

Neighbours

by

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“Porky always gets pissed as a parrot on Friday nights,” Delma said, and sighed. Her mobile mouth settled into a discontented pout.

Trevor suppressed his English-teacher’s shudder at the coarse language, and merely nodded. *She obviously has a lot to put up with. One must make allowances.*

He watched her tongue emerge and lick the cappuccino froth from her upper lip. Her mouth was quite fascinating; it seemed to take on a life of its own as she spoke, its movement far more expressive than the flat vowels. He nodded sympathetically, his mind drifting off into an erotic reverie involving soft lips and hugely rounded breasts and buttocks.

“It’s a big put-down for a woman, Trevor. I mean, when her bloke’d rather get on the booze than on ... well, you know what I mean.”

Trevor nodded again. Sagely, this time.

They’d run into each other in the supermarket. Trevor wasn’t sure how they came to be having coffee together. Perhaps because he was starved of contemporary female company. Or perhaps it was to do with how little they saw of each other, even though they were next-door neighbours. He wondered how the conversation had strayed to Delma’s husband’s shortcomings.

“He was always a big bloke. But back then it was muscle, y’know?” The mouth formed a little moue of disappointment. “He could carry the booze when he was in training, sweating it out. But since he left the team...” Delma took another bite from the chocolate florentine, then laughed ruefully.

“Not that I can talk. If I didn’t eat these, maybe I’d be trim like Jill.” She glanced at him out of innocent, baby-blue eyes.

Trevor stepped gallantly into the opening. “You look very Rubenesque, Delma.” She stared blankly. “I mean, so few women can carry their weight gracefully. On you it’s sexy, and beautifully proportioned.”

The pout transformed into a voluptuous smile. “You really think so?”

He reached across and patted the soft hand. “I know so.”

And at that moment, Trevor believed it. He wondered what it would be like to dive into all that pink, plump flesh, so different from Jill’s taut, tanned body. And that was strange, because he loved his wife’s body with a passion. He felt a stirring just at the thought of the feel of it. Why should he be getting these erotic thoughts about *Delma*? Obviously Jill had been away too long.

“How’s Jill’s mother?”

“She’s got most of her movement back now, but she’s having trouble remembering things. Jill thinks she’ll have to stay at least another fortnight.”

“It’s tough on you, Trevor. Everyone knows how *well* you and Jill get on.” He stared, alerted by some nuance in her voice. “I mean, doing without sex for so long,” she continued. “You’re not the sort to put up with that, I reckon. Jill told me you’re a *fantastic* lover.”

Trevor didn’t know whether to be flattered or otherwise that Jill had discussed their love-life with her neighbour, and given him the seal of approval. Unlike him, Jill was not a great reader, but she read all the women’s magazines and always tore out and filed the how-to-improve-your-marriage/sex-life articles. In bed, he always knew when she’d just read an interesting one.

“Oh, come on—” he started to say. Delma interrupted.

“I know she wasn’t kidding. Our bedroom windows are so close together... I’ve *heard* you.”

They looked at each other through a pregnant silence. Delma leaned forward, resting her breasts on her arms folded on the edge of the table. The front of her blouse gaped, revealing a cleavage as deep and tempting as a well to a thirsty man in the desert. The silence lengthened.

“Ian’s home a lot,” Trevor remarked, inconsequentially. Delma snorted.

“Yeah, but he sleeps like the dead after the Friday night booze-up. Usually doesn’t surface till ten.” She licked her lips, took a deep breath, and smiled.

“I could leave the window open,” Trevor heard himself saying. “But Mum takes a long time to settle...”

As he drove home, Trevor wondered what he had got himself into. He must have been mad! He loved his wife, had never been interested in any other woman since they were married twelve years ago.

And Ian was an ex-front-row forward.

He was in no hurry to get home. He seldom experienced the luxury of leisure with Jill. She was the organised one.

Jill always made sure to be home from her part-time job for after-school quality time with their eight-year-old daughter. Then came Trevor’s turn for quality time with Miranda, while Jill went off to instruct her aerobics class. On the nights for his moonlighting job at the Benowa TAFE College, Trevor cooked dinner. He and Miranda would be finishing theirs as Jill returned home.

