FOR BETTER... OR WORSE?



Tracy Barlow (Kate Ford) and Steve McDonald (Simon Gregson)

> TRACY'S SO SCARED OF LOSING STEVE. SHE'S JUST DESPERATE
>
> KATE FORD

Coronation Street's Steve McDonald is about to marry scheming Tracy Barlow – unless Becky's bombshell wrecks their big day

Evil, twisted, poisonous – over the years, we've pinned no end of labels on *Coronation Street*'s Tracy Barlow.

And with every justification. Even her initials have an unpleasant ring to them.

But just before Christmas, we couldn't help feeling desperately sorry for the spiteful little so-and-so, as she suffered a miscarriage, losing the twins that she had been expecting and felt her world crashing down around her. Toxic individual though she may be, you wouldn't wish that on anyone.

And how long did our sympathy last? Ooh, several hours. By the following episode, true to form, Tracy had turned this terrible tragedy to her advantage in the most despicable fashion, claiming that a fall down the stairs at Becky McDonald's flat – to which she'd stormed for yet another confrontation with her nemesis – was what had caused her to lose her babies. And, worse, that Becky had actually pushed her.

As we go into this week's big storyline – Tracy's wedding to Steve McDonald (Simon Gregson), the father of her daughter Amy, the man who would have been these twins' dad, and the guy she's taken such evil delight in stealing from the despairingly innocent Becky – that's pretty much where we still stand. Steve has swallowed Tracy's awful lie, continuing to believe that his ex is effectively a killer, while bride-to-be Tracy is thrilled that at last she has the man she's been chasing all this time.

Except, of course, this is Soapland, where weddings rarely go to plan. Especially those involving Steve McDonald…

CORONATION STREET, MONDAY, 7.30PM & 8.30PM, ITV1

Kate Ford, 34, who first took on the role of Tracy 10 years ago, isn't one to make apologies for her character's appalling behaviour. And yet she can understand, at least to a degree, why Tracy has resorted to such extreme, unforgivable measures.

"She's so scared of losing him," she explains. "She's just desperate."

And Kate adds that, for all her character's faults, "Tracy is a genuinely devoted mum."

What sets us up so nicely for Monday's marriage ceremony is the fact that Katherine Kelly, who's been playing the wayward but ultimately lovable Becky since 2006, is all set to leave the show.

So it doesn't take a genius to figure out that the writers will have created a suitably spectacular departure for her character, as Becky's gullible ex prepares to tie the knot with the woman who has wrecked her life.

Throw in the fact that, unbeknown to the happy couple, Becky has finally unearthed indisputable proof of Tracy's despicable deception – sneaking into Dr Carter's office last night and printing out Tracy's tell-tale medical records – and you can rest assured we're in for some typical soap-style wedding day fireworks. The question is, how exactly will Becky drop her bombshell – and with what consequences?

"She's waited so long to get proof," explains Katherine, 32, "that I don't think even Becky knows what she's going to do with it. She's not one to make plans, she's very instinctive. She'll just know when the time is right to take the ammunition out.

"Basically, she decides to put on a cracking outfit, rock up to the church and say to Steve, 'This is what you could have won…'"

There are several ways this could then pan out, of course, particularly with regard to Katherine's final scenes. Will she successfully wreck the wedding? Will she reconcile with Steve? Will she be leaving alone? Or will she pledge her future to this Danny chap she's taken such a shine to – the widowed hotel manager (played by ex-*Holby City* star Jeremy Sheffield) whose little lad, Billy, has already brought out Becky's maternal instincts.

"At this point, Danny is out of the picture," Katherine reminds us, "because he's just been told he's being transferred to Barbados. But he has left her a ticket and all the possibilities are still buzzing around in Becky's head.

"The thing is, until she has given Steve one last chance to look her in the eyes and believe her, she can't think about anything like that. She's been like a dog with a bone, trying to get her hands on these medical records and clearing her name. Now she's got to run with it before she can think about anything else.

"She gives Steve one last chance to believe her, to stop him making the biggest mistake of his life."

Mike Ward

> BECKY DECIDES TO PUT ON A CRACKING OUTFIT, ROCK UP TO THE CHURCH AND SAY TO STEVE, 'THIS IS WHAT YOU COULD HAVE WON'
>
> KATHERINE KELLY



Right: Katherine Kelly as Steve's ex-wife, Becky McDonald

WILL IT BE FIFTH TIME LUCKY FOR STEVE?

Can't make it to Steve McDonald's wedding? Don't worry, he's bound to have another before too long. Monday's will be his fifth!



PHOTOS: ITV; REX FEATURES

1995



Steve's first wedding was back in 1995, when he tied the knot with **Vicky Arden** (played by Chloe Newsome, left) in St. Lucia. He'd hopped into bed with Vicky immediately after being dumped by hairdresser Fiona Middleton (Angela Griffin). The marriage ended in divorce two years later.

2001



His second came in 2001, when he married **Karen Phillips** (Suranne Jones, left) to help her win a bet. They divorced two years later – but, typical of this couple's crazy relationship, Steve proposed to her again on the same day.

2004

Tracy Barlow livened up Steve's second wedding to **Karen** (left) by turning up at the ceremony to reveal Steve was baby Amy's father (he and Tracy had had a one-night stand). Steve threw the volatile Karen out on Christmas Day 2004, having feared for a few terrifying moments that she'd taken Amy's life.

2009



In 2009, things looked promising for Steve and Rovers barmaid Michelle Connor (Kym Marsh's character) – only for Steve to dump her and propose to **Becky Granger** (right). It then took Steve and Becky two tries before they became husband and wife – a nervous Becky getting too drunk for the first ceremony to go ahead.

2012

Steve and Becky's marriage eventually went into meltdown last year, having never really recovered from two miscarriages and a failed adoption bid in August 2010.

It did at least look for a while as if their split could be amicable, with Becky remaining hopeful of a reconciliation. But **Tracy Barlow** had other ideas . . .