

## THE BOOT FAIR – MORE THAN I BARGAINED FOR

I really didn't want to go to the boot fair. Why would I want other peoples' old tat in my smart executive home? However, my husband Gerry had other ideas as he is a keen collector of old cameras and other photographic paraphernalia.

"Amanda darling, there's a fantastic coffee stall and there will be stunning views from the field on this Spring morning. You'll be surprised by what's there, I'm sure you'll find something to interest you." Gerry said enthusiastically.

I didn't have anything else to do that Sunday morning. So, suitably attired in my Polo Ralph Lauren jeans, Harris tweed jacket and Hunter wellingtons I climbed into Gerry's Range Rover SV.

Twenty minutes later through the country lanes we arrived at Nelson's Farm. The old tudor farmhouse looked gorgeous covered in purple wisteria and I noted that the farm shop would open soon. I made a mental note to ensure we picked up some organic locally grown provisions before departing.

As soon as we had parked up Gerry wanted to make straight for the photographic equipment.

"The early bird catches the worm" he said.

"The coffee stall is over there; I'll get one a bit later" and he was gone.

I wandered over to the coffee stall.

The sign said specialty-grade 100% Arabica beans, single origin, hand-harvested.

A good looking young man informed me that they roasted the beans themselves. The smell was tantalising and his smile encouraging. I ordered a Cortado made with an origin-specific single-estate bean. Having less milk than a flat white, the premium tasting notes shone through.

Wow, that's fantastic I thought to myself. And that motivated me to take a walk around the field to see what the stallholders might be peddling.

There were the usual stalls where amateurs were selling a hotch potch of articles after having a clear out at home. Then I encountered a row of arts and crafts stalls where bohemian types were selling home-made jewellery, woodwork and paintings.

I was just beginning to get bored, thinking there wasn't anything I would dream of purchasing when I came across some antique stalls.

Now these were of interest to me. I considered I had quite an eye when it came to choosing tasteful and valuable antiques. I had been known to spot a Clarice Cliff plate at a charity sale and bought it for a song.

Suddenly I felt a slap on my posterior.

"Well hello randy Mandy"

I knew that booming guttural voice before I turned around.

It was Johnny Bunton. He'd been one of the traders when I was PA to the Chief Exec of a metal trading company in the City. He was a rough diamond and a wolf: dark hunter eyes, a prominent jawline, rugged and predatory.

We'd had a dalliance. I was drunk after an office party, he took me home and to my bed. Gerry was in New York on business. We didn't have security cameras then so Gerry never knew.

I should say that I regretted it but I can't deny that I enjoyed it, and by the look in his eyes now Johnny hasn't forgotten that either.

"So darling, would you be interested in buying any of my antiques?" he smirked.

This was his second career after burning out as a trader.

I knew I wouldn't find a bargain here. Johnny would know the value of everything.

"I'm not really in the market for anything, I was just browsing" I replied.

"Are you sure there's nothing I can interest you in, either here or elsewhere?" he grinned in that mischievous, knowing way.

"What are you doing with yourself these days darling?" he sniggered.

"I'm a happily married wife who doesn't have to work nowadays" I responded haughtily.

Out of the corner of my eye I caught sight of Gerry who appeared to be walking in my direction.

"Johnny it's great to see you, really it is, but Gerry's coming and I have to go." I gushed.

Johnny had the audacity to grab my wrist. "Come on darling, you know you want to buy something" he declared.

Gerry was getting nearer.

It was implicit in Johnny's tone that I was required to buy something to keep his silence.

"I'll take that vase" I whispered, thinking to myself that it wouldn't cost too much and one can never have too many vases.

"Oh you mean this one" said Johnny passing me a Lalique crystal vase. "That'll be £500. I take credit cards".

I could see that Gerry was waylaid talking with somebody. I took out my credit card and punched the number in. Johnny smirked.

I hurried away carefully clutching my vase.

"Hello darling" said Gerry, "I knew you would find something of interest."