

MAYHEM AND CRIMES ON
THE PIER AT GRIMES

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PARTNERS IN CRIME

Mayhem and Crimes on the Pier at Grimes

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AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

This story was written in collaboration with the Meet the Authors! Facebook group on 4th April 2023. Users suggested a number of ideas to include in the story and then I had to figure out how to shoehorn those ideas into a short story. *Mayhem and Crimes on the Pier at Grimes* is the result. You'll see the following ideas throughout...

- Tiramisu
- Ice cream
- Pineapple pizza
- Granny “born in this street”; Killer wanted the “pitch”
- Rundown seaside setting
- Rhino
- Isle of Man during the TT
- Zumba
- The “Bookworm in Yicker Land”
- Man in a coffee shop killed with a samurai sword
- Russian ice cream
- Ukrainian refugees in town
- Mafia killing
- Ice cream cones wrapped in pizza

- Retail work flipping out and killing someone
- The village of Westbourne. No, not that Westbourne, the other Westbourne.

- Pistachio ice cream, not enough for two scoops

- Tsunami

- Peacock

- Vic stabbed with a stiletto

- Protag lives with Gertie

- Wrong person killed

- Sexy underwear

- Bunion cream

- Haydock

- A Mini Cooper racing green colour with black stripes down the bonnet, with a roof white and wing mirrors (a getaway car)

- Protag called Annie, war bride, husband died while pregnant

- In-grown toe nails

- The Fart of Eternal Damnation

- Marmite ice cream lovers convention

- A handsome copper with handcuffs and an extra-large truncheon

- Trombone practice

- 'Pepper's Ghost' - a Victorian optical illusion used by alleged clairvoyants

- An iguana named Ignatius with a diamond collar and a shoulder fixation

- Mr Whippy River

- Dubai

- Abseiling off a bridge

- An angry clown appears, having been banished from a circus.

- Brussel sprouts

- A tramp who's a demon
- A young Middle Eastern kid with a secret, loving falafel and dragging around a small suitcase with a dodgy wheel
- A docile Yorkshire terrier who is vicious, belonging to a big muscly guy (think the rock) who is soft and squidy despite appearances. Lives with his mum in a flowery cottage and wins garden of the year in the local village fete, but will kill for hire.
- Yourself
- Naga Jolokia
- Washboard abs

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE LADY IN GRIMES

THINGS AIN'T how they used to be.

When I was a kid, this place was alive. Me and Ella Fitzroy used to own this town. Every Saturday we'd hit the pier, swigging bottles of hooch as our heels click-clacked along all the way from the East Pier to the South Pier. Right little mare she was. Thought she owned the town 'cause her Daddy built half of it.

Now the South Pier's gone – burnt down in the middle o' the night, didn't it? – and what's left of it is fallin' back into the sea. Bit decrepit, like me. Eighty-odd years'll do that to anyone.

Now we ain't got an East and a South Pier. There's just The Pier. The ballroom's gone and so is the old teahouse. All that's left is little old me. Same spot, right by the entrance.

The only thing that's changed is the ice cream. Vanilla used to be good enough. These days the kids want exotic flavour like bleedin' tiramisu. Bloody millennials. Even my own granddaughter, bless her heart, has fallen for it: she's got the Awesome Sourdough Spot over by the big wheel.

It's even got a bleeding rhino statue outside. As if we're in bloody Puerto Banús instead of Grimes. Doubt that Dali fella ever heard of Grimes. I wouldn't have if I hadn't been born here.

Halfway between Weston-super-Mare and the Great Caravan Fields to the south, nobody in their right mind comes here. Let alone stays.

As for Ella, she's in the grave. But at least her granddaughter has stuck to tradition. Haughty little miss was here last night with her new boyfriend, pointing out *her* hotel and *her* private beach. If she'd heard it, her granny would have been turning in her private mausoleum. She's got her granny's name, though she prefers Elle. Like the magazine.

Elle even had the cheek to come and take the piss out of my ice cream. Right when I was about to close up shop for the night and go have a well-earned cuppa too.

'Hello Mrs Stein!' she said, her tone full of faux-cheer. 'Have you got any marzipan and maraschino in? With kirsch reduction and fresh cherries of course.'

I glared at the little witch. She knew I hadn't. I jabbed a gnarly finger at the sign my by Mr Whippy machine. Vanilla. If that wasn't good enough, there was a freezer full of Magnums and other modern processed crap. My only concession to the modern world was pistachio ice cream and I was almost out of that too.

