



Stories for the Train

Tales on the go

0:4:00

Our Yorkshire Tits

A Monologue

By Alan Goodchild

A woman sits at the table in her front room. On the wall behind hang two small porcelain birds, wings outstretched. On the sideboard stands an alabaster figurine on a crocheted doily.

They're a constant puzzle to me, pigeons. As much as I try to discourage them, using fair means and foul, back they come. Not that I'm against birds, I like them, in fact I positively encourage as many as I can on a Wednesday, when I'm off, from the charity shop. That's where I bought the owl.

'Safe as houses' she said, 'never see one again, just pop him on your fence in clear view and they'll be terrified'.

'Do I make owly noises?' I said, 'don't be daft' she said.

It's not the easiest thing mounting an owl, but up he went and come Wednesday I sat with eagle eyes watching the buggers line up on Millie Watson's privy roof across't way. Sure enough my Tits were given the space they needed and a feeder full of meal worms was gone in a jiffy. Why pigeons are scared of a barely recognisable Tawny owl, and Tits aren't, escapes me, so I asked Ron next door, he knows stuff, wish I hadn't.

It seems that the male of the species is incapable of using homophones in any correct and sensible way in our wonderful language. I knew something was up when I said; 'I'll have to cut down the food supply or my Tits'll be huge.' A wry smile stretched his pock marked bristly brown face. 'Nothing wrong with that' he said. Well, it weren't what he said, it were the way he said it. And I'm not abashed to a bit of flirting but the open, brazen way his eyes unbuttoned the top three at least buttons on my artist's smock so that he could get a look at my, well I have been told before so it's not boasting at all on my part. It were my late husband Roger as first noticed, couldn't get enough of me; Nipples of Venus crowning a pair of Helen of Troy's he used to say, literary man he were, you know, well-read. Ron conversely is a simple sort for whom I had no wish to become the centre of attention or the object of desire. I can't deny a slight raising of the rib line and a modest increase in my depth of breathing accompanied his unwanted attention, just to see, and it did, and I do.

Ron's lived alone since Molly went, we used to hear them through the wall, not easily but my Roger's experience in the Signal Corps during the war gave him many skills. Ron used to be fit, must've been.

'I'm up here' I said. He looked at me and raised his eyebrows as if to see whether I would, or I wouldn't. As I walked away up the path, I adopted the sway that our sergeant used to say when out on the town. 'Bags of swank girls, bags of swank' she said. She were a muscly women, rather hairier than usual, sprouting from every orifice it seemed, nose hair you could plait, and I don't even want to think about down below. The girls used to say that's why she wore the longest shorts, but I'm not sure, perhaps it's a religious thing.

For the next few Wednesdays, as the weather warmed up, I spent longer in the garden. Most wooden fence panels have knots, do they normally just fall out? I think they don't. I took to singing, nothing highbrow, ballads mostly, Marilyn Monroe, high, helpless stuff. And my summer wardrobe has come into its own, if a little snug. The temperature topped eighty degrees last Wednesday, so out came the Richardson's recliner that we saved for, lightweight, prone to ninety degrees, perfect. I set it on the lawn with a panoramic view of the garden, or in panoramic view of the fence, if I'm being my naughtiest. A nice lemon tea and my spiciest copy of the People's Friend and I was set for the afternoon. My garden was now full of Tits, informed Ron as he eyed me through the fence. I turned over ignoring him while accidentally hitching my tennis skirt above see level. I guessed the tinny crash was him falling off the bucket, he wasn't a big man.

'Are you OK? I shouted, nothing. 'Ron?' again nothing, oh dear. Was it the embarrassment of me catching him looking, or has he done himself a mischief in his own vegetable patch? That's what's on the other side of the fence. I suppose the bucket must have sunk in the soft ground; he's prized for the size of his squashes is Ron. I got up and went over to the fence. Now my side is higher than Ron's side and it is his fence after all, and his ground slopes away because we're South Westerly on a hill so we get the sun all day, which is why his squashes are so big. So anyway, I can see over, so I did, I looked, up close. I felt something that I hadn't felt in years. The cheeky bugger had cut a hole in the fence, must have been recently, I'd never seen it, just big enough for his hand to go through and there he was, fiddling with my Helen of Troys. I looked down as he looked up, his cap had fallen to one side reminiscent of Humphrey Bogart in the

African Queen, sweat trickled down his tanned swarthy cheek. I felt very much like Kathryn Hepburn except I had no intention of rebuking him. I stood while he fiddled in the heat of a Yorkshire afternoon. I found out later they were sparrows, but it didn't matter, I kept stumm. Ron loves our Tits too and I'd hate to disappoint him, every Wednesday.

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