

Carrots, Peas and Runner Beans

Chapter one

It was not too often the chance came his way, but when it did, he thoroughly enjoyed it. With his feet comfortably raised up on a padded leather footstool, George Smith relaxed in an armchair of the same. Although there was another brown chair and matching three seater sofa, he always held the opinion, that seat had the best view of the television.

Chelsea was never in favour of him having his feet on her coffee table, hence the use of that chair and pouf.

In general, she was a good daughter in law and secretly, he was quite fond of her.

They all lived together in an end terraced ex-council house. The strict rules and regulations, imposed on him when he first moved in, were hard to get his head around. He had been used to his own company. Well, for the past eight years anyway, since his darling, Edith, had passed over. However, it felt like a family unit again. And, when things got a bit uneasy, he just went out, usually to the local pub. But, today he felt was a good day.

On ITV three, was his favorite type of film – set during the Second World War. Unwillingly, he had lived through that time, like so many others, and could relate to so much. The clothes, the speak, the food, the hardships, the way of life and the destruction and loss.

It was plainly decorated making it feel quite spacious. Magnolia painted walls and mushroom coloured full length curtains heightened the light in the room.

Chelsea was in the kitchen busy making cakes. Baking was her favorite past time and there was never any shortage of helpers when it came time to sample them.

In the opened up area under the stairs, was a small computer desk and a few reference books.

That was ideal for Liam to do his homework. Although, it seemed, something else took priority for the moment.

“Granddad?”, asked the eight year old, maintaining his gaze at the monitor.

“Mmmmmmm?”, groaned the reply, equally engrossed in the monochrome movie and about to take a drink of his tea.

“How do you spell, orgasm?”

His mug holding hand fiercely jogged up and down with each blustering gust of squeezed out air. Only a dribble was left in the cup when he finished coughing. Most of the drink George spat out, ended up on himself or the carpet. He never did like that carpet, anyway. A few stains would not notice on that garish pattern.

Regaining his breath, he thought of the best way to deal with his Grandson’s request.

“I, um Was just going out, Methuselah”, he lied as he flicked off the TV set and scrambled to his feet. “I should ask your mum”, George suggested, as he entered the hall at speed.

Chelsea’s flour smeared face appeared at the kitchen opening. “Did I hear you say you were going out?”

“You did”, he replied, hurriedly donning his long grey coat and squeezing the black and white tweed cap over his ever increasing bald patch.

“Mum?”, her son attempted to ask.

“Just a minute, Liam Can you get the puzzle mag and a packet of self-raising flour, while you’re out, please?” Baking may well have been her best creative outlet, however, remembering to buy all the ingredients, required some attention.

“Puzzle mag, self-raising. Got it. Bye” And with a slam of the door, he was gone.

Looking at the windowless white front door, she smiled. “Your Granddad, Liam I can’t make head or tail of him sometimes”, she sniggered. “Now What was it you wanted?”

“How do you spell, orgasm?”

“Liam!”, she yelled, appalled that he could even know about such things. Chelsea then

scowled angrily at the front door.

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Exiting from the local newsagents, George swung a medium size plastic carrier bag from his right hand. For his age, he was pretty nimble and could nip across the street as well as his younger counterparts. He did carry out the Green Cross Code, as he remembered it, with the looking left and right, but then changed his mind. Wisely believing there would be some backlash awaiting him at home, he thought perhaps an hour or two at the pub was in order. So, off to his left he went. He had only gone three or four shops along, when he slowed and gradually stopped. Outside the Bookies, he glanced at the open doorway, then along the street. The doorway received a second look.

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Being no different to any other pub, The Red Lion found itself diversifying into food in order to survive. Portions were not great, but plentiful and good value for money. There were always takers for a mid-day feast or an evening meal there. In fact, several had been served over in the quiet corner near one window. A couple in their fifties and their adult daughter were enjoying some kind of pie and chips. About their feet, were approximately ten shopping bags full of shoes, tops and skirts. That indicated one of Smith's best ways of a boring waste of time.

To one corner, there were three serious bikers. Dressed neck to toe in protective gear, the individually coloured suits looked more like leather onesies, a bit like real life 'Teletubbies'. One wore red and black, another green and black and the third in blue and black. The full face helmets were all black gloss, apart from the visors, and they were tinted. They hung neatly on the wall mounted coat rack close by, leaving little space for anything else. A decent bunch really. Kept themselves to themselves, a light laughter could be occasionally heard. Other than that, the well-spoken men in their twenties were no trouble at all.

