

# Laurie

## Awkward

Waiting for courage I held back my fist. I stopped it, just stopping it in time from knocking on their door. Mum had said patiently many times, “Always knock, that’s being polite” and I always did, but this time I didn’t want to be polite, I wanted to see what the buzz was all about, I wanted to see what Bucky had seen. Bucky Warton said just barge in, that’s what he did he said, but you couldn’t always believe Bucky Warton. He told some whoppers and this could be one.

Bucky Warton was always boasting. He’d laugh through those big chunky teeth of his and just plain out lie. Nobody could tell when he told truth or not so, at least sometimes, and maybe this time, he did.

One time, he reckoned he’d kissed heaps of girls but we didn’t think so.

“Who’d want to kiss you with that mouthful of busted teeth,” we said.

“Plenty,” he sneered. “While you guys have been mucking around I’ve been making out.”

“Yeah right,” we replied. Kicking rocks and stirring each other were the favorite pastimes of the grade five boys down at the creek.

“Come Saturday I’ll show you drongos,” he challenged. “Tell you what, come here, ‘bout noon, and I’ll be here with Sally Day and I’ll show you what’s kissing.”

“Bulldust,” I exclaimed. Sally Day was special, an angel, she wouldn’t be interested in a dag like Bucky.

He just winked and flipped his dirty blonde curls. “Turn up or shut up,” he said. I couldn’t speak for the others but my Saturday was now booked.

We were hiding in the trees but come Saturday, there was Bucky, sitting by the creek, practically attached to Sally’s pretty face, sucking for all he’s worth. She didn’t seem to mind and he was rolling.

Bucky moved up a notch or two in my reckoning.

Days later and still crowing from success, he boasted he’d busted his parents hard at it in their bedroom one night and I for one believed him. The other guys looked skeptical but me, I believed straight off.

“Whadja see,” we inquired.

“S,dark. Couldn’t see much. Dad’s hairy arse covered nearly everything but he was in there, I could see that much.”

“In there,.....in where?”

“You know, in there.”

The collective blank look showed how little we knew and Bucky decided we needed to be smartened up.

“They have this little hole,” He used his fingers to triangulate a rough size and indicate a direction, “to put your doodle in and when you put it in there and leave it long enough they get pregnant, then they get fat and later, out through the same hole,” he spread his hands with a magicians flourish, “pops a baby.”

“But what if you don’t want a baby?” I asked.

“Then better not do it in the first place stupid,” he replied exasperated. I looked down at my pants, imagined the tiny defenseless doodle within and shuddered. Putting that in some hole worried me.

“So, how did you know he was in there,” we asked getting back to the interesting bit.

“I could see between his legs just before he moved. He was in there alright but I don’t know how he finds it because mums really really hairy down there.”

“No way,” we replied disgusted.

“Yes way,” he replied with conviction.

“Really.” I didn’t know what to think. Bucky’s mum changer for me on that say. All that hair, down there, to look at her you’d never know.

“So, what’d they do,” I asked. “You know, after you busted in on them.”

“Nothing really,” Bucky replied perplexed. “Dad just yelled at me to get the hell out and close the door and mum, well, she just giggled.”

“Giggled!!!!”

“Yeah giggled. She musta thought it was hilarious. On the way back to my room I could hear them whispering and laughing. Musta been a great joke.”

Bucky seemed a surprised as us at this reaction from his parents.

“I thought I would be in for a flogging but nothing, not even the next day. Mind you, Kevin said it would be that way.”

Kevin, Bucky's older brother by a couple of years, had done exactly the same thing at Bucky's age. He was the one who told Bucky how to do it and when to try. "Wait till you hear the floorboards creaking real regular like, not just moving about with the house, it has to be regular. Then, if you're real quiet, you can sneak right up and if you hear moaning and whispering they're going for it. Then all you have to do is open the door and barge in."

"Barge in," Bucky protested. "Dad'll get mad and give me a flogging for sure."

"Didn't to me," Kevin answered easily.

Bucky didn't completely trust Kevin and it took a long time for his curiosity to win but one night, when the floorboards were fairly creaking out a tune, it did.

"So they did nothing," we chorused now focused on the punishment for this crime.

"Nothing," he answered with a dismissive wave of his skinny arms.

"No shit."

His defiant silence finished the conversation but lit a fire in me. In the distance curiosity was calling and I was planning on answering.

Overall I was happy enough to follow Bucky's plan but the punishment part worried me. While Bucky's parents were a couple of happily married people nice to all they meet and liked by the town in general my situation was completely different.

To start with there's my dad. I never knew him but from what people tell me he was a real mongrel and that makes people wary of me, something about my bad genes, but work this out, I've never even owned any. He took off to the bush just after I was born and has never been seen since. I guess I miss him but I don't know why.

I've got an older sister, Jan, to some other dad, mum knows who, but she's sworn to keep it a secret. I think it's some fella in town, probably already married, but I'd be guessing. And I got a younger brother, Jack, and a little sister, Beckie, to another dad but he died. I think it was the wicked drugs or something but mum doesn't talk about it.

We get by in a bashed up rented house just out of town and mum gets work where she can. Occasionally, when we have a bit of extra money, she goes into town and herself a good old time. She's still really pretty, well sort of, and she tells us she tries real hard and sometimes a new dad will stay over and sometimes they might even stay a while, maybe a couple of weeks, but these days it never seems to last more than that and with some of the dropkicks mum drags home that's good. She says she can't help and shrugs her shoulders in between crying when she's down and all sad. It's something about being attracted to the wrong sort. Nev, mum's latest, is one of these wrong sorts. He's been hanging around for a couple of weeks now and I can tell he's all itching to go. Nowadays they're always arguing and fighting. I don't mind if he goes, probably sooner the better. I don't like him anyway and I'm pretty sure he doesn't like me. He's always getting Jack and me mixed up, even though we don't look anything alike and

he looks at Jan funny. She told me he makes her feel greasy, whatever the heck that means. To tell the truth, he scares me a little, well, probably more than a little. He's a tall skinny, rough skinned man with sharp bristles and home spun tattoos. He works down at the slaughterhouse and always stinks of dried blood. He's nearly always cranky, drinks way too much and is always sharpening his long boning knives. "His babies," he calls them. Mum never lets us anywhere near them. Those things are sharp.

So, if I was going to do the barge in thing I wasn't too worried about mum, oh she'd be angry but I could handle that, she can't keep it up with us kids anyway, it was Nev, I was real worried about Nev. Maybe I'd better wait for some-one else. But sometimes, late at night, through the thin walls I could hear them, hard at it, moaning, laughing and whispering, with the floorboards creaking like crazy, and finally I decided to just do it.

So here I am, mouse quiet, holding my breath, outside my mum's bedroom door just waiting for courage to build.

It was taking a while and my heels sure are primed for flight just waiting, waiting.

Through the bedroom door the loud groaning and trashing about had sort of settled down a bit and been replaced by a soft rhythmic squelchy noise, a noise I had never heard from my bedroom up the hall. I could faintly hear Nev, grunting to the rhythm, a melodic clockwork hypnotizing sort of sound. He sounded like he was putting his back into it.

I guess now is a good a time as any.

I took a deep breath, grabbed the door knob and twisted.

It turned silently, easily and almost with effort I pushed open the door.

It the thin moonlight seeping through the window I saw Nev, his whole naked body was heaving with sweat.

His long knife was in his hand, something dark and thick dripped from its glinting point and mum was everywhere.