

Franklin Be Damned

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by

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‘Well, aren’t you the dark horse.’ Sally took another sip of her over-milked tea. ‘Sitting there as if butter wouldn’t melt in your mouth and telling me you’ve been to prison.’

Cathy shifted in the chair. Her hip was killing her today. ‘Well, it was only for one night, hardly prison. It was the police cells. Then we had a hearing, and I was let out on bail. Don’t pull a face like that. Why don’t you just ask for black tea like I do? Or you could make it yourself in your room.’

‘But then you probably wouldn’t visit me, and I would have to drink it all alone, and anyway, the cake’s always good. I’d much rather sit here in the lounge drinking pap and listening to your criminal history. What happened after you went to court?’

‘Community service. I only lay down on the track in front of the bulldozer. People who chained themselves to it were charged with something else. They went to prison for a bit. Even if I had gone to prison it would have been worth it to save the Franklin, don’t you think?’

‘Bugger the Franklin, I’m just so excited - I’ve never met a real criminal.’

‘I don’t consider myself a criminal. It was only that one time - and the anti-Vietnam war demo I suppose.’

‘What happened then?’

‘Well, I was sitting on the road, not lying down, and I did call the policeman a “fascist pig”, but we all did that. I didn’t expect him to take it personally.’

‘Did you go to gaol that time?’

‘No, we were put in the back of the paddy wagon and taken down to the station, but I was let off with a caution. After all, I hadn’t done anything really bad and possibly not even that illegal. But I did get my picture on the front of page of ‘The Age’, so that was my fifteen seconds of fame.’

‘Oh lord, better and better.’

‘I was quite attractive then. You’d never know it to see my now.’

Sally made a little moue to indicate her disbelief in this statement.

‘So, I guess they thought I’d make a good front cover image, being carried by three cops with my legs apart. Naturally, I would never insult a policeman now, you understand, even though I don’t really like the way they walk around with all those guns and other things stuffed into their belts.’

'Maybe they know you've got "form" and steer clear of you. Could we look up the picture on Google, do you think?'

'We don't need to. I've still got the original front page in a box in my room. I tell you what, I've also got a bottle of Scotch. Do you want to come round after supper, and I'll show it to you? I just have a feeling that I'm going to need a drink after one of their suppers.'

'Single malt or blend?'

'Single malt.'

'You know, you've only been here two weeks and I feel like we've been friends for life. My declining years are suddenly looking significantly less dismal.'

THE END