

Deadliest of Sinners

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This is dedicated to anyone who has ever felt worthless. 'If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.'

Monday

Mondays were always too long and the library was usually shut. I liked the library, at least I did when I was alive, but I'm not too keen now. It's amazing how your perspective changes when you're dead. Take my husband. When I was alive, he was a hindrance. I really disliked the babbling mess that he'd become. Before he was diagnosed, the word Parkinson always conjured up images of that nice northern chap that did the chat show. But after that awkward meeting with the doctor the images changed. It's true what they say, you go out of this world the same way you enter it, bald and incontinent. I lay in bed that night, thinking, why us? What had we done to deserve this? I wept into the night wrapped in the comfort of my husband's arms. It was the last time we ever shared a bed.

The next morning I went into auto-pilot. I told Brian that things were going to change for us, and that meant that we had to change too. We'd had our house since the children were little. It had three large bedrooms and a tiny box room that was used as a study. The children had long since grown up, so I decided that one of the bedrooms, the one closest to the main bathroom would be Brian's. I could see his eyes pleading with me not to make him leave our marital bed, but he couldn't stay any longer and he knew it. I'd read about Parkinson's in the library, I knew how debilitating it was, and how much it changed a person. Brian was no longer my husband. Overnight he'd become my child.

Thinking back on it now, I know I was pushing him away, but I couldn't stand the thought of being close to someone who couldn't control their own bowel movements. Of course I didn't share this with Brian. I'd lost my husband and my best friend.

Seven years later and the library was my only escape. Three times a week I'd settle Brian in for the afternoon and go. The relief of having just a couple of hours when I wasn't a nurse was immeasurable. I became Stephanie again, not just Brian's carer. This particular Monday the Library were having a book sale. Twice a year they would display all the books deemed unfit to belong to library anymore and sell them stupidly cheap. I would always go down and have a nosey, see if I could pick up any audios on tape. I loved audios. Sleeping in that bed, which seemed to grow twice its size every evening, I needed a bit of company. The audios blocked out any thoughts of loneliness.

The library staff thought they knew me well, 'Mrs Lancaster' they politely called me. They didn't know shit. I allowed them snippets of my life, the things I knew they could cope with, anything that wouldn't bring pity to their eyes when they looked at me.

"How's your daughter doing in her new job?" Julie asked me when I walked in.

"She's enjoying it," I replied with cheery falseness. "It looks like the whole village is here today." I said, looking around at the library which was unusually full with people.

"Yes," replied Julie, "these sales can do quite well," she added jokingly, "especially if it's raining." She took the books from my hands and began to process them.

"I'm just going to have a look," I said and left the desk. I liked the ladies at the library, but didn't feel comfortable talking to them with so many people around.

I began to look through the familiar shelves, and found myself selecting books that I knew Brian would like. I reached out to choose *Yesterday's Railways* and then stopped. Brian adored trains and when the boys were of an age he would spend hours with them building the sets and would have the carriages whizzing around the tracks in no time. Damn! Tears pricked the corner of my eyes and I blinked them away. Not here. I wasn't going to do this here.

"You bastard!" a loud voice bellowed, breaking my thoughts. "She was my wife!" the voice shot across the library. I turned around to look at the commotion and saw a youngish man striding through the library at a terrific pace, aiming for another man, younger than the first, and better looking. He was just a few steps from me.

"Come on now," said Julie coming out from behind her desk, trying to restore peace. "There's no need to use that sort of language, there's small ears about," she pointed to the children's section where a mother was unsuccessfully trying to get her twins interested in a picture book, while they played with the toys.

"Look man. She was begging for it, said she hadn't had it that good for a long time!" The accused man didn't seem to hear Julie. His face had "Come on, punch me" written all over it. The two of them were now just a foot apart from each other. I hurried around to the other side of the bookshelf. I didn't want to get involved. The two men started pushing each other. One of them punched the other with great force. I kept my head down and pretended that I was engrossed in a book I'd selected quickly, *Traveller's Guide to the Solar System*. Brian would have liked that one too. That was my final thought as the shelf came crashing around me. I no longer like libraries.

