

## Following in the steps of St Francis: Julie Dawson

They snigger as I walk into the staff room. I'm sure of it.

Jason pretends to read 'Nudism in a Cold Climate.'

It makes my blood boil.

Margo starts to call out, 'Hey Mate!' before dissolving into laughter. I glare at her shaking shoulders.

I slam into my chair and pull the pile of English essays towards me. I start to read.

My brain pounds. '*You all knew, didn't you?*' I shake my head and read the first paragraph again. '*You deadshits. Not one of you thought to warn us!*'

Jimbo calls out 'So how d'ya go?' Jason snorts. I'm ready to punch them out, but I ignore them all.

At that moment the staffroom door flings open and there stands our flamboyant leader, Nathaniel, fiddling with his gold bow tie. I shudder. He's *so inappropriate for a Head of Department*.

At the end of the day Jason slaps me on the back and says 'No hard feelings mate. Come on, let's have a beer and you can tell us all what a pack of bastards we are.'

It's when we're downing our second beer, I finally tell them what happened. They promise, unsuccessfully, not to laugh.

'I rang the bell. Carly was in front with the flowers and the wine and so I only heard her gasp. I heard him say "Take off your shoes and leave them by the door." Suddenly Carly was backing up, trying to get away from him.'

'So, I gave her a gentle shove forward. Over her shoulder, I saw him wink and heard him giggle. "Oh, and leave anything else you don't fancy wearing over here!" Of course, I thought he meant our coats. I hold out my hand and then catch my breath. Apart from a little gold bow – around you know what, he's stark naked.

Then Mrs Nathaniel appears, saying, 'Welcome to our little home'. She takes off her pink fluffy apron and we follow her wobbling bottom to the lounge.

By now they are all whooping with laughter. Jimbo chortles 'You know, a welcome dinner at Nathaniel's is a tradition.'

'Yeah' says Margo, it's to honour our patron, the famous 12 Century nudist, St Francis.'

‘Yeah, but I bet he didn’t wear a golden bow.’ laughs Jason. And they’re all off again cackling uncontrollably into their beer.

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