Trevor and Jill had *their* quality time in bed, after they’d tucked Miranda in. They would kiss and cuddle and fill each other in on their day. Regularly, they’d make long, passionate and imaginative love. Trevor thought he was the luckiest man in the world.

He turned into their street in Banora Fields, past the developer’s sign advertising the next subdivision stage. The red volcanic soil at the end of their street gaped like an open wound, bared for the extension of bitumen, concrete and brick-veneer. He wondered

why engineers felt the need to scrape and re-form the pleasant natural disorder into smooth geometric shapes. Maybe it had something to do with putting their stamp on the land, like a dog cocking its leg at a gatepost.

Trevor felt a faint sense of guilt in living here, a small molecule in the spreading cancer of development covering what used to be fertile market gardens. He would've preferred to live on acreage in the Currumbin Valley, with chooks and ducks and a sheep to handle the grass; but, as Jill pointed out, the travelling time would have been a problem with their lifestyle.

There was no hurry to get home, as Jill had organised for his mother to come and stay and give Miranda her quality time while Jill was away. His mother even cooked the dinner when, like tonight, he was teaching at the TAFE.

As Trevor turned into the carport, he looked at their neat little brick-and-tile low-maintenance house with new eyes. The regulation minimum one-point-eight metres between their house and the next now seemed much narrower. Sufficient, perhaps, to allow the entry of light and air, but insufficient to dissipate the gasps and moans of desire and fulfilment, carried to the sleepless ears of a frustrated neighbour.

Dinner was ready. Trevor had his quality time with his mother and daughter, then drove the familiar route to Benowa. When he returned, some time after eleven, they were both asleep. He almost forgot to leave the window open, then felt a guilty surge of excitement as he remembered the assignation. In case of emergency, he put his pyjama pants under the pillow, then climbed naked into bed.

It had been a long night. In spite of his awareness of the other body behind that wall, one-point-eight metres away in another man's territory, his eyelids drooped. Presently, he slept.

Was it an earthquake? Trevor rolled helplessly into the chasm to fetch up against something immobile, but soft and yielding. He suppressed a shriek as it spoke in a strained whisper.

"Sorry I'm late, lover. Porky wasn't home till all hours."

Trevor squinted at the clock radio: just after four in the morning. He tried to adjust to the shift in balance. Usually, *he* was the one who created the depression in the king-size bed.

Rising to the occasion, he put his arms around the generous serving of bare femininity that had appeared all too substantially out of his dream. "Just as long as you got here, darling," he mumbled, then wondered what to do next.

He smelled toothpaste. No way could he kiss her on the mouth, with his fetid early-morning breath. Getting up to clean his teeth would break the mood. He nuzzled her neck, then browsed down over the contours of the fertile uplands to suckle at a generous nipple. Suddenly his world started to quake, like an enormous pink blancmange.

“Ooo! Eee! Ahh! Careful! I’m ticklish!”

Trevor eased back on the suction to spread his favours around, kneading and caressing all the available curves. This went on for some time, and seemed to meet with her approval. Encouraged, he left the hills to seek out the valleys below.

“You’re not gunna do anything kinky, are you, Trev?”

Trevor retracted his tongue. “Of course not,” he said irritably, and began working his way up again. Delma must have a narrow definition of “kinky”, he thought. She didn’t taste right, anyway; rather sour, unlike Jill’s sharp, clean, salty femaleness.

Maybe Delma wasn’t a very oral person. Trevor put his hands to work, to better effect, and finally groped towards the central target. He felt a sense of panic as he momentarily failed to find it, so different were her contours and proportions to those he was used to.

“Oo! That tickles, too!”

“It’s supposed to.”

It wasn’t working. She seemed to be getting tense and rigid, instead of melting into him as Jill did. She looked towards the window.

“Better get on with it, Trev. The sun’s coming up.”

Trevor’s desire diminished, drooped, dangled, departed. He rolled away from her. “Oh, hell!” he groaned. “I can’t do it!”

Delma sighed. “I thought this might happen. You can’t forget Jill, can you.” They lay on their backs, a small space between; not looking at each other, distant, embarrassed. “I need to pee.”

She heaved herself out of the bed, a great pale shape in the dim morning light, struggled into her dressing-gown, and went out. Trevor stared at the ceiling, his mind an enforced blank slate as he awaited her return.

Voices! Galvanised into frantic action, he shot out of bed. He pulled on his pyjama pants with trembling fingers, and erupted into the hall.

