



## Tinned Meat And Elephants

by Dan Judd

Today the bump would be the Lucky One. She had initially picked the Chosen One, until she realised that had rather macabre connotations. She definitely had her bad days, but this wasn't one of the them. And the ship had sailed on the sacrificial virgin front.

No, today she was embracing impending motherhood. More than that she was putting it on proud display, like those fancy party cakes you used to see in the tea rooms in Regent Street before Hitler decreed let them not to eat cake. Today, she was a mother-in-waiting and as pleased as punch.

Jeannie started the morning with a wash, followed by a tummy rub using Auntie's chamomile lotion. She then slipped the dress she'd fashioned from an old sheet over her head, fixing a bow made from a remnant she'd found in the roll-top sewing box that doubled-up as an occasional table. The bow was a vague nod to fashion and femininity but she still looked like a football had somehow got stuck in a sack.

She then brushed her main of hair not just the usual 20 strokes but an extra ten for luck and the Lucky One.

Stopping to pick up a small piece of bread spread with dripping and wrap it in Phyll's hanky, she told Auntie of her plans. She'd timed her grand day out to perfection. Such leftovers there from Sunday lunch would be turned into a stew so there was little shopping and cooking to be done. Laundry on top of and tucked away, her day was her own.

Timing was everything and a few elephants had passed before she could get away with the case and the shopping bag. It felt like recent old times, the espionage, the fleeing. Minus the not knowing and the fear factor.

She hoped no one had had the same idea, but it was unlikely. They were god-fearing folk in Emery Down. They hadn't known the hunger that can drive you to desperate measures. They weren't rich but they rallied round, bartering and making any excuse to gift you something.

"I was worried the fox would get them, so can you look after this egg for me?" was one.

"I've a weak stomach but I have a hankering for brawn," was another, as a whole pig's head was hauled across the threshold for Auntie to perform surgery.

It was one thing she liked about the villagers. How they rallied round Auntie. Not really approving of the One but not wanting a death or two on their hands, either.

But they would never resort to pilfering. Pilfering, a much more acceptable word than stealing. With the hotel shut about to be confined to barracks, an opportunity had presented itself. She'd take a stroll, creep up to Cuffnells and see what was ripe for the taking.

"Finders keepers, losers weepers," was the only defense she'd worked out if she got caught. She wanted to show Auntie she could contribute, no matter how illegally. Taking abandoned stuff wasn't stealing, she'd argue. It was doing what she'd done; given it a home.

Luckily, it was a nice day for it. Sunny but not too hot for when your lugging a bump, a case and a shopping bag of swag about. Hopefully.