with this ugly piece of metal? You could have at least asked me once before buying."

"Ha! Do you ask me before buying junk for the house, all in the name of home décor? Now you shall see how I reinvent myself. I shall step out in style, all newly suited, booted, watch-ed, hat-ted, bow-ed, piped etcetera etcetera, and you shall have no choice but to admire me, along with the rest of the world!"

"WHAT?" I nearly collapsed with shock. "You mean there's more to come?"

"Yes madam, this is just the beginning to a relaunched me. Wait and watch! But before that, your unbiased comments on this ornate pocket watch please."

"Hideous is the only word that comes to mind, so don't ask me for more. The damages to the tune of, if I may ask?"

Convinced that my words lack appreciation out of sheer envy, he walks away in a huff without replying. I hear him calling out to our toddler daughter asking her whether it looks nice.

Little ones are born diplomats; the lesser said on the topic, the better.

He, satisfied at having made the smartest purchase of his life, and she, preening at making her father deliriously elated with her reply, the father and daughter hug and giggle and say to each other, "Shh...we wont let mommy touch this!"

His cartel beginning to take shape, half an hour later, I hear him call out for my son. There's a mini conference of sorts between the men, both appear to inspect the watch closely, and suddenly, before the father can realize what's to happen, the son runs to me shouting, "Mamma, mamma, daddy's new watch is wonky. Go and see how the dial shakes, and daddy is not sure if the arms are moving!"

Ahem! I hear an adult male growl and our man makes sure not to cross paths with me again that evening! Later I find him engrossed in an e-bay screen displaying all kinds of spray golf-shoe cleaners, bidding for rupee one. I brace myself for the next parcel to arrive in a couple of days, and shoeloads of mud and muck coming into the house as a result of that - what would earlier get cleaned at the golf course itself after playing, will in future be duly brought home to drive home the efficacy and smartness of his purchase!

That night, he sleeps with the watch ticking right next to him, his heart and his new toy beating in unison, united in their misery of having to tick for the same man. I think midway through the night, he suddenly realizes, to his horror, that one of them has stopped beating!

"Have you done something to my watch out of envy?" A louder growl this time.

"As if I have nothing better to do," a quick retort, and I turn the other side to doze off again to sounds of the watch being gently patted and shaken to see if resuscitation is still possible.

Poor ornate gold chained, gold shelled, newly arrived, Rs 200 worth Victorian pocket watch.

Next morning, it is found dead, and decapitated, with a peculiarly twisted shell hanging loose over an oyster of a watch dial, lifeless. Overcoming the initial amusement over the plight of the just-purchased, I do feel a tinge of moroseness. What a waste of good money: for that amount, I could have bought good music for my soul, or delicious street food for a week, or watched the latest Bollywood flick, a mega portion of cheese popcorn included, or, just about anything!

The whodunit is never attempted. Could have been anyone. The Lord and master himself, who may have 'accidentally' crushed it in his sleep. The vindictive Lady, who may have poured forth her 'envy' on the hapless object.

I don't have the heart to look at The Hubby. Is he sad, embarrassed, happy, relieved, or a little of all of these, I cant say.

The whodunit is never attempted. Could have been anyone. The Lord and master himself, who may have 'accidentally' crushed it in his sleep. The vindictive Lady, who may have poured forth her 'envy' on the hapless object. The daughter, having had slept with her plastic helmet on thinking she was Perman, may have air-crashed into it while flying high in her sleep. The son, having been preparing for his forthcoming cricket tournament, may have hopped into the big bed from his own practising one of his shots, and mistaken the deceased for the ball. Impossible to say. So the case never gets opened.

The next I know is, even before that golf accessory has knock-knocked, a gold rimmed monacle pops out of the parcel the following day. The Dear Departed and the Newly Arrived had apparently been meant to have adorned The Hubby as a pair. This time, I reserve my comments.

The next day, another parcel arrives. And then the next. And the next, until I am left with little option but to open my mouth.

I have half a mind of suing e-bay for having turned a peaceful home into a battleground. Day, after day, after day. ■