Tuesday

My name is Bernard Ralley and there have been six perfect days since my funeral. I'm not exactly sure how I died. I was having the most ordinary of days. I had prepared breakfast, cereal for me and pilchards for Sugden. After breakfast, I put his dish of fresh water down for him and gave him a good brush. His fur had a tendency to get really matted and he purred like crazy whenever he was being brushed. I enjoyed our ten minutes together in the morning before the day really began.

I got Sugden when my Mary died. We had discussed getting a dog, but we went to the caravan every weekend and they didn't allow dogs on the site. Then Mary died and I couldn't go to the caravan anymore. I didn't want to look across that little table and face an empty chair. My daughter suggested that I get a dog, but I didn't want to be bothered walking a mutt without my Mary there keeping me company. Not long after that Charlotte came round and she'd brought Sugden with her. He looked at me and I looked at him, two old fellas deserted by those we loved best and a bond was formed.

After giving Sugden his brush, I went out to the shops. Charlotte kept asking me if I wanted to go to the big hypermarket at the top of town, near the old Crimell car factory. I sometimes caught a glance of the old place now and then, when I trundled pass on the bus. It was now deserted. There were no windows, vandals had long since put them all through and the company had long since given up on repairs. Charlotte told me that the company moved to Sweden, apparently it was cheaper to manufacture the cars there and then have them shipped back over here, I didn't understand that at all.

I didn't like shopping in the big supermarkets, but once a week, on a Tuesday, I'd go into Cheepos. They sold DVDs at really low prices, as well as the usual groceries and clothing. I preferred to go to independent shops for my food or the local market. I didn't enjoy the sterilised food from the big shops; it didn't taste the same, all enveloped up perfectly in layers of wrapping. Besides, I knew a lot of the old boys that ran the stalls on the market, and Mrs Round, who ran the bakery, would always slip me an extra teacake or a doughnut, if her husband wasn't keeping his eyes on her. It was nice to have someone say "Alright Bernard?" even though that someone would then say "Alright so and so?" to the next person in the queue. I sometimes felt that apart from Charlotte and Sugden, not a soul in the world cared if I lived or died. I would have been surprised to learn when I was alive, that the whole of the market shut down on the day of my funeral, which was attended by hundreds of people.

I was in Cheepos looking at DVDs and getting quite excited about the sale of John Wayne films, when I spotted them - tins of Sugden's favourite, and they were BOGOF! I loved my cat, but his

food took a large chunk out of my pension every week, so any saving on the amount I spent on his food would be a help. I decided to take a slow wander over and get a few tins.

As I glanced over to the tills, I could see one young man who seemed to be contemplating whether or not to move to the queue to his right, as that one seemed to be moving slightly more quickly than the one he was standing in. It's the eternal debate when you're stood at a checkout anywhere, if you can find the queue which is not the slowest in all the land. You find yourself in competition with the one either side of yours, weighing up the chances of getting served before the lady on your right. You find yourself hoping that the person in front of you has the right money for their purchases, as then it will have been worth staying in queue that you're in.

I finally reached the pilchard shelf and was about to take what appeared to be the last four tins, when a youngish man shoved past me and snatched them off of the shelf.

"I saw them first!" he barked.

"Oh" I said, "I was going to take them home for my cat. He loves pilchards you see."

"I don't give a shit! They're my Christmas money!" His face was now barely an inch from mine and he added in a soft threatening tone, "I'm going to make a fortune from these."

I looked across to his trolley. It was full of tins.

"I only wanted a few" I said backing away from him, I couldn't see why he wouldn't spare just a few tins for Sugden.

"Back off, old man!" he said in the same soft voice.

