

FEELINGS

by

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"That ol' bugger's been up to it again!"

Carlene's voice cut like a razor into Alf as he came into the small, steamy kitchen.

"What ol' bugger?" asked Alf despondently... But he knew "what old bugger". "Damn!" he thought, "what's up now; why me? What the hell did I do to deserve this crap?"

Carlene was standing at the sink, elbow deep in other peoples grimy washing. She slowly twisted around, revealing a malevolent sneer on her face. Thrusting her chin forward, and narrowing her eyes, she spat out words through small white teeth.

"Your dirty, light-fingered, ol' sod of a grandfather... that's who."

"What's he done now?" sighed Alf as he flopped onto a chair at the kitchen table.

Wiping her rough hands on a damp apron, Carlene slid onto the chair at the opposite end of the table and tensed forward. She looked like a predator ready to strike at some defenceless pray.

Alf leaned back, exposing his soft belly... He wanted to die quickly, but he knew there was no death without pain and blood; he had died this way so many times that he knew there was no mercy.

"Your grandfather..." the words advanced slowly and were tipped with venomous ice, "was caught today, in Phillips' Supermarket, with a frozen chicken stuffed up his coat. He'd been grippin' it 'tween his bleedin' knees, but the old bugger's legs must have give out 'cause the bird fell out at the cash desk. Phillips called the coppers and they come 'an dragged 'im off."

She leaned back with satisfaction, folded her arms, and pursed her lips.

A thought passed through Alf's mind - "My god, Carlene, you look just like a chicken's arse." - and a smile came unbidden to his lips.

"What the hell are you smirkin' at?" she was coming in for a second cruel slash.

"Where's granddad now?" Alf parried quickly.

Shrugging her narrow shoulders, his wife spat indifferently, "Don't know, an' don't care! With any luck the old sod's behind bars." She thrust her face further forward and continued, "I warned you, an' I warned 'im, but did anyone listen? No... not bloody likely. He's an old klepto, an' ought to be put away for good."

Carlene was in her element now; she had tasted blood and she was aroused.

"He's just a lonely old man looking for attention." Muttered Alf softly.

"Crap!" snorted Carlene fiercely, "he's a bloody klepto... and a bloody menace to society... that's what 'e is. An' the sooner we're shot of 'im the better."

A heavy silence filled the room, and Alf started to explore the ragged edge of the chair seat with his finger nail.

"Shit!" he thought, "what the hell do I to do?"

His pensive exploration of the seat edge was interrupted by an urgent rapping on the front door.

Carlene uncoiled herself in response to the summons. She triumphantly strutted past Alf into the hall, and slammed the kitchen door shut. Her passing left a sweaty, animal, smell in Alf's nose.

"Unfeeling cow!" he breathed under his breath.

Quickly returning, Carlene flung open the kitchen door. Framed in the doorway was a dejected looking old man with bowed head and cap in hand. He was dressed in a shabby old rain-coat, and was being supported between two burley policemen.

At that point there was no doubt in Carlene's and Alf's minds - Grandpa would have to go.

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