

Carleton

Tramp Stamp

Trevor carefully snipped the camellia; making sure to leave just enough stem above the leaves for the next season's growth. He took a deep breath; inhaling the scent of orange jasmine coming off the neatly trimmed hedge; and sighed contentedly. Old Mrs Peterson had moved out of next door and taken her mangy cat with her. The garden was finally safe from the little terror.

“Oi! Youse be careful with that!”

Trevor's calm was shattered by a loud, coarse voice coming from next door. The new neighbours were moving in. Oh well; time to stop trimming the camellias and go and introduce himself.

Out front he found the requisite Mini Movers van, complete with two burly Islanders struggling with a big plasma TV. The sight of the woman directing them, stopped him up short. Standing on the stairs leading into the house was a dumpy woman; the scowl on her face messily framed by a bush of tight blond corn rows. Trevor thought she had a nice pair but they were pretty hard to miss in the skimpy white tank top; a top that did nothing to disguise the ornate Celtic tattoo cresting the sizeable muffin top that peaked over her patent leather mini and knee length black boots.

“Er, hello,” stammered Trevor, “I'm Trevor, I live next door.”

“Hullo Trev, nice ta meet ya. I'm Sharon but my friends all call me Shaz.” She had the gritty kind of voice that only comes from a pack a day habit.

He heard himself say “Need any help with that?” and quietly cursed his own politeness. He didn't really want to help this woman.

“Ta. Thanks mate.”

Trevor spent the rest of the day carting boxes; the small van contained a surprising amount of neatly packed boxes. Finally, as the sun faded into the purple Queensland sky, it was all done.

“Feel like a drink?” asked Sharon; holding up a bottle of scotch.

“That's Lochan Ora.”

“Partial to a single malt are you Trev?” Sharon smiled and poured them both a stiff finger of the amber liquid. “How about I fix you some dinner to say thanks for helping me today. Won't be anything fancy.”

Trevor said yes; this odd woman was starting to be interesting.

She hauled out a bag of brown onions and sliced up several using an expensive looking kitchen knife. She put the onions in a large pot and added a dash of olive oil. Setting on the stove at a low heat she said “Well that will be about ten minutes. How's your scotch doing?”

“Getting a bit low” he said, hoping for another shot of the smoky, amber pleasure that was a good single malt. She didn't disappoint him.

“Lochan Ora's a rare sight in Brisbane; where did you get this?”

“Oh I had a thing with a Scottish sailor and I lifted this from his booze cabinet one night while he was sleeping off a bender.”

Trevor was shocked until he saw the impish grin on her face.

“Nah mate, I got it at the local bottlo, they have a great range.” She stirred a bit of flour into the onions which had turned a golden caramel colour; Trevor couldn't believe how delicious something so simple could smell. She topped the pot up with water and started rummaging through one of the boxes—“Aha, I knew the bowls were nearby,” she said rising with two simple white bowls.

She magically produced a loaf of sourdough bread from another box; and suddenly there was a complete meal of brown onion soup with crusty bread. They ate quietly for a few minutes until she broke the silence with a question; “What do you do for a crust?”

“I'm a financial analyst; How about yourself?”

“I'm an actress. Right now I'm actually in drag for my new role as a bogan chick from the burbs. You like it?”

“Well you're certainly full of surprises.” said Trevor; smiling over his soup. Perhaps this new neighbour was going to work out quite well after all.