I didn't want to argue over some tins of pilchards of all things, so I backed away even further. I tripped over a stray tin that had been abandoned in the aisle and fell to the floor with a worrying thud, and now there have been six perfect days since my funeral.

Wednesday

When I fell down the stairs I wasn't frightened, I was surprised. I'd always imagined that I would die peacefully in my sleep.

I'd lived in my flat for two years. It was a first floor council place, far removed from the beautiful home I'd once owned. I'd had many different neighbours. Young mums with strings of children, single ladies like myself, but right now my neighbour was a dreadful youngish man. He kept the most unsociable hours. I couldn't tell you what he looked like, but I certainly knew what he sounded like.

I liked to be in bed by eight, early to bed, early to rise. I had to be up for the early constitutional I took every morning, before popping into the local newsagents for a chat with the nice lady that worked there.

"Oooo Nora," she greeted me, "you'll never guess what happened yesterday, that awful man who lives next door to you was in a fight, in the library of all places. Apparently he punched that nice Mr Bellingham from Netherton Road."

"He never did?" I said. I settled down for a good talk about what had happened. Carol knew everything about everyone who lived in the area.

After I'd spent a very pleasant half an hour with Carol, I would go to church. I was on the committee for the choir, the flowers and the activity evenings which we ran three times a week. I had daily meetings with Reverend Peterson, who seemed impressed with my organisational skills and my ability to deal with people. I had been a matron at the hospital. I missed it. Still, I was busy now. In fact, it was coming up for our busiest time. I'd organised a lady to come and give lessons on card-making. I'd prepared the Christmas cake making competition, which was very popular with the more elderly residents. The last thing on my list was to decide what flowers we were having for the Christmas service.

Once I'd met with Jack, on Wednesdays I would have a cod and chips for a treat. Jimbo's Jumbos was the best chip shop in the area and it was conveniently situated opposite the church. My favourite thing about the church was the weddings. I'd never been married myself. I'd had the dreams, as you do, when I was a child. But somehow Mr Right had eluded me.

My neighbour had no trouble finding plenty of Miss Rights it seemed, or at least Miss Right Nows. The noise he made night after night, well, it was enough to put me off hearing for life. Carol told me that the women he paraded in and out of his flat were no more than 'cheap tarts'. After this had been going on for more than three weeks, I'd had enough.

I finished my fish and chips and caught the number 24 into town. Friday was my usual shopping day, but my ears couldn't take any more of his sinful moaning and groaning. I walked

into the chemist's and asked for the best ear plugs they supplied. I was determined that I was going to get a decent night's sleep.

As I lay, I strained my ears. I could hear nothing. Peace at last. I drifted off into a peaceful slumber. I don't know what caused me to wake, but as I glanced across the my digital alarm clock I saw that I hadn't been asleep more than a couple of hours. As always, I needed to use the bathroom as soon as I woke whatever the time was.

I pulled on the light blue dressing gown that Jack had bought me for Christmas last year and buttoned it up to the neck. I put my feet in the matching slippers and walked across and opened the bedroom door I had shut firmly only hours before, I somehow felt safer with doors closed. I walked into the hallway and stopped suddenly. There was mess everywhere. My pictures were torn from the wall and the glass was smashed. There was graffiti all over the walls and my plants were scattered from their pots. I screamed. I couldn't help it. I felt faint. I had to get downstairs to call the police. The room started spinning and I couldn't see straight, I felt my foot catch on the leg of a chair in my hallway and I went tumbling down the stairs, all the way to Heaven.

Thursday

As the whole pallet came crashing around me, I had the feeling that I wasn't going to get my pointy grapes or any other food ever again. Dying in a supermarket wasn't the best way to go. I hated shopping enough as it was. All that choice, there were just too many things. I was overwhelmed by things. I really should have sat down and made a list of the things I needed to buy. Mother would make lists, long snaking ones which she would dictate to me, the items ticked off one by one as we shuffled our way round the supermarket.

