

Ginger Man

It had to be now. David had reached his limit of tolerance. His eyes hurt as he recalled the humiliation - that public humiliation at the big sports event. Ginger Man has been responsible for that. The restaurant ejection was even worse. He had been with his best friend. Once again it was Ginger Man who masterminded that mafia style humiliation.

Davvid sat quietly at the table. He identified and measured the knife. He would use it to regain his dignity and inflict his revenge on Ginger Man. My weapon, he thought. He avoided the gaze of the woman sitting at the table with Ginger Man. She must not guess what he was thinking, or she will pay for his crime too. He looked scornfully at the weapon he must use. Such a small knife. I would have liked a large one. But this one is at hand. He looked at the sunlight glinting on the handle. Yellow. Almost the same colour as the butter clinging to it.

An imaginary friend within him whispered. You get one chance. I will help you. When you hold the handle, I will be with you. Be quick. I will watch. You do it, you can do it.

His friend had gone. David was alone again. He watched the light moving on the knife handle. I need to think fast. The butter on the knife will make the entrance easier. It will be the end of Ginger Man. His hand will be sticking to the table when the knife goes in.

David stared at the woman's hair. Dark black and shining. It too was catching the sun, just like the knife. I should fix her too. I don't like black hair today. It's not her that I despise. She is under the influence of Ginger Man. The knife is only for him.

His attention focused on the man beside her. He upsets me. His hair with that salt and pepper look. Sleeves rolled up. A hairy ginger arm like a branch from a tree. Not red. Not orange. Not anything really. Mucky ginger.

In the past he recalled that he had liked the man, but today was different. The insults had been huge and will be repaid with the knife. The man's salt and pepper hair was brushed tightly. It looked glued. Above the ears, his hair went in a straight line from the front to the back of the head. Often the boy had watched as Ginger Man squirmed and twisted his face when he trimmed the small roadway of hair. Ginger Man would grunt and smile when it was over. This meant nothing to the boy.

Adults made their mythologies. Often, he heard talk of witches as he sat at the table. His mother laughed when she talked about three witches. Why three? Why not four, five or a hundred. He had seen them in the wood disguised as birds. Black evil eyed birds. She used to ask Ginger man why he read so many books.

The woman was speaking and smiling. The killer did not hear her. He leaned forward and smiled, watching her lips move. I will murder when I smile. I need to think clearly, he thought. How to get that knife in the flesh.

Suddenly he is distracted. There is a smell. It's from the flowers his sister brought from the garden. A woman's scent. That earth damp smell. I know another smell...a raw sweetness of

pine trees in the forest. A good smell. A real smell. Strength. Men, not women. The smell of Achilles, the Greek, a man who knew about killing. I am he. He is me. That knife is my sword. Ginger man is a Trojan. He is talking about that war and the big horse. I wait. When he stops. That is the time.

Written by Patrick Craddock

Saturday, 24 May 2025

Greek Warrior Achilles at the fall of Troy

