

Intermediate English Short Story—The Possessive Wife, with Detailed Possessive Adjectives and Possessive Pronouns

Level A2-B1

I'd like to tell you the story of my neighbour. Well, she used to be my neighbour but she moved to another city two years ago. I want to tell you this story because I want it to serve as a lesson.

When I was growing up in Benin, my grandmother used to say that we do not own the people we love.

“Your husband is your husband but he's also his mother's son! He's yours but he's also hers. I'm your mother but I'm also my husband's wife. I'm yours but I'm also his!”

When my grandmother said this, I used to laugh of course. However, I listened to her advice and made sure to treat my husband with respect and care.

I didn't check his phone when he was away. Whenever I washed his clothes, I never searched for any hidden notes or anything that would jeopardise our marriage.

My husband also respected my boundaries and never enquired about my whereabouts. Ours was a free marriage based on trust.

I had my own friends and he had his. We shared some hobbies and interests but also made sure to have our own universes.

It goes without saying that his wallet was his and my wallet was mine. These were two separate worlds, never to be crossed, never to be violated.

When I first moved to this new neighbourhood, I immediately noticed how my neighbour was always with her husband. Day and night, I saw them: talking, holding hands, gardening together or simply having a glass of wine on their terrace.

They went to work together and returned hand in hand. When her husband was not with her, then she was with her little daughter. She was never alone and I secretly envied this woman who seemed to be surrounded by the people she loved.

Her family's love seemed to be sufficient. She fiercely guarded her family, never letting anyone in, including friends and family.

"That woman never shares her family with anyone!" I said to myself one day and my tone was so judgemental I would have become the Chief Justice herself.

To say the truth, I didn't know her very well and neither did my husband. We actually never went past the usual "Hello! How are you?" My neighbours had their own life and we had ours. Everybody just minded their own business.

Life went on.

One day, as I was leaving for work, I saw her husband leaving too. However, he was alone. To say that this was a huge surprise is an understatement.

The following day, the wife was also missing and I started wondering where she had gone.

"Maybe she has gone to visit her family," my husband suggested and I said nothing.

"Maybe she's sick," he forwarded another theory and I still remained mum.

To be honest, I didn't want to meddle in my neighbour's affairs. This was a matter of conjecture and I didn't want to deal with maybes. I wanted facts.

Two weeks passed and the wife and daughter were nowhere to be seen.

"Perhaps we should call the police," my husband told me one night when he started getting worried about the disappearance of our neighbour.

I laughed and said that he was going too far. True, it was unusual to see her husband alone but this did not imply that we should start suspecting her husband of some foul play.

One month passed and the wife had not returned. Well, maybe it was time to go a step further.

I was saved from additional distress when one of my other neighbours asked me about her.

"Do you know where Janet is?"

"Who's Janet?" I asked back.

This is how I learnt that my missing neighbour's first name was Janet and that she had moved to our neighbourhood five years before.

It is also during this time that I discovered the name of my other neighbour: Clara.

I therefore replied to Clara that I didn't know. "Maybe she's gone to visit her parents." I said timidly.

"Her parents and siblings died three years ago in a car accident. She is very alone. She's got no paternal or maternal grandparents either. They also died a few years ago."

My heart sank and I thought about how I had treated Janet. I thought that she was a possessive woman who just wanted to keep her husband and her daughter to herself. I had no idea what she had gone through and I felt very ashamed of my behaviour.

In the evening, I told my husband about Janet's story. He also felt ashamed because he had equally thought the same about Janet and her husband.

Two weeks later, Janet reappeared with her daughter. I don't know where she had been and I never asked her.

However, I made sure to greet her with a little more warmth the next time we crossed paths. She returned a radiant smile and we both went our separate ways.

Two years ago she moved to another city and their house is now occupied by an elderly couple.

This time round, I don't venture any opinions about what and who these people are. Sometimes what people show is not what we see.



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