Her lists might have been wonderful, her cooking had been dreadful. Her idea of a perfect Sunday lunch meant that vegetables had to be put on the Tuesday before. I just accepted it and ate with as much gusto as I could possibly summon. When she was dying, I planned to eat all kinds of things, baked beans and sausages in a tin, cheese slices and hotdogs, when she'd gone. Mother certainly wouldn't have entertained a hotdog in the house. Not that I wanted her to die, I just didn't want her to be here anymore. However, after spending two years gorging my way through a fantasy list of food, I became a bit picky.

After Mother's death, I'd kept myself busy at work. I'd worked at Postie's Office for fifteen years. Mr and Mrs Postie had been running the newsagents come post office ever since the council had built the estate. There wasn't a big team, just myself, Carol, Winnie, Sydney and a few interchangeable paperboys, but between us we had kept the place ticking over well enough.

I had fought Mother for a long time to get a job,

"You've got enough on, looking after me," she had tried to pursue with a smile. I, on the hand, just needed something of my own. She'd monopolised my entire life, I'd never managed to find a wife. My mother had never allowed it. "You've got me Gerald, you don't want to be messing around with all that *that* kind of thing," she had replied whenever the subject was raised. There had been one woman, but she'd married someone else. I'd heard that he'd got Parkinson's and she was his carer. Shame.

Thursday was my favourite day, half day closing. We shut early on a Sunday too, but there was just something naughty about finishing early on a weekday. Thursday was also shopping day. Carol had told us that the man had died in Cheepos on Tuesday. I had been worried that it wouldn't be open, but apparently Cheepos couldn't bear to lose their precious profits and had re-opened on the day after.

I'd gotten myself into a routine with my food and Thursday night was pizza night. Ham and pineapple. Mother hated foreign food, even pizza. We never had pizza when she was alive, or lasagne, or even a take-away. She certainly would never try curry. Friday night was curry night.

After plonking the pizza, milk, cheese and tomato sauce (what a luxury that was!), in my basket, I finally headed back to the fruit and veg aisles. You could tell it was getting to the end of the day, there were workers shelf staking between customers.

My first instinct had been to head straight for the grapes and walking into the Supermarket, I had started to head straight towards them, but stopped myself. I knew that if I did get them first, I would be tempted to sneak a couple whilst I was shopping, and that would be wrong. Or would it? You see people having the odd crafty grape all the time, but does that make it acceptable? I dunno. I didn't want to risk being done for shoplifting, so I had headed determinedly in the opposite direction to the frozen foods.

Now I had completed the rest of my shopping I could approach the chiller cabinet where they kept the grapes. I could see a worker man stood looking at the tomatoes in the next cabinet. He seemed quite pleased with himself. His hands were on his hips and he was smiling. He shouted out suddenly,

"Oi, Adam, have you got your camera? I have to get a picture of this, I bet I'll win 'Display of the Year' with this one!"

"I've left in the back," replied the voice of Adam, who seemed to be two aisles away.

"Go and get it for me?!" asked the stacking man.

"Go and get it yourself you lazy fuc-thing!"

Grumbling the staking man left his display and went, I presume, to go and get the camera. Walking up to the chiller, I was annoyed that he'd left the great big pallet of grapes behind and there wasn't a single bag in the cabinet. Looking around for an assistant, I saw a youngish looking man, wearing the Cheepos' uniform at the other side of the pallet and I heard him mutter,

"Display of the Year my arse!"

And as the whole pallet came around crashing around me, I had the distinct feeling that I wasn't going to get my pointy grapes.

Friday

As I watched my funeral, I got to thinking how strange it was for women. We are born with one name, and we die with another, presuming we marry. I had married at just eighteen years old, going from Brown to Bright in just one day. William Bright had swept me off of my feet, charming my parents, whom had both declared him to be a perfect match, after just one meeting. I felt sorry for him now, as I looked at his hunched frame, my death had aged him. It wasn't a bad turn out though.

