

Rats!

Christina was pretty enough, impeccably dressed, but never 'out there', if you know what I mean. Working in the office next door, I used to say hello, chit-chat at the water-cooler, and sometimes even sit next to her if we all decided to meet up at the pub on a Friday night - but that was about it, really. Besides, she and Douglas (he of the Porche Carrera) seemed happily ensconced in their 5-bedroom barn-conversion, pleased the kids had finally flown the nest. Then, one day, in the pub, out of the blue, I felt a hand on my leg and turned to find her smiling – a small, devilish smile accompanied, I'm sure, by a wink. Well, things progressed quickly and me, being 'fat, loose, and fancy free' (my little joke) just went with the flow, if you get my drift.

A month later, we *finally* made it to her place. Beautiful, it was, surrounded by farmland. No sign of the Porche either – 'away on one of his golfing weekends' – the only thing disturbing the peace, the barking of a dog, somewhere in the house. So, she opens the door and we enter the kitchen, all Agas, marble tops, and American fridge-freezers. 'Welcome to my humble abode', she says just as a white and brown Jack Russell comes skidding across the floor, growling and pulling angrily at my laces. 'And don't mind him, more bark than bite. Give him one of these: Yum-Yums - they're his favourites. He'll be your friend for life!' Well, I wasn't sure about that, snarling and yapping, taking chunks out of my Sketchers. 'Never been the same since we had an infestation of rats, from the farm. Now he's just crazy for his Yum-Yums. Sniffs them from a mile off... *Derrick*', she says, 'are you crazy for *your* 'Yum-Yums'?', closes the door on the dog, and drags me upstairs...

Well, needless to say, over the next few months we got to '*know each other very well*', if you follow me. Douglas seemed to have lots of 'golfing weekends' - playing away, I suppose, just as I was. Christina and I grew close but managed to keep things under wraps at work. And happily, Badger, the dog, and I became besties, me always keeping a pocketful of Yum-Yums to distract him, before slamming the door shut and heading for the bedroom.

Now, one Saturday afternoon, it must've been about 4ish, we're lying in bed when we hear the crunch of tyres on gravel. 'Oh! my God! It's Douglas!' she says. 'Get in the wardrobe, *now*! And take your things with you!' In seconds, I was hunkered down in her walk-in, stark-naked, clutching a bundle of clothes, Yum-Yums and all. Next, I hear a man's voice. 'One of your migraines, is it, darling?' then frantic barking and scratching at the base of my wardrobe door. 'Oh, no! It sounds like we've got *another* rat in the wardrobe!' I hear him say. 'Step aside, Badger! I'm going in!'