

SILVERTOWN

The Pig

Jenny Page lives in Altmore Avenue in East Ham. She is married to Len Page and they have two children who have been evacuated since the war started. Len is in the ARP and he has been bringing home all kinds of things: tins of corned beef, dried milk and packet of peas. Jenny doesn't ask him where he gets it from. Then one day she finds a real surprise. The year is 1944.

On one particular day sometime in the last winter of the war something unexpected happens. Jenny notices the tin bath is missing. She is curious and goes into the bedroom to check beneath the bed. It isn't there but then she remembers the understairs cupboard. She opens the door and there she finds it. The tub. And inside the tub is a body. But whose? Her first thought it is to rush and tell someone but on a moment's consideration she changes her mind. A dead body in the bath, not her husband's (somehow she is sure of that) but very likely something to do with him. What if the body is a German and *Len has killed him?* A German! She realises that she doesn't really know what a German might look like. She directs the torch to the form in the bath and as she looks closer she sees a pig. A large, dead pig.

The next morning the pig has gone, the only reminder is a thin brown stain on the lino. She passes the day imagining thick streaky bacon or the stew of belly pork with a few carrots. She thinks of sausages sizzling in a pan and gammon steak with parsley sauce.

Sometime in the afternoon the doorbell rings. She shuffles through the hallway and sees two coppers on the step. One is thin and dark and the other has ginger whiskers.

'Oh lord,' she thinks 'It must be about the pig.'

The dark one says hello and explains that they are on a routine visit.

'What's up?' says Jenny.

'It's nothing urgent Mrs Page,' says the ginger one 'Nothing urgent at all. We're just popping by for a nice chat.'

'Well you'll have to come back,' she says defensively 'I'm here on me own.'

'Appreciate that Mrs Page,' the ginger one smiles back. The two policemen don't move. 'Mind if we come in for a minute?'

And before she knows it they are already in the hallway. The ginger one says 'I could murder a cup of tea.'

Jenny puts the water on and searches for an explanation for the pig.

'A very tidy place if I might say so Mrs Page,' says the ginger one 'Lots of space to store things. Husband fond of the dogs, I hear.'

She brings the pot of tea to the table and says nothing. The dark one stirs his tea. 'Is it just the dogs he likes, Mrs Page, or is Mr Page partial to the beasts of the field or the farmyard, say?'

'He's fond of canary birds,' she says 'If that's what you mean.'

The coppers swap glances. The dark one makes a slurping noise with his tea.

'He do come home with a rabbit from time to time,' she continues.

'A rabbit?' says the dark one nodding. 'Skinny thing a rabbit is. Not much meat on a rabbit. More meat on a pig than a rabbit.'

'Don't see many of them around nowadays,' says Jenny. 'Except in the pig clubs of course.'

‘Not so many in the pig clubs neither, Mrs Page. You wouldn’t believe it but there’s all kinds of pigs going astray from the pig clubs. Amazing how many of them pigs just disappear. You’d think they’d be located wandering the streets eventually. It’s a bit of a mystery.’ The policeman sighs and stands ready to leave. ‘Well we won’t keep you from your work.’

Jenny never heard anything more about the pig.