boys ever tidy their toys away?

MIKE

Can we talk about Matthew now?

LYNN

Shower first?

(off Mike, she sits)

No. You're right. So...?

MIKE

What she told us about Matt?

LYNN

You mean his "attention seeking".
She's always worried too much that
one. I preferred his last teacher.

MIKE

Ok. But how do we give him...

But Lynn's distracted by the TV. A BBC news report about
Romanian orphanages, after the fall of the Communist regime.

Images of malnourished children, crowded three or four to a
cot, sitting on dirty mattresses, wearing tattered clothes.

MIKE (CONT'D)

...more attention?

NEWS REPORTER (TV)

Those who see these Communist-built
institutions can never forget them.
Hundreds of children not so much
cared for as contained...

Mike's getting annoyed at Lynn being distracted by the TV.

NEWS REPORTER (TV) (CONT'D)

...What's in this room, no one can
prepare for. Filthy, dark and
stinking. Excrement everywhere...

Mike looks from Lynn to the TV. And back again.

MIKE

Earth to Lynn?

NEWS REPORTER (TV)

...There are tens of thousands such
children in orphanages like this
all across Romania.

(MORE)

NEWS REPORTER (TV) (CONT'D)

A legacy of the Communist regime's policy to increase birth rates in a country where many couldn't provide for themselves, let alone their children. These institutions were never meant to be discovered...

Mike shakes his head and leaves her to it.

INT. LYNN AND MIKE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mike sleeps. Lynn's staring at the ceiling.

ANNABEL (PRE-LAP)

You can't just leave it...

INT. THE VILLAGE SALON - DAY

Annabel styles the hair of customer JO MARSHALL (50s), while Catherine and Lynn drink coffees.

ANNABEL

...but he was like, "it'll find its own way out". Come on! Have you ever seen a bat open a window?

Laughing Catherine notices Lynn's off with the fairies.

CATHERINE

Lynn? You in there?

ANNABEL

Thinking about Eric's lycra shorts at Keep Fit last night?

JO

Typical, isn't it? The only single man in class is an overweight apple farmer with hairy legs!

LYNN

I saw those orphanages in the news.

JO

The poor children in Bulgaria!

ANNABEL

Romania, Jo.

JO

Dumped by their parents in those horrible places. Glad we've nothing like that in Europe!

CATHERINE

Actually I think Romania is technically part of Europe?

JO

If that's true, why didn't we know?

ANNABEL

Maybe it wasn't called the Iron Curtain for nothing?

CATHERINE

Some charity or other will help.

JO

Waste of time. I read the country's full of gypsies. They'd probably steal all the donations as soon as they cross the border.

CATHERINE

How many times, Jo? Don't believe everything you read in the papers!

ANNABEL

Well, we can't do anything to help from our little village.

LYNN

Who's to say we can't?
(off their looks)
What if we donated the cash raised by the fashion show? The church roof can wait a year.

ANNABEL

Are YOU gonna tell Gladys? Or leave that to Brenda?

Out on Lynn's thoughtful expression.

INT. THE LORD NELSON INN - EVENING

A cosy village pub. Laughter and amiable chat. Lynn and Mike sit at a table finishing a pub dinner.

LYNN

It's probably Middle Child Syndrome or something. Remember Simon at Matthew's age? If we help Matthew with his schoolwork-

MIKE

We? Or me? You gonna squeeze him in between your salon, keep fit classes, village fetes and God knows what else?

LYNN

And yet I still do everything for this family. Bringing in money, feeding you all, clean clothes. I'm sure the disruption of living in a dirty, half-finished house for months on end has nothing to do it.

MIKE

I'm going as fast as I can.

LYNN

Four months you said. It's getting on for six now.

MIKE

Well, if I had some help I might finish quicker.

Before Lynn's rising anger gets the better of her-

ERIC (O.C.)

Here Lynn! What's this I hear about you raising money for a bunch of kids in Latvia?

Mike's eyebrow rises as the notorious ERIC (50s) nudges him.

LYNN

Romania, Eric. I was going to tell you, Mike.

ERIC

There's no finer lady for getting cash out of tightwad farmer's pockets, eh Grumpy?

MIKE

Don't I know it?

He gets up and leaves the pub. Lynn follows.

EXT. NORTON-SUB-HAMDON - MOMENTS LATER

Lynn follows Mike across the road towards their back gate.

MIKE

I knew that news report would set you off. You've got too much on.

LYNN

Actually, I'm going to suggest donating fashion show money to the orphans not the church this year. That's all. Come on, Mike. Our boys have everything they need. Those orphans have nothing.

He grunts and walks in through the gate, leaving Lynn.

INT. VILLAGE HALL/ PRIMARY SCHOOL - LATE AFTERNOON

In a circle of chairs Ms Phillips, hat pulled down over her new hairstyle, sits with Brenda and some other villagers.

MS PHILLIPS

Brenda, you have sent invitations out? What will Mr Ashdown think if no one shows up?

BRENDA

I don't know. I haven't asked him.

LYNN (O.C.)

We've put the word out through my customers and the Martock Women's Institute will provide wine and nibbles. It's all in hand.

Lynn winks at Brenda's grateful smile, then clocks Ms Phillips's baleful stare. And the hat she's wearing!

MS PHILLIPS

Glad you can finally join us Lynn.

LYNN

Was giving the boys their dinner. Now, I've got an idea for the show-

MS PHILLIPS

I already said, no perms!

LYNN

It's about the money we're raising?

MS PHILLIPS
Marvellous!

Ms Phillips waves JULIAN RICHARDS (early 20s) into the room.

MS PHILLIPS (CONT'D)
You all remember Julian Richards?
From *The Western Morning Gazette*?
He's covering our show this year.

JULIAN
Nice to meet you all.

LYNN
So as I was saying Gladys --

MS PHILLIPS
-- You've met Lynn Orchard? Our
local hairdresser?

LYNN
Hair stylist, thank you. What if we
sent the money raised this year to
help the Romanian orphans who have
been in the news?

MS PHILLIPS
But we always raise money for the
church. Charity does begin at home.

LYNN
What about those without a home?

MS PHILLIPS
And you're an expert on what
children in Eastern Europe need?

JULIAN
Which charity are you thinking of?
(off everyone's silence)
I've just interviewed the Romanian
Orphanage Trust down in Bridport.

A flash of inspiration for Lynn.

LYNN
Yes, that's them.

JULIAN
Terrific. And will Paddy Ashdown be
there for the event?

Ms Phillips shoots daggers at a defiant Lynn.