

THE BURGER KING

By Jane Miller

jane@blackcactus.com.au

THE POLICE STATION – APRIL IS BEING QUESTIONED BY AN UNSEEN POLICEMAN.

APRIL: It's April....April Janine Reynolds. Like the month. I can't believe this has happened. It's so not me. It's just so not who I am. When we've had a chance to talk about it you'll see I'm the last person to do anything conventionally violent.

Up until last month I was a strict vegan. You can't be a strict vegan unless you have a deeply held belief in the sanctity of life. In all its forms. I have that. I do.... For me to be charged with...."assault occasioning grievous bodily harm"....is a distortion of who I am....what I believe.

I'm not blaming you. I know you have a job to do. I know who is to blame. The thing is.... he's so persuasive. It's actually frightening...the power he exercises over people. Now I'm out the other side, I see it.

I was a prime candidate for his manipulation...So trusting..... I've always wondered about the power of suggestion....You know ...you see people like the ones that lined up to drink poison in that American town. I used to think....How could that happen? How can someone actually make you eat or drink something against your will? Against your principles? But they can...And that's what he did to me...He seduced me into doing things I hadn't done since I was a child. He lured me back into a sordid world of carnivorous consumption ...I was a vegan.... It was a violation.

My commitment is such that I've even been a fructarian.... ..For 12 whole days....I ate only seeds and apples. Only the food of flowering plants. At my father's 60th birthday my mother tried to get me to eat a carrot but I couldn't. Fructarians can't eat root vegetables...It would have choked me... Simple as that.

In the end I couldn't sustain it....for medical reasons.... I collapsed on the way home from work. Vitamin B12 deficiency. The doctor ordered me to eat root vegetables immediately or I'd go into some sort of system shut down. Toxic shock. Death.

A little piece of my heart broke the first time I ate a radish. It felt like a moral defeat. I didn't go to work for 3 days so it's not likely that I could assault anyone...In the traditional sense....Is it? Really?

We met at a pub.... That should've been the first sign... I never go to pubs. I can't stand to drink from a glass I haven't washed myself. Always been like that. That's another reason I couldn't have been part of that poison drinking massacre. I can't tolerate the thought of sharing

a cup with one other person let alone thousands. I know it's unusual but I won't apologise for it.

Anyway....I was at this pub with some friends and they were ordering food. It was the usual orgy of indistinguishable slabs of crumbed meat and overcooked potatoes. I almost regurgitated the lentil and mung bean casserole I'd had for lunch.

Even the tables were sticky for heaven's sake. Don't people ever ask themselves what causes that disgusting film to cover everything in sight?

So I sat there and I wasn't in a happy place...But then the last meal arrived at the table and to my amazement it was....Magnificent. It had a sense of grandeur. Pedigree. It was so plump...So juicy. I wanted it. I learned later it was the speciality of the house...A hamburger with the lot.

At first I couldn't believe my reaction. It was like a journey of self-discovery. I looked at that magnificent slab of elegantly minced beef and actually felt my self start to salivate. In that moment I could understand every person who has ever questioned the very core of their being. The person who questions their sexuality or religious beliefs.

I sat in that pub among those people in an agony of torment....A vegan who wanted nothing more than to grasp that huge beefy, bready burger, take a huge bite and feel the greasy mix of oil and sauce run down my chin....God, I hated myself but it was also..... slightly thrilling.

And so shameful...I started to feel trapped. Claustrophobic. I needed some water... I went to the bar and asked for a glass....I washed it in the Ladies' toilet....Did I mention that I can't drink from a glass I haven't washed myself?

On my way I looked into the kitchen and there he was....The man that the patron's at the Lemon Tree Hotel called "The Burger King". He was magnificent.

I stood watching him work the grill. He had the most beautiful long hair held in a ponytail that followed his every move with the grace and poetry of a serpent under a charm. He was like a cross between a magician, maestro and a surgeon coordinating a symphony of beef, bacon and onions. Our eyes met and that was it. We were in love.