'You know, Mrs Stein, you really should get with the times. If you'd just let my father and I'

I cut her off mid-sentence. 'I've told you, Elle, that I've been here since before your Daddy was a twinkle in his father's balls, and I'm not going anywhere. You're taking this pitch over my dead body.'

She gave a wan smile and huffed off into the night.

THE BOOKWORM IN YICKER LAND

I MET Lindsey outside the Bookworm in Yicker Land. Her happy place. She came out, exactly on time, with an armful of new-to-her books. Good girl. I handed her a cup of tea as she sat down next to me. My own was half-gone as I'd sipped it while watching the seagulls. Bloody things had "painted" half the town.

'Thanks, Gran.'

She cradled the cup as if it were January, not mid-June.

'Ello love, how was the Isle of Man?'

'A-May-Zing. The bikers were so fast. It was like WHOOSH.'

'Sounds bloody dangerous to me, love.'

She looked at me, clearly affronted. 'It's not that dangerous...' she protested.

'Two hundred and sixty-five dead,' I said. 'Google told me so. That TT sounds bleedin' dangerous and what for? A bit o' adrenaline?'

'*You* used Google?'

I hadn't. Sheila down the Bingo had done it for me. I ain't

touching anything called a “mouse” unless I’ve got my Marigolds on.

‘It’s true, isn’t it?’

‘C’mon Gran, live a little. Nothing ever happens around here. Just imagine if it did. We could be the Bognor Regis of the West.’

I almost choked on my tea.

‘Did you hear about what happened at the Roast and Grind, love?’

She looked at me curiously. ‘The mediocre coffee place over on the Royal Bay?’

It was the last low-rent place left amongst a bevy of fancy Michelin restaurants and cocktail bars. Come to think of it, it’d be the perfect place to flog sourdough pizza.

‘That’s the one, Linds,’ I said. ‘Herman, the barista, he got murdered last night. Heard it at Zumba this morning.’

We both knew the Zumba ladies were rock solid. They fact-checked every titbit of gossip before passing it on. If they said it happened, it did. Fact.

‘*What?*’ Lindsey yelled.

‘Someone cut his head off with a dirty great samurai sword.’

‘Holy crap. Something cool finally happened in Grimes? It had to be when I was away, didn’t it?’

My granddaughter was a strange wee one. ‘Love, people don’t generally want to be in town when there’s a samurai sword executioner taking out retail workers. Be glad you were away with... what’s his name again?’

‘Alphonso.’

‘Alfie.’

‘No, Gran, Alphonso.’

‘Right. So you and Fonzo were nice and safe on the Isle of Man. It was me that could’ve been got.’

‘I’m sure Herman deserved it,’ Linds said coldly.

I shook my head. ‘Love, if it had been Herman who’d gone Genghis Khan on one of his regulars, I’d have understood it. Customers are a right pain in the backside. Only last night, your friend Elle came by to ask for kirsch-soaked Cheerios or summat.’

‘Cherries, Gran. I gave you a jar of them at Christmas.’

My mind flickered back to the “hamper” she’d given me at Christmas, full of horrible concoctions not fit for human consumption. I’d probably fed ’em to the birds. Maybe that was why they kept shitting all over my ice cream pitch. Maybe I should’ve given them to charity. I’m sure there’s an “*I Heart Ukraini*” collection box by the tills in Lidl. I don’t mind the refugees but did they have to stay in the hotels? There weren’t so many tourists around these days with nowhere to stay.

I said as much to Lindsey.

She gave a shrug. ‘They can take our hotel rooms, but they can’t take our ice cream. How’re sales, Gran?’

‘Two hundred quid,’ I mumbled.

Lindsey beamed. ‘That’s not a bad day’s takings!’

‘... this month.’

Her face fell.

‘Oh Gran, I told you to switch to the Russian ice cream. It’s cheaper, sweeter, and you’ll sell much more than that old Mr Whippy rubbish.’

Bloody Russian ice cream mafia. Thinking they could come over here and make a killing. On my patch. Not if I could help it. I felt my blood boil.

‘What’s next, ice cream cones wrapped in pizza? You’d love that, wouldn’t you?’

At my anger, Lindsey shifted away along the bench. She turned to glare back at me, unblinking. ‘It’s “*gelato*”, Gran. And I don’t sell it with the pizza. Let me help you. Please. You’re going to go out of business in a few years.’

'Maybe I will love. But you know what? At my age, that probably won't matter.'

GASSY OLD BAG

THE FIRST ATTEMPT on my life happened the week after Herman's murder.

