

## Anne Marie

Ma da's a nutter. Radio rental. He'd dae anythin for a laugh so he wid; went doon the shops wi a perra knickers on his heid, tellt the wifie next door we'd won the lottery and were flittin tae Barbados, but that wis daft stuff compared tae whit he's went and done noo. He's turnt intae a Buddhist.

At first Ma thought it wis another wanny his jokes.

'Ah'm just gaun doon the Buddhist Centre for a couple hours, Liz, ah'll no be lang.'

'Aw aye, is there free bevvie there?'

'Naw, hen, ah'm serious. Just thought ah'd go and have a wee meditate, try it oot, know?'

Mammy turnt roond fae the washin up, and gied him wanny they looks, wanny they 'whit's he up tae noo?' looks ah'd seen a million times afore.

'Jimmy, d'you think ma heid buttons up the back? Yer a heathen. The last time ye set fit in a chapel wis when yer daddy died. The time afore that was when ah'd tae drag you tae Anne Marie's First Communion. And you're tellin me you're gaun tae a Buddhist Centre on a Tuesday night, quiz night doon the Hielander? Tae meditate? Gie's a break.'

When ma da gets embarrassed he looks like thon skinny wan in the Laurel and Hardy films and starts tae scratch his ear wi his left haund. That's when ah began tae think he could just be tellin the truth.

'OK, ah know it's funny, ah probably should of tellt ye afore, but it's no the first time ah've been there. Know that job we've been daein in toon, thon shop? Well, ah wis gettin a coupla rolls for ma lunch when ah met wanny they Buddhist guys. We got talkin and ah went alang wi him tae see the centre. It wis rainin, ah'd nothin better tae dae and ah thought it'd be a laugh, you know, folk in funny claes, chantin and that.'

Ma wis staundin at the sink, soapy bubbles drippin aff her pink rubber gloves.

'And?'

'And it wisnae like that. They were dead nice, dead ordinary, gied me a cuppa tea, showed me the meditation room, and, ach, it wis the atmosphere, hen. Ah cannae explain it, but it wis just dead calm.'

Ah'd never seen ma da lookin like that afore; there wis a kinda faraway look in his eye. Ah kept waitin for him tae come oot wi the punchline but he just stood there for a minute, lookin oot the windae.

'Anyhow, ah know it's daft but ah just want tae gie it a try. They have these classes, embdy can go, so...'

'Oh, well, suit yersel. Just watch they don't brainwash you.'

Ma da turnt roond and spotted me, sittin at the table, daein ma hamework – ah think he'd forgotten ah wis there. He winked at me.

'Nae chance ae that, is there, wee yin?'

'They'd need tae find a brain.'

From BUDDHA DA

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