After we'd gotten married, we moved into a small flat together. Not like the kids today, co-habiting willy nilly. We did things properly. We lived in that little flat for almost two years before we moved up the hill. Our new home was palatial. Four bedrooms, ("We're going to fill them with beautiful girls that look like you," William had declared) ornate, stretching gardens and a garage, my parents' mouths had dropped the day I invited them for lunch.

"Ooo Dorothy," my dad said, "you have done well for yourself."

We certainly had. And thirty years, four children and six grand children later I couldn't help but feel lucky as I was peeling potatoes for that evening's meal.

I could pin down the exact moment my husband had changed.

"It's over Dorothy, I've lost the lot." He had said, his face was grey and his shoulders were wilted. It turned out that, he had invested all of our money in some Icelandic bank. When they had gone belly up, he'd arranged a loan to keep the business going and used the house as collateral. We had certainly lost the lot.

On the day that I died, I parked the car and walked across the newly laid out car park to the precinct. They were always changing the layout to this place, you now had to drive one way in and one way out. William complained about a lot, when he did the driving, said he didn't know whether he was coming or going, driving round that car park. He did make me laugh, at least he used to.

I remember when we were on our honeymoon. We'd gone to a little bed and breakfast in Whitby, middle of March it was, biting winds and pounding hail stones, not that we noticed or cared. We went for a walk up to the church and climbed what felt like a thousand steps. William was so puffed out by the time we'd got to the top, he face was all red and he had to sit down for a rest. He plonked himself down on the wet grass and asked if I wanted to sit with him. When I declined, he pulled me down and kissed me so hard he took my breath away.

As I entered Postie's Office, to pick up our State Pension, I thought how quick things had deteriorated after William's announcement. We'd sold the house, moved in with my parents and traded in the cars for a small run-around, all within a couple of months. I'm sure many people were thinking it served us right. I could see them looking down their noses at me as I queued. I

tried to rise above it but it did upset me, their condescending looks, and the little knowing nods to each other. It was alright for them, they didn't have to live with William.

As I approached the counter, I was surprised to see neither Mr nor Mrs Postie behind it.

"Where are Winnie and Syd?" I asked.

"Didn't you hear? Gerald died yesterday," she replied, her eye sprung tears which she immediately blinked away.

"Gerald? Really?" I was stunned. I had known Gerald for years. I'd always felt sorry for him, there was always something very sad about him, apparently his mother was a very controlling woman.

"Yes, Winnie collapsed and Syd is at the hospital with her. She's going to be ok, I'm going to see her tonight" added Carol, seeing the worry blanket my face.

"Well, send them both my love," I said.

Poor Gerald, I thought, as I buckled myself into my car. He was such a lovely man, such a shame. In a way, it made me angry at William.

He was a nothing man, he said nothing, he did nothing, the only movements he made were from his seat, to the toilet and back again. I really wished he'd snap out of it, we'd lost everything, but I just felt that I'd lost my husband too. I got so mad seeing him there, festering, fading, just barely existing. I longed for the man that I had married. I just want to be pulled down onto wet grass once more.

As I was mourning, I didn't see it, the big green car, coming the wrong way, too fast. It was going the wrong way and the youngish looking driver didn't brake until it was too late. Dying had been easy, not painful nor traumatic. Just a small bump and it was all over and I looked across to my funeral, I was pleased. The turnout certainly wasn't bad at all.

Saturday

As I sat in Richard's fast food restaurant, I was face to face with the reason Saturdays had bothered me when I was alive. When I was a child, everyone else was out playing, enjoying their weekends. I wasn't. When I was an adult, everyone was out drinking and partying. I wasn't. You're thinking what a loser, well I wasn't that either. I feel like I'm at Alcoholic Anonymous my name is George and I'm agoraphobic.