I'd just come back from a trip down to Westbourne.

Lindsey thought I was going to the other Westbourne, the one down near Chichester. She'd texted telling me to enjoy the harbour and walks along the South Downs. I didn't have the heart to tell her I'd booked the wrong Westbourne. And the hotel was non-refundable.

This Westbourne claimed to be a village too but really it was a suburb of Bournemouth. Posher than Grimes with artisan gelato and hand-baked calzone on sale side-by-side with Harry Ramsden's and candy floss.

Somehow, everything felt a bit posher. Maybe it was Sandbanks nearby. I'd sat on the front and watched a bright-red helicopter fly up, presumably heading for London.

The sun had even come out long enough to hop on the little ferry over to Brownsea Island. I'd been mad sick when I got there. The waves had barely been six feet higher but by the way my feet shook as I'd stepped onto the little stone jetty, you'd have thought we'd been hit by a tsunami.

Then, when I'd stopped feeling my age, I'd been robbed by a bloody peacock. The thing snatched my herring sarnie right out of my hand and then pecked at me as if to demand more.

I'd been glad to get back home.

Until I walked in my front door.

The smell hit me straight away: gas.

Thank God I'd noticed before I'd fumbled for the light switch. The hallway light, which was almost as old as me, had been on the fritz for decades.

Had I left the hob on?

My forehead creased up as I tried to think back to when I'd left. What had I done? I'd thrown everything in Gertie – that's what I call my wheelie trolley, the one I take everywhere – and rolled on out. I'd packed my dentures, a sexy bra just in case I met a handsome fella on the promenade, and my bunion cream. My feet are bloody awful these days: the nails have yellowed and curled back on themselves as if I put hair-curlers on 'em. That's why I like to pick up my men outside Specsavers. The ones with heavy prescriptions don't tend to notice anything beyond the bright red undies.

I used to be sexy. About fifty years ago. Back when it had been me and my late husband, Frank Nigel the second. We nicknamed him Jack on account of how little he knew. Poor sod couldn't smell a thing, not after the war. He'd never have noticed the gas leak even if he were alive. He left me while I was carrying Lindsey's mother. He survived the war, only to have an accident while abseiling off a bridge just outside Haydock with Ella and her husband. The safety rope snapped. My eyes teared up. I didn't know if that was from the memory or the gas. All I knew was that if I didn't stop it soon, I'd fall asleep. Finally, I'd know Jack again.

Down the hallway I stumbled, fumbling for the door knob. As I entered the kitchen, the smell grew stronger. It reeked like

the Fart of Eternal damnation, so pungent that it was as if a whole family had consumed several kilograms of Brussels sprouts and then sat, just waiting, until each erupted. The last time I'd smelled something this awful was a tramp living under the pier. His odour had been so bad, I'd have sworn he was sent by Lucifer himself to torment me. I'd had to bribe him with twenty British pounds to bugger off back up the road to Weston-super-Mare.

Eventually, I found the hob. All four rings were going on full blast, pumping gas into my home.

This was no mistake. I turned them off.

Then, quick as I could, I ran back out the front door to where I'd parked my Mini Cooper. Its green-and-white striped bonnet reflected the setting sun.

'999, what's your emergency?'

'This is Annie Stein. Someone just tried to blow up my house.'

LOVE HIM OR HATE HIM

THE HANDSOME POLICEMAN came around minutes after I'd called. He threw a silver blanket around me and had me sit in the front of his car. I could smell cigarettes and stale coffee, a combination which took me back to my youth. If only I'd had a handsome police officer with a pair of cuffs back then... had he got the truncheon to go with it?

I felt a smile creep onto my face and quickly killed it, blushing furiously. 'Thanks for coming so quickly, officer.'

'No problem, Mrs Stein. I was only down the road at the awards ceremony of the Marmite Ice Cream Lovers convention. Absolute nutters the lot of them. Ahem, pardon me for saying that. Don't mention that to Chief Inspector Singleton, will you?'

He looked at me, beseechingly. How could I say no to those big brown eyes? He was love it or hate it, equal parts infuriating and endearing. A proper marmite chap.

After clearing his throat, he started again, this time much more matter of fact. 'Tell me again, Mrs Stein, exactly what happened.'

'I got home and could smell gas. There's a dodgy light in my hallway which flickers when I turn it on so I didn't hit the

switch. Instead, I shuffled through the darkness 'til I got to the kitchen.'

'And found all four rings on,' Singleton repeated.