“Where did you get to, Trev? Have you got it?” Delma asked brightly.

“Wha-what—” His mind reeling, Trevor’s glance flicked from Delma’s frozen smile to his mother’s stony stare.

“The cup of sugar I came to borrow,” she explained, with a leering look apparently intended to suggest a subtle hint. “You’re not really with it first thing, are you?”

“Oh! Yes. Sorry, I got sidetracked.” Trevor reeled away to the kitchen.

“—fancy a cuppa first thing. Lucky I saw Trev out on the porch, wasn’t it?” Delma was prattling on as he returned. He extended the cup with a limp hand.

“Thanks, Trev. Well, I’ll be off now.” She went breezily to the front door, and found it deadlocked.

Her frozen smile fossilised into a grimace as Trevor found the key and fumbled it into the lock under his mother’s icy glare. At last, it opened. She fled. Trevor wanted to follow her: he’d rather face a front-row forward than his angry mother. But there was no escape.

“I am appalled, Trevor. *Appalled.*” Trevor’s shoulders slumped. He remained facing the door. “To think, when you are blessed with a beautiful girl like Jill, a *perfect* wife and mother, that you could consider having an *affair* with *that creature*—” she choked, at a loss for words.

“It was a mistake, Mother—”

“*A mistake!*”

“Nothing happened. When it came to the point, I...” Trevor’s eyes smarted. “Don’t tell Jill, Mum. I couldn’t bear to lose her.”

“Well ... let this be a lesson to you, Trevor. Don’t you dare even *think* of doing it again.”

“I won’t, Mummy.” Trevor’s voice lost its teacher’s resonance, and assumed the piping quality of a child. “I promise.”

“That’s a good boy, then.” She smiled forgiveness. “Come along, son. I’ll get you your breakfast.”

I should have recognised the symptoms, she thought, and remembered how easily led my little boy could be. He’d be all right, now. Once Jill or I point out the error of his ways, he always promises to be good. And he always keeps his promises.

She could hand him back to Jill’s control with a clear conscience.

Delma took her key from under the rock. She was quite content with her adventure; much more interesting than *Days of Our Lives*. Trevor’s brand of sex seemed a bit way-out for her tastes. She put the cup of sugar on the kitchen bench, and decided she might as well have a cuppa. Turning to the sink, she gasped at the sight of Ian standing in the doorway, clad in his old football shorts and jersey.

“Hi, hon. Where you been?” he asked mildly.

Delma rallied. “Well, I fancied a cuppa. We’re out of sugar, and I saw Trev on the porch, and went to borrow some.”

“You were a long time.” No suspicion coloured his voice. Delma’s confidence seeped back.

“I got talking to his mother about Jill’s mum. She’s a lot better, but Jill will have to stay for another week or so.”

Ian seemed vague and preoccupied. “Wouldn’t mind a cuppa meself.”

Delma set the cups out and put the jug on. “You’re up early.”

“Yeah.” He paused for a long moment then said, “Thought I might start joggin’ in the mornings. Get some of this gut off.” He sucked in his stomach, and for an instant looked like the young spunk she’d married.

Guilt squashed the sarcastic remark she might have made. “Maybe that’s a good idea, Ian.”

He gave her a warm, surprised glance, then frowned. “You remember Crusher Cooper?” Without waiting for a reply, he plunged on. “Poor bugger carked it in the pub last night. I heard someone say, ‘Hey, Crusher, you’re dribblin’.’

“I turned around and he had his head up, pourin’ a schooner into his gob, but he wasn’t swallowin’. It was just runnin’ out onto his shirt. Then his eyes rolled up, and he fell over. Not a bad way to go, I guess, downin’ a beer, but... Shit! He was only a coupla years older than me.” Ian shook his head.

Delma smiled at him. “Maybe we oughta both go jogging.”

Ian looked at her, and a slow grin spread over his face. “You’re lookin’ real sexy this morning, Del. Sorta ... rosy, and rumped.” He stepped over and hugged her.

“What say we postpone the jog and go back to bed for a bit, eh? Don’t want to rush into anything, after all.”

Delma gave him a squeeze. “Sounds good to me, Porky. A bonk’s pretty good exercise too, you know. And if you gotta go, better to knock yourself off bonkin’ than boozin’.”