

SAUL. Because I won't tell them who you are, you fetid little arse-kisser! Now get the blasted door before I decide to introduce you as Colin the paedo cop-killer!

PERCHIK *flings open the door. As he does, VANESSA notices Frankie's glasses.*

VANESSA. The spectacles, Saul!

SAUL *panics, then puts the spectacles on. Gravy drips down his face.* DETECTIVE PRAWN *enters.*

DETECTIVE PRAWN. Who's in charge of this establishment?

SAUL. Hello. This is my shop. This is my wife. And this is... Um...

VANESSA. *Francesco.* Frankie.

SAUL. Yes! Very good, wife. This is Frankie, my – Frankie. He's Italian.

PERCHIK *throws a panicked look at SAUL, then smiles.*

PERCHIK. Er... Ciao, bella!

DETECTIVE PRAWN. I've not got time for 'Ciao, bellas'!
A dangerous painter is on the loose!

SAUL. The worst kind! Perhaps we can help. What does he look like?

DETECTIVE PRAWN. He looks... like a painter.

VANESSA. Which one?

DETECTIVE PRAWN. All of them.

VANESSA. All of them?

DETECTIVE PRAWN. What I mean to say is that he has a generic artistic *countenance*. (*Beat.*) You know. Shifty.

VANESSA. But why would you think he's here?

DETECTIVE PRAWN. We have intelligence to suggest that he hitched a lift from London and arrived at a landfill site here in Bradford at around four-thirty this afternoon.

VANESSA. How do you know it was him?

DETECTIVE PRAWN. The car that he flagged down was an unmarked police car driven by my Superior, DCI Swann. It seems this 'artist' is an exceptionally stupid character.

VANESSA. But why didn't DCI Swann arrest him?

DETECTIVE PRAWN. He's not too bright either.

SAUL. I'm sorry, Detective. We've not seen anyone of that description, but of course we'll let you know if... What?

SAUL *stops.* DETECTIVE PRAWN *is staring at him.*

DETECTIVE PRAWN. Umm... there's gravy on your face, sir.

SAUL. Sorry?

DETECTIVE PRAWN. There's gravy.

SAUL. Where?

DETECTIVE PRAWN. On your face.

SAUL. Oh.

Beat.

DETECTIVE PRAWN. Why is there gravy on your face, sir?

SAUL. Why is there gravy on my face? Why is there gravy on my... What an *excellent* question, the reason is – The reason, I mean to say –

PERCHIK. It's our custom, Officer.

DETECTIVE PRAWN. What?

PERCHIK. Er – I mean... it's a *our* custom! Ciao, bella!

SAUL. Yes! Very good, P... Frankie! Our custom! A silly little custom of ours. If we've had an exceptionally good meal, to, ah – show our appreciation we put – um –

DETECTIVE PRAWN. Gravy on your face, sir?

SAUL. Exactly!

DETECTIVE PRAWN. I see. You must waste a lot of gravy.

SAUL. Not really. My wife is a very mediocre cook.

DETECTIVE PRAWN. I'm sorry. You, er – You mind if I have a taste?

He picks up the ladle, VANESSA swipes it off him.

VANESSA. Won't you spoil your dinner, Detective?

DETECTIVE PRAWN. Oh no. Mrs Prawn has recently become a freegan.

VANESSA. A freegan?

DETECTIVE PRAWN. She'll only eat food out of skips.

Ecologically it's very sound, but I can't say it's not damaged our standing on Bradford's dinner-party circuit. You mind?

He takes the ladle from VANESSA and ladles out some stew.

SAUL. No!

VANESSA. No!

PERCHIK. No... -a!

Sitting on top of the ladle is a flip-flop.

DETECTIVE PRAWN (*staring down*). What the hell is this?

SAUL. It was an accident!

VANESSA. He fell!

Silently, SAUL takes a cricket bat from behind the counter, creeps behind DETECTIVE PRAWN and raises it. But DETECTIVE PRAWN isn't looking at the flip-flop. He produces a pair of tweezers, then lifts something from the floor. It's a cigarette butt. He rises with a nasty grin. SAUL chucks the cricket bat behind him.

DETECTIVE PRAWN. Oh-ho-ho. You are for it, mate.

SAUL. Is there a problem, Detective?

DETECTIVE PRAWN. Tell me – is this your shop?

SAUL. Yes. It's my shop. And Empire, Detective.

DETECTIVE PRAWN. And so, sir, does this – cigarette butt belong to you?

SAUL. No. I've never seen it before in my life. But if I had to make a guess, I'd say it belonged to the unruly gang of sado-masochistic asthmatics who use my property for their 'Wine, Wheeze and Cheese Evenings', every last Sunday of the month.

DETECTIVE PRAWN. Don't try and be *funny*, fella. Tobacco and its derivatives are designated a Class-A drug, and the purchase and consumption of their associated products is a serious offence. You're looking at five to ten in a prison full of Estonian gangsters and kiddy-fiddlers with dubious personal hygiene and I've heard bathtime can get a bit friendly, so why don't you just ANSWER THE FUCKING QUESTION!

Pause. PERCHIK picks up the cricket bat. Then suddenly DETECTIVE PRAWN grins.

Aaahhh! Only kidding! I've got six rapes and an identity theft to write up tonight! Last thing I want is fourteen hours of paperwork over this! But I got you, didn't I!

He starts to wander again, poking his head round doors, then approaches the icebox.

SAUL. Oh yes, Detective! Yes! You got me!

All three relax and laugh mately along.

DETECTIVE PRAWN. The look on your face! Priceless! Well, you've got to laugh, haven't you? What have we got here? (*He opens the icebox door, looks in.*) What I'm always saying to my colleagues, in a job like ours, you really have got to laugh...

SAUL. Oh yes, Detective! You've got to laugh!

DETECTIVE PRAWN. Otherwise you'll... (*He turns suddenly.*) Hang on. Was that – a flip-flop?

Quick as a flash, PERCHIK chucks the cricket bat to SAUL, who brings it down on DETECTIVE PRAWN's head. He collapses into the icebox.

PERCHIK. Here.

PERCHIK helps SAUL manoeuvre DETECTIVE PRAWN into the sack that PERCHIK arrived in. VANESSA opens the shop door and peers out.

VANESSA. Quick! There's a lorry backing up!

SAUL and PERCHIK carry the sack out of the door. The sound of an engine starting up is heard as they re-enter, exhausted. VANESSA collapses with relief.

Well! I think that could have gone a lot worse. Don't you?