'That's right.'

'And you're sure you didn't leave them on yourself?'

Did he think I was stupid? 'All four of them? I'm old, officer, not senile.'

His expression was doubtful. 'I didn't find any signs of forced entry, you see.'

No bloody surprise there. He'd only left me for five minutes. If that was what Grimes Constabulary thought a thorough investigation looked like, no wonder the town had gone to pot.

'I keep a key under the doormat,' I said.

'And who knows about that?'

I shrugged, the blanket slipping down my back as I moved. 'Beats me. Anyone that's met me. I have to have people in, see. My cleaner comes by as my back plays up, my granddaughter uses my place to practice her trombone so she doesn't upset the neighbours, and my neighbours know too as they check on me once in a while. They're nice like that.'

He patted me on the shoulder. 'Right, well, is there anyone we can call for you, my love?'

My love? My nostrils flared. He might be a bit of eye candy but I ain't up to be patronised. Men've done that to me all my life. 'I'm *not* losing it,' I half-yelled, fully aware it sounded like I had indeed lost it. Whatever it was.

'I'm telling you,' I continued, 'someone is trying to kill me. If I'd left one ring on, fine, that's me getting forgetful. But four? I'm not thick, you know.'

Mr Handsome took my hand in his as if he were my flesh and blood. I snatched it back.

'Nobody's saying you're thick, love.'

'It bloody feels like it.'

'I'm going to level with you, Mrs Stein. If you're sticking with your story, we're going to have to take you in, y'know, to get checked out. There's a nice little place over-'

'No,' I said, cutting him. 'No bloody way. You're not checking me in anywhere. Do your damned job and find out who was in my house. Can't you at least start with asking the neighbours if they saw anything?'

He looked back along the driveway, past my Mini Cooper, and to the ramshackle hut I called home. My nearest neighbours were a hundred yards and a thicket of trees down the hill.

'Alright,' he said. 'I'll talk to them.'

MIGHTY MARVIN AND HIS IGUANA

WEEKS WENT BY. Nothing of note happened. Except for a visit from the bloody Dementia Nurse who wanted to know what year it was. I had a plumber in to check my gas pipes, a locksmith in to change my locks, and, for a while at least, everything went back to normal.

Then the first weekend of August rolled around. Lindsey was in town and Elle, in an unbecoming fit of generosity, had given us two tickets to the show her father was putting on at the Grimes Am Dram Theatre. A balding man took to the stage. He wore a purple velvet cape, the kind magicians used to wear when performing on the front. But that wasn't the most interesting thing about him. On his shoulder there was an iguana, its tail draped around his neck. Revolting. Worse still, it was wearing what looked like a diamond collar. Who was this joker?

As if to answer my unvoiced question, his voiced boomed over the sound system. 'I am the Mighty Marvin and this is my assistant, the Imperial Ignatius. We have travelled the world together, my iguana and I. Tonight's show is inspired by the glittering sands and heights of Dubai.'

Bit of a bloody comedown then. Dubai, Paris... Grimes.

'Linds,' I said, poking my granddaughter in the arm. 'Remember you offered me that one-way trip to Switzerland last summer? I think I'm ready to take it now.'

She giggled. 'Oh shut up, Gran. He might be funny.'

He wasn't. Two hours later, the most impressive thing was a lacklustre attempt at the Pepper's Ghost illusion. Except he hadn't hidden the "off stage" bit very well. And that gambit was almost as old as me so rather than ethereal, it looked like he'd bought a dodgy overhead projector.

It was less "Mighty Marvin" and more "angry clown who'd been banished from the circus" except his makeup wasn't "on fleek" as Linds always said. I've no idea what that means but she keeps saying it.

'Well,' Linds said as we left, traipsing behind a crowd of similarly-disappointed Old Grimers, 'That's two hours of my life I'm never getting back.'

'At least at your age, two hours is inconsequential,' I said. 'At mine, two hours could be all I've got left. Especially if you and Elle try to kill me with boredom. What the hell was her father thinking hiring that muppet?'

No wonder Dubai hadn't wanted to keep the Mighty Marvin.

'We won't!' Linds protested. And then she added something under her breath that sound a lot like, 'not with boredom anyhow.'

'What was that?' I yelled.

'Nothing, Gran.'

Little mare. She too had a butter-wouldn't-melt expression on. It was the same one she'd had when she'd "jokingly" offered me Dignitas. Oh so funny, my granddaughter.

'So Gran,' she carried on. 'Fonz and I were wondering...'

