Bourne toWrite... creative writing workshops

# Deliberate

by Ano Tura

'What are you having, Sal?'

'Dunno. It's a toss-up between the salad and the salad!'

'Tricky. I empathise with your dilemma.'

'Well, you wanted to come here to get your meat fix. I'd have been happy with something light.'

'That's right. Leaves are really going to fill you up.'

Just then, a waiter with slicked-back hair approached the table in a tuxedo.

'Are you ready to order, Sir, Madam?'

'I am, but he's still trying to decide which animal he wants slaughtered just to fill his belly.'

'Jesus, Sal. Do you have to do this here? Apologies—could I have another minute, please?'

'Very good, Sir.'

'I've been driving all bloody day. I'm really hungry. Don't do this.'

Sal rolled her eyes and scrolled through her phone. After a few minutes, she threw it back in her bag.

'Haven't you decided yet?'

'Well, I fancy chicken, but I don't like cream sauce. And they always serve lamb undercooked in these places—pink! Jeez.'

'I'm hungry, Jack. Just pick anything.'

'Okay. Maybe the steak, then. Saying that, do you remember that French place that served me a sirloin with peppercorn sauce hiding all that fat and gristle running through it? And their attitude! "Eez tough luck, no?" Bastards.'

'For fuck's sake.'

'Maybe the pasta?'

'Right, I've had enough.' Sally waved to catch the waiter's attention. He promptly came over.

‘Is Madam ready to order?’

‘Yeah. Salad, please.’

‘I’m afraid the Bouquet Feuilles de Printemps is orf.’

‘What? What kind of a place is this? Right, spaghetti for him and a double vodka for me. And hurry, please, because I’m not getting the vibe of this place, and the sooner we get out of here, the better.’

‘Right you are, Madam.’

Before Jack had a chance to emerge from behind the large menu he was holding up, a rotund man from a nearby table came over. He placed both hands on their table and leaned into Sally’s face, his dribble-laden tie flopping into her lap.

‘I’d watch my step if I were you—accidents are terribly punctual around here.’

Sally lurched back. ‘Are you threatening me?’

Jack jumped up from his seat and took the man by the arm.

‘That’s enough, mate.’

‘Advice, dear boy. Merely advice.’ The man looked at Sally again, then left the restaurant.

Before either of them had a chance to process what had just happened, the waiter arrived.

‘Spaghetti Pomodoro for Sir and a double vodka for Madam. Bon appétit.’

‘That was quick!’ said Jack. He looked at Sally. ‘We may as well eat it now it’s here. Come on, half each.’

‘The food or the vodka? Always thinking about your stomach.’

They sat back down at the table. Jack started his meal, and Sally downed the drink.

‘What did he mean, Jack?’

‘He was a drunken idiot. Probably hates vegans.’

The waiter returned to collect the empty plate.

‘Was the food to your satisfaction, Sir?’

‘It was great, thanks,’ said Jack, ‘although it was a bit cold, and the tomato sauce was too sweet. But apart from that…’

‘My sincere apologies, Sir. I will speak to the chef.’

The waiter went to the kitchen, and the head waiter arrived a couple of minutes later. He handed them a silver plate with two chocolate mints.

‘Ze food and drink are on ze house. Apologies once again. Have a lovely evening.’

‘For fuck’s sake! I can’t even have their shitty apologetic chocolate!’

‘I’ll have yours, then,’ said Jack, who stuffed them both in his mouth, swallowed them with complete satisfaction, and began choking.

He fell back and grabbed Sally’s chair, pulling it over. She fell with him and bashed her head on the floor. A glistening red jus spilled from beneath her lifeless head and spread across the stone tiles, slowly concealing its intricate marbling.

The waiter leaned over.

‘Tut, tut. Eez tough luck, no?’