I can't remember when it first started. Sorry to disappoint, but there was not earth shattering trauma which caused my unhealthy desire to stay indoors. Yes, I do realise that it's not healthy to stay indoors so much, hence me seeing Patrick once a week for the past two years. Doctor Patrick Gordon had made me realise that it was a gradual thing, that I simply began to feel more safe indoors than outdoors. The safer I felt indoors, the less I would venture outdoors.

I'm not sure if it was the fear of open spaces or a dislike of people that kept me indoors. I remember one lad at school, Jamie Kingston. Horrible piece of work he was. He chalked all over my chair, leaving me with a white bottom and a red face. You would have thought that that would have been enough for him, but oh no. A few days later he glued my chair and not realising, I sat down. People laughed and pointed when I couldn't move and when Mr Jones asked who had done it, no one told. He didn't get into trouble, he didn't have to replace my pants, he didn't get any punishment at all. I was too afraid to play outside after that. And that wasn't the first thing that kept me indoors.

Watching the people as they queued in pairs and groups up for their meals, the loneliness hit. You see, I was quite happy when I was alone in my home, pretending that rest of the world didn't exist. You teach yourself strategies, things that keep you inside and away from the people. When I was younger, my mum looked after me and I still lived in the family home. When she passed away a few years ago I thought that I'd never manage, I'd talked myself into complete isolation by then. Who was going to do my shopping, the washing and the cooking? And then the age of the World Wide Web conveniently arrived and solved all my problems. Anything I wanted I could order, from shopping to a laundry service. I could even pay my own bills now and I'd learnt to cook. It was amazing and deadly.

Seeing all the people here, it was harder to perpetuate the fantasy. Doctor Patrick had taught me that the fantasy was a bad thing and that people were basically good. I know, I didn't believe it for a very long time either. But my mind had changed just six months ago. Doctor Patrick had come round for his usual appointment and he was trying to convince me.

"George, I have to believe that people are good, I dedicated myself to helping them, why would I do that if they were bad?"

"People don't know what it means to be good, they only know wickedness," I answered, so sure of myself.

"Can we watch this?" he asked, handing me a DVD, "it may just change your mind."

"Ok, but it's going to have to be a bloody good film" I quipped, putting the disc into the player. It was a news story, apparently a guy, looking for the good in humanity, left twenty pounds in dozens of cash machines up and down the country. Only one person took the money, everyone else had given it back, which in these cash strapped times, was bloody miraculous. Of course I'm not naive even to think that the news company didn't fix the numbers to make the story look better than it actually was, but the simple fact that they would even concoct a story to make people feel better about themselves, well it gave me hope that not all of mankind were terrible.

And so here I was, sat in Miniature Cook, outside, among people for the first time in years. I took a deep breath, and stood, time to join the queue, order my food, eat it and leave. This was such a big step for me, being outside alone. Doctor Patrick and I had been for short walks down my street before and I'd even said hello to a neighbour who remembered me from when I was little. But I was here alone, waiting anxiously to leave. I knew that this was the right thing to do, but I didn't like it one little bit.

It wasn't made easier by a dreadful youngish man who was in front of me. He was loud and kept shouting out to people he knew,

"Hey Dave, you comin' round later for a beer? Nice one, I'll see you later, 'bout sixish?" he was rewarded with a wave and a smile from a tattooed man with a bald head.

He couldn't even order his food quietly,

"I'll have four Big Burger meals and three portions of onion rings."

The spotty kid serving yelled back to whoever was cooking the burgers, "Four BBs with everything," He put the meals together expertly and within a minute had the youngish man's food ready and it was my turn.

"What can I get you buddy?" asked the spotty kid.

"Erm, I'll have a Big Burger meal please," I asked quietly.

"One BB meal" yelled the spotty kid. A voice yelled straight back, "just had to put on a new batch, should be five minutes."

The spotty kid apologised and I said it was ok, even though it wasn't. I tapped my foot on floor impatiently, I didn't want to wait here, I began to feel claustrophobic and I felt like I was on a merry-go-round. I fell to the floor and my head bounced off of the side of a nearby table and I wished I'd never left the safety of my home.

