

## A Concealed Lie.

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'Oh hello, Helen. Cold this morning. Hello Frederico, how are *yoooo* today? There's a *goood* boy!'

'Yes, Margot. At least it's not raining, but this dreadful cold is affecting my hearing aid something awful. It's whistling and banging away like a banshee. Ah, that's it now. Perfect. I see DoogAli is back to his old self?'

'Yes, Henry's sock eventually emerged, rather the worse for wear. I offered to darn it but he had already thrown the other one away.'

'That's the Lab in him, Margot. Oh, just look at them, running about as if they were pups. Happy as Larry, covered in mud. I'm going to have to give Freddy a bath when I get him home. Why did I choose oatmeal for my new carpet in the TV room? Madness.'

'Me too. Although they don't drop hairs as much as Labs, they do drop dirt!'

'Did you ever get Henry to make a hot tub for him in the garage?'

'Yes. Of course he moaned about it, as usual, but he does love these DIY projects, gives him something to do when he's not playing . . .'

ooOoo

The two ladies made their stately peregrinations around the open area beside Glasgow Golf Club.

As they walked they revisited all their old prejudices, assassinated the usual suspects and caught up on gossip missed while DoogAli had been indisposed.

Time passed.

The dogs raced around in circles.

ooOoo

*'Freddy, race you to the big tree.'*

*'He-eh-eh! OK, Doogy, GO!'*

*'I won! I won!'*

*'He-eh-eh! When did you last lose, Doogy? Look at the legs on you! Gawd I hate being a bloody Lasso Apso! I wish I was a Great Dane.'*

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*'Come on, Frederico, I can't help it. I didn't want to be a bloody Labradoodle, did I? I mean, who the hell wants to be a half-breed?'*

*'He-eh-eh! Can we lie down for a bit, Doogy, I'm fair peched oot.'*

*'What about over here, under these bushes, where it's dry.'*

Well hidden, the two friends curled into one another and soon slipped over into doggy dreamland.

ooOoo

'Frederico, Frederico, come here. Frederico, where are you?'

'DoogAli, Doo-ooogAleee, come heeeeeer! COME HERE, Doo-ooogAli! COME HERE AT ONCE!'

'Oh Margot, look. That hole is opened up again. You know where they'll be, don't you?'

'Quick, Helen, let's take your car round the back of the clubhouse, see if that groundsman chap of yours will help us round them up. If they get inside the clubhouse again, Henry says DoogAli is for the chop. He's been threatened with expulsion, you know.'

'Who has, DoogAli?'

'Henry! Did you know he was black-balled for Captain after the last time?'

'Henry was up for Captain? Cyril didn't say. Surely he would have known. After all he's Convenor of House and Gardens, isn't he? Anyway, it's Percy I rely on. I'll get the real story from him.'

'Is that the groundsman chappie you're always on about, what's his name?'

'Percy, Percy Potter.'

'Oh God, Margie, look, our boys are in the bunker, right in front of the clubhouse. Look at the amount of sand they've thrown up onto the eighteenth green! Thank God the place is deserted.'

'Is that Henry and Cyril? Are you sure?'

'Oh for God's sake Helen, no, not those boys, it's your Frederico and my DoogAli in the bunker. Quick, drive round to the back. Ladies are not allowed here, you know, except by special invitation.'

'Will I phone Cyril, get us an invitation. He's here somewhere. Or is he playing at that other place, near the seaside? It's called something to do with wind, I think.'

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'Look, is that what-his-face, eh, Percy thingy.'

'Where?'

'STOP! For God's sake, Helen, you almost hit the Pro's new car!'

'Is that a Porsche? How can he afford a Porsche? Cyril didn't tell me the Pro had a Porsche.'

'Stay in the car, Helen, and leave this to me. Remember, I used to be a Head Teacher, and that old authority never fails one when it is needed.'

'No, I'm coming too. Didn't I tell you that Percy does our heavy gardening in his spare time? I know him quite well, you know. We always have a wee natter over a coffee when he's finished. He's a real font of good gossip, you know.'

'HEEEELLLOOW. You over there.'

The man switched off the ride-on mower and walked towards them, lighting up the remains of an odoriferous weed.

'Percy, it's me, Lady MacCallum, from The Briars.'

'Aye, good mornin', yer Ladyship. If it's yer man yer efter, he's no here. Ah heer tell he's away tae Gailes, wi his fancy pals. Seems wee'rr no good enough furr'im the day.'

'Helen, *please!* Leave this to me, please. We must act quickly!'

'What was that you said, dear? This dammed thing is acting up again.'

'Now, Mr Pottah, we have a situation. We need your help. You must go round to the front of the clubhouse at once, to that big bunker; and get our dogs for us.'

'Yer dugs? Yoose brought dugs ontae the course, missus? That's no allowed. Dugs is against the rules, annat.'

'Oh, Percy, it's my wee Freddy, and DoogAli, they ran away.'

'Sshh, Helen, please!'

'Waitah wee minnut! Ur yoo no Miss Thingy? Frae Drumchapel High...'

'NO! Mr Pottah, I am not. Do you know Henry Swinburne, the Judge? Well, I'm his wife. Obviously you know Lady MacCallum. Now, Mr Pottah, the situation is that there is a huge hole in *your* perimeter fence and unavoidably and inadvertently our dogs ran through it. They were chasing a rabbit, actually. It was on your side of the fence, I believe. Unfortunately the rabbit led them right to the bunker in front of the

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clubhouse. We saw it happen but were powerless to act. We came at once, of course. And, well, eh, how shall I put it, over to you, really.'

Margot Swinburne held out both leads and the packet of treats but Percy Potter kept his hands deep in his overall pockets and stared hard at the woman's face.

'Sorry, missus, Ah'm no quite wi' ye here.'

'Look, it's very simple, Mr Pottah. Take this packet of treats and these two leads and go round to the front of the clubhouse, proffer the treats, call the dogs, snap on their leads, bring them back here and I will give you an appropriate small reward. What's complicated about that?'

'Right, ah gotcha noo! Yoor Whiney Swiney oor auld Heedie fay years ago. The wan thut goat sacked fur shagging Tony Bellany ootah six year. Urn't ye?'

'NO, I AM NOT!'

'Ah, but aye ye ur, so ye ur. It's the big rid mole on yer nose that geed ye away.'

'What was that you said, Percy?' interjected Lady MacCallum.

'NOTHING! The man said nothing. Look, Helen, you are causing confusion with your constant interruptions. Please, Helen, why don't you go back to the Range Rover and get another packet of treats. Time is of the essence.'

Helen was used to doing what her friend Margot 'ordered', and toddled off.

'Right, Percy, how about fifty pounds?'

'Aye, aright, fifty quid a week should dae it. Every Friday jist ootside the main gate, aside Arnold Clark's garage. Hauf-three, OK? Ah'll dae a month in advance, if ye want? Nae skin aff ma nose.'

'Fifty pounds a week? You must be joking!'

'Nah, Ah never joke about money.'

Margot delved into her rucksack, found her purse, fished out the first instalment.

Whistling, Percy Potter went off with the leads and treats.

Five minutes later he returned with a mangy Heinz 57 and Staffordshire bull terrier with a missing ear.

'What the hell are these supposed to be?'

'Yer dug, missus. Whit dae they look like tae yoose?'

Half-a-mile away, Frederico and DoogAli slept on.

