Bacon Jack: Julie Howard

After the breakup, I scraped the remnants of my life together and bought a soulless unit across town. Empty units and shops with FOR LEASE signs were my only welcome.

Finally, I had the silence I'd craved, but it drove me crazy. It was Rosa who rescued me. 'Hey mate! Give us a hand, will ya?'she yelled while struggling with a cumbersome box of picture frames. She pointed with her chin, 'I'm opening the 'Memories' Café over there.'

'Hah! I thought. *Memories the last thing I need.'*

Over the weeks, I got into the habit of popping down to help Rosa settle in, until finally the day before opening, we painted the feature wall.
'Black?' I questioned.
'You'll see, 'she laughed, as she hauled the box of white picture frames across the room.

Rosa's coffee and cakes quickly put the café on the map - as did the photo frames. The idea of people displaying their photos of the local area and past events caught on. As the frames filled so the friendships grew.

It was the place of comfort I was seeking. Every day, I would sit at the corner window and write. On this particular day though, the peace was shattered by a noise of a bent and broken bike bearing a tall, ragged man crashing to a halt. We all watched as he bent to slip the bicycle clips from his stained trousers before sitting on the seawall.

The café quickly calmed, and I settled back to my work.

It was the smell that made me raise my head for the second time. I held my breath as he shuffled by.

'Usual Jack?' says Rosie smiling. *She's got to be kidding.*

I try to ignore him but can hear him sniffle and cough his way to the table behind me. *How can Rosa let such a filthy dero into the joint?*

I turn to see him wipe his nose with his sleeve before his hand darts to steal the scraps of bacon left on the plates on one table and then another. It's too much!

'Who is he?' I hiss at Rosa.

She smiles and points to a picture of a tall, slim dark youth. 'Meet my hero. My brother, Bacon Jack. First class honours from Oxford, renowned researcher. Rode around Australia and raised $500,000 for Dementia research. 'Memories' she smiles.

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