

In the eye of the predator

By Carla Caplin

In his entire life, Donald Scratch had never tasted more delicious muffin than the one in his hand; and yet he had eaten more than his (strangely flat) stomach could bear, but this one was simply fantastic. It combined both the softness of the dark chocolate cover, the sweetness of the chocolate sauce inside and the crunchiness of the nuggets.

Undoubtedly, it was one of Donald's favourite moments, but like many things in life, the most beautiful pleasures are always the shortest.

After having finished his muffin break time, Donald was wiping his hands covered by crumbs on his pants when he saw it... The bear.

The animal, upright on its back legs, seemed even taller, its claws long and sharp caused shivers in Donald's back, but curiously, that gave him the desire for approaching and touching them.

Then step by step, he advanced slowly and prudently towards the animal, which had never seemed so huge, so scary and so dangerous...

But it was too late; Donald was totally mesmerized by the yellow and strangely calm eyes of the animal who was waiting for him.

With a great smile Donald opened the beast's mouth and brushed its teeth:

'Has anybody ever told you that you stink, my sweet Bertha? Yes, it's true, it's not because you are a bear who's more than dead that you shouldn't brush your teeth.'

Donald rubbed the animal's teeth with strength, but in spite of his stopped nose, he could still smell the musty smell of Bertha's mouth, who had remained 3 months without any care in the workshop with the other stuffed animals that people did not want.

The workshop, which was located on the upper floor of the taxidermy shop, was the largest apartment of the building and probably the most beautiful; the clear green walls and the wooden floor gave to the place a

comfortable environment, almost magical thanks to the presence of the stuffed animals scattered everywhere.

For Donald, there could not be any more beautiful place to work, as he loved to take care of the animals, imagine the stories which they had lived, and most important, he loved saying that his work was to resurrect dead animals.

Lastly, after having succeeded in cleaning Bertha's mouth (now perfect), Donald decided to go in the shop downstairs. And no sooner had he descended the staircases than June, the saleswoman, who was overwhelmed by customers, shouted:

'Hey! It's not snack time, there is a case outside which has been here since this morning!'

Instead of retorting as usual, the young man decided that it was preferable to obey, and left the shop.

The box was rather large and heavy, but it was damaged in places, undoubtedly because of transport Donald thought, when suddenly a deep voice murmured in his ear:

'What are you doing alone my little sheep? It can be dangerous...'

Donald wheeled around to see the hideous face of his best friend, Thomas, who was smoking.

'So, what is in this box?' he asked.

'Precisely... I don't know.'

Thomas threw his cigarette, and cherished the box with a loving glance.

'You know...I like mystery and beautiful things, so that's precisely why I'm going with you... you and this box.'

Together, Donald and Thomas each took a side of the box and raised it with difficulty to bring it to the workshop. They were advancing slowly because many customers were in their way.

At the beginning, Thomas was always in a good mood, but once arrived in the workshop, he fell and knocked his head on a buffalo.

'Are you waiting for me to die or what? Open this rotten box!'

Donald approached the box and observed it silently to find the opening, while Thomas who had difficulty staying at the same place, was checking (by tugging their tails) if the dead animals had really died: obviously yes, they had, since hardly a few minutes later, he was growing impatient:

'I don't like this ostrich very much,' he said, pointing at an old ostrich of Somalia, 'her small cunning eyes remind me of my ex-wife.'

'Come, quickly! I got it!' exclaimed Donald who wasn't listening.

He broke the last side of the box, to discover a lion which seemed to be dead, and a short letter on its side.

Dear Doctor,

I wish I could meet you personally, but it's impossible because I live in Russia, in a secluded area.

This lion was in good health, but it was impossible to educate, and that made my circus lose money, so I killed it with poison.

It was 17 years old, 160 cm long, weighed 140 kg, and was vaccinated.

I am sure that your talent will be able to make it more beautiful as a statue than as a lion.

Thanks and good luck.

P.S: In the circus, we used to call it: Leo.

‘I didn’t know that there were lions in Russia’, commented Thomas who had read over Donald’s shoulder, ‘anyway I must go to the toilet.’

He left the workshop, and let Donald alone.

Leo in spite of its thinness seemed in good state, Donald noticed that its claws had been cut, and that its mane was very short, probably because of the poison. However it was necessary to act quickly before Leo’s body rotted.

Therefore, Donald went to the office to prepare his equipment, but at the same time, he heard Thomas shouting:

‘Can you bring me some toilet paper?’

As an answer, Donald mumbled and was bringing the toilet paper to his friend at the other end of the apartment, when suddenly, Donald found the toilet’s door open, and... empty.

Donald thought that it was a joke, and tried to find Thomas, but in vain, he had disappeared.

The young taxidermist was turning around when he stumbled on something; he raised his eyes and saw that his hands were covered by a red liquid.

Donald turned around, and saw the reflection of his own frightened face in the wild eyes of the predator.

As Donald once said, his job was to resurrect dead animals.

THE END

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Sent by PLESSIS Virginie

2^{de}4, 15 years old

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