



# the forgotten day

by David Marshall

**Sindy.** Life was hell on wheels for Sindy. Pressured by her teachers to score high. Pressured by parents to be cute and sparkling. Pressured by peers to 'do drugs'. Pressured by boys to 'do sex'.

So many things locked up in her heart. So much to give. No one to receive. No one to listen. Mum and Dad caught up in their own busy lifestyle: both working long hours; nights out with friends. No time for Sindy. Her problems would have to stay locked up. Once complained to her mum that nobody 'communicated' in her family.

And Sindy couldn't escape from this house of strangers.

**Matt and Louise.** Matt was going places – fast. Off at a fast gallop to grab the commuter train for the city. There were wage scales to be climbed, promotions to be fought for, mortgages to be paid, deals to be done.

Home at 7.30pm. Turn on the telly; helping of second-hand adventure might ease his mind of the nerve-stretching stress, pull his thoughts away from today's quota of aggro.

Scratch meals; caught a cheese burger from McDonald's for lunch. Vindaloo from the take-away for tea.

Turned off the television when they mentioned 'executive burn-out'.

Tossed and turned all night.

What was Louise fussing about? Never got to see him? Didn't seem the same man she'd married?

Why be a misery, Louise? Stick with it for a couple of years and I'll have powered up to the hot seat. And then . . .

From opposite ends of the breakfast table they wondered what was clotting their rapport these days.

**Steve.** Audi, his right foot flat on the floor. Nought to sixty in 8.0 seconds. Top speed 150mph. Stereo full blast – all eight speakers. Executive briefcase on the back seat.

Tracey wanted to talk. But there had been

no time for that. He took her to Round Table, right? Couldn't she make friends in the neighbourhood, or something?

Home at 8.30pm. No Tracey. Just a note and no forwarding address. At 8.47pm, or so they told the coroner, £30,000-worth of *Vorsprung durch Technik* hit a motorway bridge support at somewhat in excess of 100mph.

**Lucy and Sean.** It can be great being 13 like Lucy or 8 like Sean. But it depends. Often Dad's face looked pale. It wasn't the same between Dad and Mum any more. They'd heard Dad say so. And Grandad had said plenty more: When he was young, families went together, *did* things together. Lucy and Sean liked the sound of that. All the family together – in the park, off on a ride; it really didn't matter where or what. But *together*. Mum said there was no time for all that. She wanted Lucy to be 'liberated' like her, but Lucy wasn't struck on that. A loner at school, often crying; teachers couldn't make her out. She was drawn apart, closed in a violent silence. An under-achiever. And Sean? He was never home. What was the point?

Whatever happened to families?

All-absorbing careers.

Anything to avoid the embarrassment of communication.

Every member isolated, his life vacuum-packed.

End results?

Most of the statistics that make headlines.

Divorces – up. Suicides – up. The statistics of violence, mugging, kids on the prowl – up. Incidence of duodenal ulcers and coronaries – up. Number of teenage runaways – up. And the extent and intensity of things like loneliness and misery cannot be measured.

How to get back to the simplicity of happy homes and secure families? How to cope with the pressures of life in the twenty-first century? How to be a mum, dad, child – *human being* – these days *and stay happy*?

Why couldn't somebody have invented a day – say just twenty-four hours in a seven-day week – when the pressures would be off? When the workaday week would be forgotten. Shut out. A day that would liberate everyone from the madding, materialistic society – the tyranny of the world of *things*. One day in a week when a man need not feel small, anonymous, a face in the crowd, but have a sense of his significance, identity, belonging, roots.

One day a week when a man, rushed off his hurrying feet on a weekday, could relax and communicate with, *enjoy*, his wife, his children, his family, his friends, his partners in the business of living. One day a week

when, instead of *exploiting* God's creation, he could *experience* the rest and peace of *appreciating* it.

Was it too much to ask that there should be one day a week when a man could, so to speak, recharge his batteries: renew his spirit, revitalise his flagging physique, spark his mind into creative activity, and find joy in his family?

Couldn't someone have invented such a day?

Like God, for example?

Well, God did. Way back. In his ten stone-written rules of right and justice, God said, 'Remember the Sabbath . . .'. But the day God said to remember has become the forgotten day.

Because the day has been forgotten, real values have been forgotten – and God has been forgotten, too.

And life has become hell on wheels – for Cindy.

A fast track to divorce for Matt and Louise, with nervous breakdowns and coronaries just milestones *en route*.

A seven-day week, top speed, sound-bursting mayhem to suicide for Steve.

Warped, mind-blown, loveless, lonely childhood for Lucy and Sean.

All because the day God said to remember became – the forgotten day.

