



THE BBQ

The true pleasure the barbecue brings to men.....

Griff was at the barbecue and Joel was at the barbecue and I was at the barbecue; three men standing around a barbecue, sipping beer, staring at sausages, rolling them backwards and forwards, never leaving them alone. We didn't know why we were at the barbecue; we were just drawn there like moths to a flame. The barbecue was a powerful gravitational force, a man-magnet.

Joel said the thin ones could use a turn, I said yeah I reckon the thin ones could use a turn, Griff said yeah they really need a turn it was a unanimous turning decision. Griff was the Tong-Master, a true artist, he gave a couple of practice snaps of his long silver tongs, SNAP SNAP, before moving in, prodding, teasing, and with an elegant flick of his wrist, rolling them onto their little backs. A lesser tong-man would've flicked too hard; the sausages would've gone full circle, back to where they started. Nice, I said. The others went "yeah".

Kevin was passing us, he heard the siren-song- sizzle of the snags, the barbecue was calling, beckoning, Kevinnnnn ...come. He stuck his head in and said any room? We said yeah and began the barbecue shuffle; Griff shuffled to the left, Joel shuffled to the left, I shuffled to the left, Kevin slipped in beside me, we sipped our beer. Now there were four of us staring at sausages, and Griff gave me the nod, my cue. I was second-in-command, and I had to take the raw sausages out of the plastic bag and lay them on the barbecue; not too close together, not too far apart, curl them into each other's bodies like lovers -fat ones, thin ones, herbed and continental.

The chiploatas were tiny, they could easily slip down between the grill, falling into the molten hot-bead-netherworld below. Carefully I laid them sideways ACROSS the grill, clever thinking. Griff snapped his tongs with approval; there was no greater barbecue honour. P.J. came along, he said looking good, looking good -the irresistible lure of the barbecue had pulled him in too. We said "yeah" and did the shuffle, left, left, left, left, he slipped in beside Kevin, we sipped our beer. Five men, lots of sausages.

Joel was the Fork-pronger; he had the fork that pronged the tough hides of the Bavarian bratwursts and he showed a lot of promise. Stabbing away eagerly, leaving perfect little vampire holes up and down the casing. P.J. was shaking his head, he said I reckon they cook better if you don't poke them. There was a long silence, you could have heard a chipolata drop - this newcomer was a rabble-rouser, bringing in his crazy ideas from outside.

He didn't understand the hierarchy; first the Tong-master, then the Sausage-layer, then the Fork-pronger -and everyone below was just a watcher. Maybe eventually they'll move up the ladder, but for now don't rock the Weber.

Dianne popped her head in; hmmm, smells good, she said. She was trying to jostle into the circle; we closed ranks, pulling our heads down and our shoulders in, mumbling yeah yeah yeah, but making no room for her. She was keen, going round to the far side of the barbecue, heading for the only available space . . . the gap in the circle where all the smoke and ashes blew. Nobody could survive the gap; Dianne was going to try. She stood there stubbornly, smoke blinding her eyes, ashes filling her nostrils, sausage fat spattering all over her arms and face. Until she couldn't take it anymore, she gave up, backed off.

Kevin waited till she was gone and sipped his beer. We sipped our beer, yeeeeeah. Griff handed me his tongs. I looked at him and he nodded. I knew what was happening, I'd waited a long time for this moment the abdication. The tongs weighed heavy in my hands, firm in my grip - was I ready for the responsibility? Yes, I was. I held them up high and they glinted in the sun.

"Don't forget to turn the thin ones", Griff said as he walked away from the barbecue, disappearing toward the house. "Yeah" I called back, "I will, I will". I snapped them twice, SNAP SNAP, before moving in, prodding, teasing, and with an elegant flick of my wrist, rolling them back onto their little bellies. I was a natural, I was the TONG-MASTER!!!