

The Black Widow

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At 25 years old, Clarice Adams was beautiful and charming, like a princess out of a fairytale. Apart from being good-looking, she was also very shrewd and forward planning. Clarice knew exactly how she wanted to live her life and would do anything to achieve what she wanted. Most people didn't know this however, so the good looks alone turned heads wherever she went; it wouldn't be long before someone married her, and someone did just that.

In 1978, she married Fred Walker. He had a decent job, he was a trustworthy man and a loving husband. All was well.

During the following winter, the economy was failing. Walker returned home with news for his wife. It didn't take long. Clarice was crushed. He said that they would manage. As Walker turned to leave, she took a cleaver and fractured his skull. *What right does he have to go and try to ruin my life like that? Well deserved, I should think.*

The insurance people accepted Clarice's story that Walker had slipped on an icy path and split his skull on the front doorsteps. It took a month, but she was paid.

Soon afterward, an advert was placed in the newspaper. 'Young, attractive widow looking for lover. Send details to above address,' it said. Clarice picked through the replies with care. She was looking for men without relatives who were well insured. *Just in case some other fool manages to spoil what would otherwise be a very happy relationship.*

Sure enough, she found what she was looking for. Jack Arthur was instantly captivated by Clarice. Before long, they were married and had two children.

Three years passed. Clarice was satisfied with the life she was leading. She had a caring husband and her small children were doing fine.

Suddenly, Arthur had an accident that left him crippled and unable to work. Shocked, Clarice brought out the packet of strychnine she kept for emergencies, and used it.

Not for the first time, Clarice wondered why she felt no remorse when she killed. *Life is only going to happen once. If I can't have a good one, I'm not about to let anyone else enjoy it too much. A conscience just prevents people from doing what they really want. Surely not having one is an advantage?*

She told the insurance company that he had had a heart attack to make sure they paid up and had Arthur cremated before they had a chance to investigate his death. However, the money took a long time to arrive this time. *I knew I was right about the insurance, but I wasn't counting on it taking so long. I suppose we'll have to forget about the insurance bit and just search for the rich boys.*

Clarice began to advertise for another husband. Once again, she was looking for men with no relatives and plenty of cash. This time, she left out insured men as they caused no end of

trouble, even in death. *Sorry, I don't have that much time on my hands, thank you very much. Insurance isn't much of a factor this time. They'll think I'm jinxed, having all these men 'suddenly' die around me. People are so gullible.*

The responses were abundant and she took her time searching. Many men went to her village to seek the beautiful widow, or rather, who they thought was a beautiful widow.

Clarice had become fat, and she walked with a waddle. Her horrific acts seemed to have been reflected in her appearance as Clarice became less and less attractive. She assured any apprehensive men that she was a maid for the widow and she took them to the widow's farmhouse. And while the men stood in the hallway, Clarice came through a side door with a well-honed axe.

By this time, she had come to enjoy the thrill of murder. Clarice had heard the term 'psychopathic' before, but she thought who cares? *Life ends anyway. If they think it's that easy to get a bride, they're too stupid to live.* Ironically, her children were perfectly normal and had proper senses of morality. They had no idea how many people their mother killed to keep up their standard of living and they were alone the people that Clarice had any cares for.

Six years and nine bodies in her backyard later, Clarice found a man called Will Edwards. He was chosen like the others, he came with his savings like the others and he was treated like the others. However, Edwards was smarter than the

more trusting men from the past and he concealed the fact that he had a brother named Michael.

After hearing nothing from Will for a fortnight, Michael wrote a letter to Clarice. The reply said Will had disappeared and begged him to come, bringing all the money he could. *Well, well, well, it seems like one of them was more cautious that I anticipated. No matter, I'll just kill him as well when he comes.*

Like his dead brother, Michael was clever and sent the sheriff to investigate instead of going himself. When the sheriff found nothing, he left to inform the suspicious brother. *Maybe I was wrong. Maybe I got too ahead of myself.*

The sheriff returned to the farm later to collect a statement about Will from Clarice. He was greeted by a burning wreck. In the backyard of the farm, the Sheriff found Will, nine other bodies, a large female one and two smaller ones. Clarice and her children?

Two weeks later, Michael returned to the village for a farewell. There, he found some unnerving things. A neighbour told him that recently, three graves had been mysteriously vandalised. The earth in front of the graves showed signs of shovel marks and there were fragments of wood everywhere.

Disturbed that his brother's killer may still have been alive and with no conclusive evidence of Clarice's death, Michael spent the rest of his life trying to find her. He failed.