Here it came, the ask. There was always an ask with Linds.

'You want money, do you?' I asked. 'Again?'

‘Well,’ she said, twisting away... She glanced back, her puppy-dog expression freshly affixed to her face. ‘I was wondering if you might be willing to let Fonz have your ring.’

I glanced down at my finger.

‘My ring?’

The one my late Jack had bought me?

‘Yes, Gran, you see, he wants to ask me to-’

‘Marry him,’ I finished for her. ‘I got that bit. Contrary to the rumours, I’m not actually senile, you know.’

‘So ... can he?’

We walked in silence, my eyes flitting from my hand to Linds’ face and back again.

Like hell was I giving this Fondue guy anything.

‘Over my dead body.’

WHEN'S A DOOR NOT A DOOR?

THINGS ESCALATED QUICKLY. The comparative peace of the last few weeks was shattered as my life descended into chaos. The morning after our trip to see Mighty Marvin and the Imperial Ignatius, I found a fox slinking around my kitchen, its snout poking into the bin bag that I'd been meaning to take out.

Had I left the front door open?

I was willing to assume I had... until the next night.

That was when my ice cream stall was broken into. I found the latch undone, the freezer open, and ice cream running out, a steady stream of it running all the way down to the shoreline. Insects had congregated along the Mr Whippy River.

That wasn't the worst of it. By the time I'd finished sweeping the promenade, my back was ready to give out, and so, when I returned home to find my front door had, once again, come open apparently of its own accord, I knew something was up.

I called Linds. 'Love, would you be a dear and come keep me company? Someone's broken into the shack again.'

She came around as quick as a flash, bless her heart. No sooner had I made myself a cup of tea, swallowed half a pack of

aspirin, and microwaved a beanie bag to put some heat on my aching back, she was at the front door.

‘Did you leave it open again, Gran?’

I shook my head. ‘You know I don’t do that, Linds.’

‘You think someone’s broken in then? Is there anything missing?’

Shit.

I hadn’t thought about that.

Pain shot up my legs as I hobbled to my feet. There was feck all of value in the shack. Except in my jewellery box. I made a beeline for it.

Then I screamed.

It was gone.

All of it.

Every gift I’d ever had.

Including Jack’s ring.

THE ROCK OF GIBRALTAR

A KNOCK at the door woke me early on Saturday morning.

My neighbour. It turns out Mr Handsome the copper did go round. But he didn't see a thing. Nice guy, my neighbour. I'd always hoped he and Linds might get together. He's a few years older than her, maybe twenty eight or so. Still a whippersnapper. But one who looks after his ole Ma.

Linds always said he was like The Rock.

But I can't see what Gibraltar's got to do with it.

He's chiselled, I suppose. Maybe that's what she meant. And yet he also won the Grimes Best in Bloom competition last year despite the fact he almost killed the guest judge, some idiotic crime author from London, with his home-grown "*Ghost chilli peppers*". Talk about hot stuff. Strong enough to kill for you, soft enough to grow you flowers. Why if I was fifty years younger...

I digress. He came around to ask if anyone had seen my rings.

'Not yet,' I said sadly. 'Nor any of the other stuff.'

We'd been around the pawnbrokers, Linds and I, checking

every last one of them for even a hint of my collection. Everyone swore blind they hadn't bought any of it.

'That's a shame,' Mr Gibraltar said. 'If there's anything Ma and I can do, you know where we are.'

'Actually, there is something... I know the police asked if you've saw anyone on the night they came. But have you seen anyone around since?'

'Who're you expecting? A little Middle Eastern boy who loves falafel with a suitcase with a broken wheel?'

My jaw dropped. 'That's awfully specific!'

He pointed at the Grimes Times on top of my post pile. The front page announced the crowning of this year's Middle Eastern Cook-Off. Sure enough, he did have a broken wheel on the suitcase in the photo.

Mr Gib grinned. 'Sorry, couldn't resist. Nope. The only people I've seen up this hill are you and Linds. Congrats on her engagement by the way.'

That. I glared. With everything that had happened, I'd forgotten all about her and Fondue. Maybe I was getting forgetful. Or maybe I was suppressing it.

'Not a fan of his, Mrs S?'

'Is it that obvious, love?' I said. 'He's into all sort of shite. Ya know the other weekend he dragged Linds all the way to the Isle of Man to watch the motorbike racing.'

This time, it was Mr Gib's face that contorted in confusion. 'For the TT?'

'Yeah.'