Sunday

I'd had the shittiest week and now I was dead. Let me tell you folks, there is nothing more devastating to your ego than finding yourself surrounded by dead bodies. It all started on Monday, not my favourite day. I was walking past the local library and I spotted the bloke who had been banging my wife. My wife! I think that it's one thing to sleep around when you're single, but it's quite another to screw around when you're married. Not something you'd expect to hear from a twenty four year old guy, but my parents had fought like cat and dog, they'd cheated on each other so often, it became a game to them, oneupmanship and I didn't want that for my life.

When I had met Charlotte I had thought that that was it for me. We'd married for just three months when the whore ran off with my best man. I guess she wasn't it after all. When I saw the scum in the library that day, I just saw red. I ran in and punched him one, we wrestled and in the frenzy a bookshelf got knocked over and some poor woman ended up underneath it. She died. The police came and asked loads of questions, they arrested me and Frank, but neither of us were charged they just saw it as an accident I guess. I felt terrible, that poor woman.

When I got back from the police station, I called my friend Dave and he said that there was plenty of extra money to be made from buying cheap tins of food and re-selling them at the local market. Apparently they didn't do any checks at this market because the man who used to do them was found to be corrupt and they hadn't found anyone to replace him.

The next day I went into Cheepos and found some tins of pilchards that were BOGOF. I'd managed to fill my trolley full of tins when this slow looking man came over. I told him that the tins were my Christmas money, but he didn't take any notice and kept bleating on about some cat. I couldn't afford to lose this money so I made my message clear.

"Back off, old man!" I said, and that seemed to work, he backed off and the stupid git fell over a tin that been left in the middle of the aisle. I didn't leave it there, but that didn't help my guilt when the paramedics declared him dead.

And that was only Tuesday. Wednesday, the lady who lived next door to me fell down her stairs and broke her neck. Thursday when I was at work, just shelf filling, some stupid idiot died when he got crushed underneath a cage of grapes. Ok, I *was* the one who pushed the cage, but no one saw me and after the week I'd had, I wasn't going to tell them. Oh and Friday, Friday was my favourite day.

The car park near where I lived had changed its layout three times in the last six months, how was I to know that the old IN was now the new OUT? I was driving in when some silly old biddy was coming out and my car crashed into hers. Apparently she'd got a crack to the head which knocked her out and then she'd suffered a heart attack. After eight hours in the police

station the finally let me go. I was charged with not paying due care and attention to the road and they wanted me to go back in and possibly answer death by dangerous driving charges. I wasn't driving dangerously. I was driving quite sedately, for me.

Saturday, I went into Richard's to get some of their burgers. I'd been out the night before with Dave and we'd got slaughtered. There was nothing quite like a good greasy Big Burger to cure a hangover. After I left some guy had had a panic attack or something and had died right there and the floor of the restaurant.

All this death around me, it got me wondering just what I had done to deserve it. I worked hard, I played hard and I didn't take any bullshit, but that didn't make me a bad person. All this death had made me realise just how lucky I was really. I wasn't lonely. I'd had plenty of girlfriends since Michelle had buggered off. I had my own flat, council one admittedly but I had a fairly good job, so not all bad really.

I bet Cindy, the last lass I was seeing, would be crying her eyes out at my funeral. I can see her now, short black mini dress with her makeup flowing down her face. My mum will be mortified. I wish I could be there to see her face when they meet.

My mum is a solicitor, and with all the crap I had found myself in, I really needed her help. I wanted to call her and yet I didn't. I could hear her now,

"You're in trouble again? Well there's a surprise. I don't mind bailing you out again." Snooty cow. She'd always been that way with me. I was debating whether I should put myself through all that. Was it really worth all of the aggravation? I was sceptical. Still, she'd started to mellow in her old age, I thought, maybe I should ring her after all.

Taking a deep breath, I picked up the phone. But I never get to make that call and I still can't figure out why I deserved to die.