

A Girl's Best Friend

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It was Saturday morning. I ambled up the High Street, enjoying the summer sun on my face, and there it was right beside the bus-stop as I'd been told. Both windows were filled with second-hand sewing machines of all descriptions. The shop door was open so I walked in and went straight to the counter at the rear of the shop. A stern-looking woman in her forties looked up from the sewing she was doing on a machine beside the counter and asked: 'Can I help you?'

I smiled at her: 'Are you Mrs. Davies?'

She nodded.

'I'm Joe. Mrs. Connelly said you had a radiogram you wanted repairing.'

'Ah.' She stood up and slowly looked me up and down, which made me feel distinctly uneasy. Her eyes came back up to my face and held my gaze and she gave a little nod, and turned away to pick up her handbag, from which she produced a piece of paper: 'My address is on there, and so is the make and model of my 'gram - Di told me you would need that. How much will it cost?'

I looked briefly at the paper - an old HMV, octal valves: 'What is it doing?'

'It's got a terrible buzz, so that I can hardly hear the music.'

'OK' I said: 'Let me look at it, and if I can, I'll fix it for 7/6d plus the cost of the faulty components. If it's going to cost any more, I'll tell you before I go ahead.'

She smiled thinly: 'That's fine, when can you call?'

'Tonight at six?'

'Good, I'll see you then.'

I thought I could feel her gaze on me as I walked out of the shop, and as I turned into the pavement, I glanced round to see she hadn't moved but was still staring at me. I turned away, and despite the heat of the sun I shivered. As I walked further up the street I relaxed and dismissed the disquiet I had felt as irrational. I nipped into the Herbal food store, had a big glass of foaming sarsaparilla, and headed for home.

Round about 5:30 that afternoon, I gathered up a couple of high voltage capacitors, my tools, test meter and soldering iron, and set off for the walk to her house. I knew the street, it was two rows of large Edwardian houses, built long ago for the town's petty officials, but any former glory was completely obliterated with years of neglect and many layers of soot. As I approached her door, once again I had that uneasy sinking feeling.. I withdrew my hand from the bell before pressing it, and just stood there racked with indecision. I asked myself why I was afraid and couldn't come up with an answer that made any sense. Finally, the thought of 7/6d - three times my weekly pocket money, made me dismiss my doubts and I rang the bell.

It opened wide and she stood there, one hand on the door, the other on the collar of a very large dog. I stepped back, and she gave a little laugh: 'Don't be afraid, he's a dear, really'.

The dog looked at me expectantly, and I reached forward and patted his head. They both turned, I closed the door behind us, and she led the way into her front parlour. There was no need to point it out - it stood by itself against one wall, a heavily-polished masterpiece of late-thirties technology.

I stood in front of it. 'It's lovely' I said, 'I'm not surprised you want to keep it'. I turned to her, and she smiled – this time a real, warm smile. She walked forward and turned the 'gram on. We waited until it warmed up and I nodded as the music from the tuned-in station bubbled up weakly and barely audible above a terrible low-frequency hum.

She looked at me and said: 'What do you think?'

I smiled: 'I can fix it, just give me half an hour.'

'Would you like some tea?'

'Er, not now, but I'd love one when I'm finished.'

She nodded and left the room with the dog at her heels.

I turned once again to the radiogram, unplugged it from the wall, and plugged in my soldering iron in its place.

I undid the panel fixings holding the 78rpm record deck and removed it, then busied myself undoing the fixings from the 'gram's chassis. I was leaning over the cabinet with my head and one shoulder into the gap, when suddenly I felt something very heavy on my back. Next came an unmistakable thrusting at my backside and very heavy panting - I cursed: 'That bloody dog.'

I was stuck. The weight of the animal and my position made standing up impossible, and I blindly scrabbled around with my free hand in my tool bag on the other panel of the 'gram. I felt the handle of a heavy nut-spinner, grabbed it, and lashed out as hard as I could backwards and behind me. The dog yelped and immediately jumped off me, and I extricated myself just in time to see it sloping from the room, its tail drooping on the floor, accompanied by a huge erection.

I walked over and shut the door, finished removing the chassis and replaced the main smoothing capacitor with the spare I'd brought. I briefly re-connected the set to the mains, and was rewarded with a lovely classical piece on The Third Program – this time no bubbling or hum. I turned up the volume. The door opened and she came into the room. She smiled at me and said: 'That's lovely. You are clever. How much?'

I felt myself blushing: 'It's nine shillings Mrs. Davies.'

She smiled and I added: 'I've just got to put the chassis back in the cabinet'.

'Come into the back parlour when you're done'. She said.

I nodded as she left. I walked over and closed the door behind her and then re-assembled the 'gram and re-tested it. I packed my tools away and walked with them to the back parlour.

There was no-one there. I tried the kitchen. That was empty too. I re-traced my steps to the hall way.

'Mrs Davies!' I called loudly: 'I'm finished.'

'We're in here.' The voice came from the sitting room door behind me. I turned and opened the door and walked in.

There was a double bed with the blankets pulled back. She was on her hands and knees completely naked on the bed, and the dog was mounted over her buttocks thrusting and panting heavily.

She turned her face to me smiling and reached out her right hand pointing to the bedside table. On it there was a 10/- note. 'Here's your money, Joe, plus a little tip, and thank you very much for fixing my 'gram.'

I stood transfixed. She smiled again: 'Would you like to join us?' I fled