'Are you sure, Mrs S? It's only ... maybe I'm wrong.'

'Only what, love?'

'I saw her and Alphonso the weekend that was on. Here in Grimes. I was watching the TT myself.'

'Where?' I demanded.

'The Rhum Bar,' Mr Gib said, naming the swankiest sports

bar on the Royal Bay strip. It was a stone's throw from the Roast and Grind.

The same place where Herman the barista had been beheaded.

And on the same night too.

IT ENDS WHERE IT BEGINS

MY NERVES WERE JITTERY. A confrontation was unavoidable. I couldn't go to the police. Mr Handsome hadn't taken me seriously the last time. And he'd think I was just as doddery this time.

So I hatched a plan.

I invited Linds and Fondue out on the pier and told them that they should dress to the nines so I could take an engagement photo.

They were there early. I spotted them as I forked over the £1 to the guard at the front of the pier. Not a fan of paying just to walk along it. It used to be free. Hankerin' for the good ole days wouldn't get me anywhere so I shuffled along, like Ella and I used to do, but it was only my heels clacking on the boardwalk tonight. I imagined her walking besides me. Would we still be friends? Would she still live in Grimes? Part of me thinks not. With her money, I'd have moved off to Bristol or London eons ago. And yet her granddaughter stuck around. Sod's law that.

As I approached, I could see Linds and Fondue snapping selfies. She was wearing a maroon dress, his jacket around her

shoulder while he shivered in a paper-thin shirt that barely concealed his washboard abs.

When she saw me, her left hand shot into his jacket pocket.

And in that moment, I knew.

I knew she'd robbed me blind, my own flesh and blood. That it was Jack's ring on the hand she now hid in her pocket.

'Ello dear,' I said cheerfully.

'Gran! Any luck finding your ring?'

I shook my head. 'What a shame as I was comin' round to your idea, ya know, you having it early. What's the point in waiting 'til I'm in the ground for it?'

She grinned and nodded enthusiastically. 'Right? Fonz thought the same.'

'Did he now?' I said, stepping closer. 'How's about a quick photo to celebrate? You in his arms?'

Another nod.

But she didn't move to take off the jacket.

'How about he picks you up? Show off those big strong arms, eh?'

More hesitation. She nodded at him and he swept her up in his arms, jacket and all. Her heels dangled from her feet.

'Gimme those, love,' I said. She did. I held her shoes as he jiggled from foot to foot.

'Thanks, Gran.

Then I stepped back. 'How about ditching that jacket? It's not lying flat on you. Unless there's something you're not telling me.'

Her eyes widened.

'Like you're not up the duff, are you love?'

A smile. She thought she'd got away with it.

'No... but I do have some good news.'

'Really love? What's that?' I asked sweetly.

‘You know you really wanted me to have Granddad Jack’s ring?’

‘Yes?’

‘Well,’ she said brightly, ‘we found it!’

And with that, she let the jacket fall to the ground.

There, on her skinny little finger, was my engagement ring.

She’d even had it resized.

The little witch.

‘That’s wonderful news,’ I said through gritted teeth. ‘As wonderful as your trip to the Isle of Man. To Man with your man. That’s fun to say, isn’t it?’

Her smile faltered. ‘G-gran?’

‘Yes, love?’

‘Are you okay, you look flustered? Do you want to sit down.’

I was having none of it. ‘Worried the blood might drain out of me? Like poor Herman?’

The veneer cracked. My granddaughter was gone. The girl, no, woman, in front of me wasn’t the sweet little Linds I knew and loved. Hers was the sneer of a psychopath.

‘Don’t tell me. You wanted his shop, didn’t you? And you wanted mine. That’s why you’ve been trying to have me committed, isn’t it? All so your Awesome Sourdough Spot can get even bigger.’

As I stepped forward, Fonz dropped her to the ground and she came to meet me.

I hesitated for a split second.

And then instinct took over.

I raised one of her heels above my head as she came at me.

And slammed it down.

Right into her eye.

She stumbled backwards, hands flailing. Fondue went to grab hold of her as she toppled towards the railing. In slow motion, her body folded around the railing, her man jumping up

to try and catch her. As she fell towards the rocks, he let out a guttural roar, totally absorbed in the vision of my murdered wretch of a granddaughter falling a hundred yards down onto the sharp rocks.

He was halfway up the railing, leaning forwards, watching her body crumple.

That's when I went at him.

One push. One heave.

And we both toppled over the railing.

An eye for an eye.

The perfect revenge.

I just hadn't expected it to be that quick.