

# Carleton

## Old Friends

It was a cold day when she walked into my corner coffee shop. I shouldn't have noticed, but she was wearing such a flimsy top, it was hard to look anywhere else. I mean, she had long dark hair, a gym tight body and was being rather perky under that thin blouse. Just my type, I think before the realist in my head speaks up with "Stan, you're a middle aged father of three; a bit bald on top; your shoulders are sagging; and those little love handles on your waist—you can pretend they aren't there if you want to." Not my business what someone half my age comes into my shop wearing.

She wanted to use the bathroom. "Would I mind? She was absolutely busting."

"Of course not," I say, being all professional courtesy and just a hint of red blooded lechery; She's a little different to Ethel and Mavis and the rest of my grey perm, tea and a biscuit regulars, I wipe down the counter imagining what could be if there was no Clara and the kids; and maybe two and a bit decades less.

Enough of that Stan. I tell myself and get busy with stocking the cookie jars and cleaning out the gleaming chrome and red of the coffee machine. The Gaggia Deco is my Italian sports machine, and it has pride of place on my counter; makes the customers feel they're in an upmarket coffee shop.

I'm having a final polish of the mirror smooth finish when a half familiar old school face steps up to the counter. "Donny! When did we last meet? Geez, must have been twenty years ago. I still remember that epic party at the end of schoolies." Donny gives me a tired hello and orders a coffee.

The looker comes back from the bathroom and thanks me. Donny smiles at her like he knows her. Oh hello, I think to myself, Donny's got a bit of alright there. I give him a bit of a knowing smile; Donny always had a way with the ladies.

"Clarry, Stan and I used to go to school together. Stan, I'd like you to meet my daughter Clarissa."