

BUILDING CASTLES

You mapped it all out - our house in the country, you tinkling on the piano, me nurturing stories till dusk, the waterfights in the wild flower garden with our three kids. We window-shopped for retro wedding outfits we might one day wear. There were Christmas cards to the two of us. We even invested in an orthopaedic mattress, 'This is important, for the future,' you said.

I came to see it all as you did, grafted my dreams onto yours. I touched the heads of our children – grubby, tousled and happy, heard the rush of air as you pressed those piano keys, inhaled the mahogany furniture, the Victorian rose bush you said we'd grow.

Then - as we curled up on my sofa - you placed your hand on my tummy and rubbed round and round, 'You could have my baby.' Round and round you rubbed. And left me.

And now, when I think of those words, of your round and round hand, I know that moment was real, that and the seeds you helped me to plant.

Story by Becky Cherriman.