

She likes Pineapple

Bonnie despised all kinds of weather. Everything from the bitter cold that caused her whole body to become awkwardly numb, to the tepid autumn where the ground squelched under the weight of mulched leaves. Most of all, she hated the blistering summer. The kind of weather that made her thighs rub up against each other and her armpits thicken with sweat.

She scoffed the last morsels of her sandwich as the taxi cab rolled up towards her. It juddered to a halt, keeping a clear distance from the kerb. Making a decent attempt to brush any crumbs off her clothes and hair, she stepped into the car. The air conditioning seemed to breathe new life into her, and she felt instantly relaxed, albeit still uncomfortably sticky. Firmly grasping her satchel which teemed with the intoxicating smell of pineapple, she looked up towards the front of the car.

“Destination, Ms?”

“Six Applegate Road in Surrey, please.”

Drivers used to sit there, her mum used to tell her.

The car zipped along at a steady 40mph along concrete jungles and eventually emerged into country lanes. Eventually they reached Applegate road, and as they passed each house she was reminded of the carefree weekends spent tossing frisbees and hopscotching with the other neighbourhood children. Every now and then she'd receive a notification on social media about another one of their marriages, or divorces, or job redundancies. There was a resounding sense of detachment whenever this happened; it was just a flurry of faces that she didn't recognise anymore. Reconnecting with people was never her strong point, she much preferred to be reached rather than reach out. Perhaps this was why she felt so nervous. She rolled the chewed-up mass that once resembled a mint between her teeth and bit down hard.

The car lurched to a stop in front of number six. Upon the first glance of the house, Bonnie couldn't detect any glaring discrepancies. Eventually she started to notice all the small changes, the windows were embossed with a thick layer of grime and the stone paved walkway was worn, fringed with overgrown shrubbery. Although she had walked this path innumerable times before, she felt a strange bubbling in her stomach, slowly developing into a feeling of unease. A venture into foreign lands, masquerading as the childhood home that she played and grew up in. Feeling somewhat heavy, she nervously treaded on the decrepit paving stones in fear that they might crumble under her feet. As she approached the threshold the familiar smell of fresh blueberry pie wafted from the creak in the door, causing her mouth to salivate. Definitely the right house.

After a few knocks, the door swung open and the tangy smell of baked fruit steamrolled into Bonnie's face. Stood before her was a dried-out husk of a woman she once knew. A feeble structure housing a burnt-out bulb, smelling faintly of prunes. The woman's face was thick with make-up, as if she was about to step onto a Broadway stage and sing a showtune under a canopy of blaring spotlights. Greying masses of hair spooled down around her shoulders, draping over a garish sundress. She beamed, revealing a yellowing mouth, her teeth tainted with a cardinal red that spilled from her lips. Underneath it all, still breathed the woman that used to sing Bonnie to sleep with sweet rhymes about nightingales and pink elephants.

“Bonnie! You're finally here! I was worried you'd gotten lost, or decided not to come, or- “

“Self-driving taxi car mum, they don't tend to fail on navigation much.”

“Ah right. Of course. Well, come in! I've made pie. Your favourite in fact, and I've managed to get hold of that cream I know you love, so you can have it with that.”

The house was musty and unkept, yet still maintained the warmth of a hearth and home. Bonnie nestled into the armchair and eagerly portioned herself a hearty amount of pie along with a few generous dollops of cream. Her mother sat down on the sofa opposite her, also tucking into pie, and they silently chewed. Bonnie tried to form sentences in her head, she desperately wanted to reconnect. She had the material, all her stories and anecdotes, unsaid during the past fifteen years of absence. Alas, all that she could muster were soft sighs and the crunch of pastry, grinding in her mouth.

The silence was shattered by a creaking of wooden planks, eventually discernible as a pattering of footsteps. A figure emerged down the staircase. Bonnie's jaw dropped, cream spilling down her chin. His face was chiselled, and his iridescent blue eyes glinted in his stare. The kind of blue that quenches thirst and lives in waterfalls, the kind of blue that seeps out of the hottest flames. Regarding his body, it was well muscled, well-proportioned and a feeling of grandness seemed to emanate from all parts of it. If he was shrunken a few times, he would've had a striking resemblance to the Ken doll that Bonnie used to adore. He was the kind of perfect that intimidated. However, what actually unsettled Bonnie was an odd sense of familiarity, like he was a Frankenstein of people she had encountered before.

"Bonnie, meet my new partner, Fred." Bonnie's mother let out a toothy grin.

Fred anchored himself onto the sofa, wrapping his arms around Bonnie's mum. Bonnie's stomach flipped the wrong way as she stared at the picture before her. A mismatched couple entwined on the very sofa that she used to spend hours reading storybooks on, wedged between her mum and dad and curled up in a patchwork quilt. Bonnie watched the scene before her and felt a melancholic pang in her chest.

After a few awkward exchanges and side glances, both parties had exhausted topics to talk about. Bonnie looked around the room, looking for a conversation starter. She noticed her brown satchel and recalled the box of sliced pineapple she had brought; her mother's all-time favourite fruit. She unclasped the satchel and reached inside, an acerbic twang wafted upwards.

"I've brought pineapple, I remember you love it, mum." Bonnie hesitated for a moment then felt a sudden rush of courage from within. She wanted to be happy for mum, she had to at least try. "Fred, would you like some pineapple?"

Fred jolted upright and turned to face Bonnie, a look of determination etched onto his face.

"Activation key word detected." He swooped upwards, peeling off his top. "Join me in the bedroom darling?" He cooed.

Bonnie was pierced with a feeling of dread; a dread that manifested from a sudden realisation. The realisation that Fred had the same face that was featured in a television advert she saw some months ago. The face that was promoted as allowing women to live out their wildest fantasies with 'advanced chip technology'. The face of a new model of anthropomorphic sex robots. The realisation crashed into her with the impact of a freight train, and the notion that this twisted brainchild of modern technology could ever sit where Dad did made her blood boil and the discs in her spine shiver.

In an untameable burst of rage and anguish, Bonnie screeched and darted across the table, slamming her fists onto Fred's chest. Her arms were met with a gritty hardness, not bone, just metal and mechanical parts. Bonnie's mother forced her away and flung her arms around Fred, her tear streaked face causing the stage makeup to coagulate into clumpy pools of red and orange.

"How could you?" Bonnie sobbed. "He's not even real, he's not even alive!"

"If you don't like it, just leave. Cause I don't care whatever the hell you think, he's in my life and you haven't been for God knows how long. I don't need your approval."

"Mum- "

“Stay the hell out of my life. Just leave.”

The room was a snapshot of a murder scene. Bonnie’s mother grasping the pie server in her dominant hand and claspng Fred with the other, Bonnie with her fists clenched and a sputtering of smashed blueberry across her clothes, Fred stood rigidly between them with a placid expression plastered on his face. Choking back tears, Bonnie grabbed her satchel and left, slamming the door behind her with such force that the windows shuddered, and the walls heaved.

Upon reaching the end of the walkway, Bonnie took one final look at the house. Fred was standing at the window. He waved.