Half a dozen of George's friends were already around an oval table, which this clique regarded as theirs. Some sat on the thin sponge covered seats of the large bay window, while others had their usual wooden wheel backed chairs.

Bob and Wesley Nash, the two brothers, followed their father and his father before him, into much needed residential development as bricklayers. Even though they were both deep into their seventies, the large calloused hands remained rough as if they had just stepped off of the building site.

Charlie Cooke, well, he was a schemer. A sly, and let it be said, ruthless individual. The type of person who would set a high score on a pub games machine, and if anyone dare beat it, he would turn it off and back on again and play it again so his name was back at the top.

George had a great supporter in Gerald Moreton. Longtime friends and drinking buddies back in the day. An unassuming kind man, who would do anything for anybody, if he could. When he was very young, he was chastised for giving a boy his shoes. When asked why, he explained, "The other boy didn't have any"

The stalwart of the group was Gordon King. A man of fairness and morals. He had reached that point via a million experiences he wished he never had. Single now but had been married twice. The first wife died quite young, from brain damage. A loose slate had fallen from a butchers roof and struck her edgewise directly on the head. The second, went out for some cigarettes and never came home. He only found out from reading the Dear John letter tucked behind the mantelpiece clock.

And Derek Reynolds, quietly spoken and all round nice guy. Although it was never mentioned any more, he still possessed in his bedroom draw, the silver medal he won at Melbourne. So he did not win, but coming home from the Australian Olympics in the fifties with a silver medallion around his neck, made him the talking point for quite some years.

Rarely was that magical time thought about, but when he did, the many arthritic joints received a good firm rub.

The usual crowd, those men had hung around together, well forever it seemed.

“All right, chaps”, called George, entering and heading for the bar.

Most of the group welcomed him with a grunt, nod or a token wave of the hand.

“Here comes bullshitter of the month”, sniggered Bob quietly.

“... Of the year”, mumbled his brother with a glance.

“Century”, offered Gerald.

“Millennium”, added Gordon.

They all emitted a hushed giggle. There may have been an element of truth in their banter, but he was an ingrained part of the group never the less.

“Hello, George”, greeted Tom, as he poured his latest customer’s favourite pint. “I wasn’t expecting to see you this early” The Landlord was a tall man in his early fifties and was keen for his age not to show just yet. With regular anti greying potion, this problem was being well managed.

“The Red Lion is my savior”, he sighed, dumping the carrier bag on the counter. Fishing in his trousers pocket, he pulled out a handful of change. He carefully sifted through and dropped the correct coinage on the counter.

“There you go” Tom placed the glass beside the bag and took the money. “Been shopping?”

“Chelsea wanted a few things. A magazine and some chocolate raisins”, he announced proudly and picked up the drink. “Thanks”

Nash the younger slid along the mustard patterned cushioning, making room for the late comer. He was small framed man, addicted to his jeans and open colored shirt. In fact, George could not remember him wearing a tie for years, save for special occasions. Even then, they had to be quite special for him to feel pinched in at the neck. Years in the

construction industry had taken their toll on poor Bob. About the only thing left on him any good was the right hip the local surgeons replaced, and that life span was soon to expire

“All right, you men?”, George checked, as he sat. Glancing at Charlie sitting in the end carver chair, he uttered, “I see you’ve pissed yourself again”

“Yeah? Missed you too”, he grumped, looking down just to make sure it had not happened again. Sure enough, the damp patches of more than mere dribbles lined his grey trousers. He was finding that particular task more and more difficult with his ever diminishing appendage.

“That’s drips off the bottom of my glass”, he joshed, trying to cover the embarrassment.

Gordon sucked air through his tobacco free pipe. “Yeah. You?”

“No! Bored to tears”, George truthfully sighed. He was not prone to depression, although some would say he could bring this about in others.

“Yes. Us too”, admitted the older Nash brother.

“Oh, come on. Don’t be so negative. There’s loads we could do”, cheered Gordon as he loaded his home carved pipe with shag. His outlook was always on the positive side and he

struggled for things to do.

Graham Jones 11/8/2015 09:41
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