We were inseparable. We were soulmates. I began eating meat. That very night. I drank from everything. Used glasses. Bottles. The tap. All my deeply held principles meant nothing to me as long as I could watch him and eat meat he'd cooked with his own hand. It was like a spell. I changed who I was.

I was ecstatic. I was completely obsessed. But not in a negative way.

We made love everywhere. In the kitchen. On the bar. Although I insisted he wipe everything down with Pine O clean before and after. "Leave things as you found them", my mother used to say....I left that bar much cleaner than I found it....Let me tell you....

But it wasn't about the sex. That was just a wonderfully happy by product of our deep spiritual connection. I brushed his hair. I let him cook chops, steak and a marinated chicken breast on my grill. I shared every part of myself. My brush and my grill.

I am truly April by name and April by nature...April, by the way means....open. And I am open...To life...to experience and now to heartbreak.

So the sacrifices, the compromises...They worried me...But being open, I thought...This is the man I'm meant to be with and he's a meat eater, a magnificent cook and, although it's not important, an amazing lover....I'm in the hands of fate.

But fate's overrated....

One night....I came into the pub...Early. To surprise him. To surprise my man....The man I'd given up vegetables for...The man for whom I'd so willingly hauled my backside up onto that disgusting bar....I ripped my blue Country Road skirt doing that...but did I mention it? No I did not.

To my utter disbelief and devastation, I find him feeding chicken, pineapple and capsicum pieces to the relief bar woman off the end of a left over shaslick.

You look almost as gutted as I was and I was gutted, let me tell you.

It was all apologies and tears...."Please forgive me. It's nothing like what we share....It was chicken and chicken's not beef. A shaslick's not a hamburger and it's certainly not steak".

But it was too late. I'd given him my soul.....And so this time it was chicken but how long before it was pork or lamb and then ultimately...beef. It was just a matter of time.

Deceitful Bastard.

Excuse me for that won't you? I don't normally swear but I don't normally have my life turned upside down. I can never go back to being vegan...I've been sullied...By all the meat. I'm like the walking dead forced to live a strange half life...In limbo....as a meat eater.

I just wanted him to lose a little piece of himself....Like I have. There just seemed something strangely poetic about using a meat cleaver.

The meat cleaver that had been like a magic wand in his hand....Used to create, beguile, seduce and ensnare...I wanted to turn that power back on him....For a moment.... An instant. A short sharp shock.

I know it was wrong of me to wait in his bedroom. I hid behind the wardrobe door. I didn't break in. No broken windows or locks. I would never damage his property. I think that's very inappropriate.

I used the house key he'd given me back when we were soulmates. Back when he'd invited me into his life. His home.

I waited and eventually he fell into the serene beautiful sleep of the heartless. People who betray like he did don't have the problems sleeping

that those of us with a conscious have. You must see that every day. The prisons must be full of people who sleep like babies.

So he slept and I saw it...Resting against the sheet. I almost hesitated...Wanted to lean over and rip off my clothes and shout "I forgive you....Cook for me...Love me...Take me...Here. Now."

But I collected myself. Amazingly satisfying sex isn't everything when your heart's broken. I came to my senses. He'd pretended to be so beautiful and good but he'd turned out to be so corrupt and false. It's only right that he lose the symbol of that beauty because it wasn't real.

So I held it gently in my hand and brought down the cleaver. Thwack.

Hand on heart...I know it hurt me more than it hurt him. After all I was a member of both Amnesty and Unicef. A true pacifist. In my heart. Where it really counts.

I'm a good person who was betrayed. Not the demented Delilah he's portraying me as because now he claims he can't cook. Burns everything. Can't use the grill. No longer a maestro. More fool than King.

The Burger King is no more...and I don't take pleasure in that. It's simply justice. And justice isn't assault? Is it? Not really?

I mean I've been robbed of my identity. Defiled. Stained. Hair grows back....in time....but I had a ham sandwich for lunch.

I ask you....

Who's the real victim? I think we both know.

END