

April Fool: Stephen Cardew

Trish was a woman whose good nature kept her suspended some distance above the cynicism-inducing world she shared with Alex, her husband of fifteen years. His sharp humour and tales of small conversational victories over ungrateful customers had once entertained her but now floated past her like bees in a lazy summer.

Alex's recognition of his wife's unworldly kindness had first manifested itself, once the honeymoon was over, in teasing but, in later years, this had turned to belittling, sometimes publicly. It was high time, he felt, for her to 'get real', come down from wherever it was she lived, and see the world for what it was.

'Have you seen this?!' queried Alex, at the breakfast table, with *The Mirror* open on page 9. 'It's another bloody 'spaghetti harvest' story, this is. EAT - MORE - EGGHELLS!' he separated the words for effect. 'Couldn't they come up with a better story than that?'

Trish went over to the table and looked, over his shoulder, at the story. She scanned it for a while. 'It says, though, that scientists have done some research and that there's a lot of calcium in eggshells.'

'You get enough bloody calcium from milk and yoghurt and the *insides* of eggs' Alex countered, 'But get real, woman. It's a joke, a spoof...look at the date. What date is it today?'

'Uh.. dunno' Trish said.

'It's the first of April. April Fools' Day!' Alex's familiar exasperation tainted his words. 'It's just another lame April Fools' joke and it's obviously aimed at people like you. Folk with no sense. I can't believe you, sometimes – you're so easily taken in.'

Trish noted the harshness in Alex's voice but put it down to Alex just being Alex. He wasn't really cross; it was just his way. She knew he loved her – he'd built her a carport, after all.

'Anyway, I'm off to work.'

Alex rose from the table and offered his cheek to Trish. She pushed her lips against his stubble, lingering fractionally to show there were no hard feelings for his earlier brusqueness. 'Will you be home for your dinner?'

'Not sure, I'll text you.' And with that, he was gone.

Trish took the breakfast things from the table, walked through with them to the kitchen and started to pile them in the bowl. She stood at the sink and looked at the eggs in the rack on the windowsill – the rack she'd seen in Lewis' and known straight away that it'd fill just that spot. She counted the eggs. Eight. Large. She thought about what was inside. A sort of life, she thought. A chicken that had never quite become a chicken but was happy to give up its goodness for the benefit of humans. That was nice. She realised that she'd never thought about the eggshells before. Well, it was always good to keep an open mind.

As she was crossing back to the sink, the doorbell broke her chain of thought and pausing only momentarily to check her look in the hallway mirror, she walked down the hall, recognising with pleasure the familiar outline through the patterned glass. She hurried the last few steps and, smiling broadly, turned the Yale and opened the door wide.

It was Gerry.
Time to 'get real'.