

Door to Door Prostitution

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It was a weekday afternoon and Kenneth was working in the office when the door-bell rang. Jennifer, his wife, hurried out of the kitchen, brushing her fingers through her hair, to open the front door. It was a new job for Kenneth and a new home for both husband and wife in the dormitory town of New Chaldon. They were still making new friends and acquaintances, and for Jennifer, even now, each new knock on the door brought a new surprise. Who could it be? More neighbours introducing themselves? Another local tradesman advertising his services to the newcomers in Kinship Close? Jennifer nervously brushed the traces of flour off her plastic apron and pulled open the door, perhaps a little too hasty in her eagerness, to see who was there to distract her from the tedium of her domestic chores.

“Why! Hello, dear!” said the woman at the door smiling amiably. “Is your husband home?”

“My husband?” wondered Jennifer, scrutinising her caller from top to toe. “No. He’s at work. Why? What do you want?”

Jennifer wasn’t sure she’d managed to disguise the hint of hostility in her voice. Who was this slut asking for her husband? And slut, she was sure, was exactly what this woman was, with her huge bosom heaving out of her tightly strapped top, almost all of her chest on display. And those clothes! No decent woman would wear such a tight short shirt, such tall tottering stiletto heels, fishnet stockings and suspenders. Nor would they sling their handbag over their shoulder in such an aggressive fashion.

The woman smiled, her red-rouged lips cracking the thick layer of make-up on her face, the eyes startlingly painted, the eyebrows plucked to the width of a pencil-

line and her hair wild and bushy and pinned in place.

“Well, it’s really your husband I’d like to see, dear, if you don’t mind,” the woman continued. “I’m sure you won’t mind me saying that the services I offer are far more likely to be of interest to him than to you. Though I can assure you that the services I provide are truly of the highest quality. And I offer discounts to my regular customers. Anyway, here’s my card. He can call me any time. I’ve got voicemail.”

With that, the strange woman handed Jennifer a printed business card, smiled again, and then spun round on her teetering heels and strode off. Jennifer studied her buttocks shifting up and down in an awkwardly provocative manner as she marched along the sidewalk, past the low hedges that kept dogs off the front lawns and in front of the fire hydrant just two houses down.

Jennifer frowned and then turned the card around in her hand. “**Cherry Bangle. Clean and Cheerful. What Every Man Needs to Spice Up His Life. Will Visit at Times to Suit.**” And at the bottom was an e-mail address and mobile phone number. At first, Jennifer was inclined to crumple the card into a ball and throw it in the waste bin, but she decided against it, and placed it instead on the long shelf that lined the hallway, just between two tiny statuettes of jolly-looking hedgehogs dressed like country yeomen.

“You’ll never believe who called today!” Jennifer announced to her husband when Kenneth was seated at the dining table with his supper in front of him: steak casserole, boiled potatoes, carrots and peas, with a side salad.

At first Jennifer wasn’t sure he did believe her as she recounted the story of the strange visitor, in her outrageous outfit, displaying no shame at all, the hussy, a

prostitute selling her wares as if they were nothing more than vacuum cleaner attachments or Tupperware dishes.

“Door-to-door prostitution?” Kenneth mused. “I’d heard something about that at work. And you say she left a card?”

“Yes, she did!”

“And did you throw it away?”

“Well, nearly. I should have done that, I know, but I was so surprised by the cheek of it, I kept it in the hall.”

“Well, let’s see it, love!”

Jennifer smiled. “Of course, dear,” she said, thinking this was a rum kind of joke for a married couple to share.

She wiped the corners of her mouth with a serviette, lifted herself up out of her seat, the hem of her skirt falling down below her knees, and strode into the hallway, returning with the card.

“Cherry Bangle?” Kenneth remarked. “Typical whore name. Like Kitty Sprinkle or Goldie Delight or Ember Diamond. So, what did this prostitute look like? Did she have large breasts and long legs?”

“Yes, she did,” Jennifer replied, recalling her husband’s taste in a woman’s figure that she had no chance of rising to. Her own breasts, while not very small, were nonetheless smaller than average. Her legs were decidedly very average indeed, with thick ankles that definitely broke up the curve that traced from the top of her thigh to her toes.

Kenneth carefully placed the business card in the top pocket of his shirt.

“You aren’t keeping the card, are you?” asked Jennifer in alarm.

Kenneth smiled. “I don’t see why not. This Cherry Bangle sounds like a delightful woman from what you say.”

“But she’s nothing but a cheap tart.”

“Well, I doubt whether she’ll be especially cheap, Jenny, but I’m sure she’ll be worth checking out. Especially if, as it says on the card, she’ll spice up my life.”

“She was really the commonest kind of slut you’ve ever seen!”

“I’m sure that’s not true, love. There are some pretty common kinds of sluts plying their trade in New Chaldon, I can tell you. And anyway, if she does visit, it’ll save me the trouble of going to the brothel on the other side of town.” Kenneth smiled again. “Oh, Jenny! Don’t look so down in the mouth! At least, you’d know who it was that I was having sex with.”

Jennifer nodded, and then cleared away the plates to wash in the kitchen. This was a part of married life they’d never told her about when she was a young lady waiting for a date and Kenneth became the man in her life. Of course she knew now, as did every one of her married woman friends, that all men were like that. It was just something you had to accept. Especially if a wife wanted to maintain a happy family. At first, it had come as a shock to Jennifer when she discovered that Kenneth regularly slept with prostitutes whenever he was away on business trips. The other wives assured her this was natural for men. They were always like that. It was just what men were like. She had no choice: like it or lump it.

Up till now, there had always been some pretence of a distance between her husband’s whoring, often accompanied by his work colleagues, and his domestic life,

where he was a keen gardener and an enthusiastic DIY-er. But Jennifer had been told that just as one's own sex-life with one's husband became less and less regular, having become as rare an event as those bouquets he occasionally snatched from the florists by the bus station and brought back for her, so too would his liaisons with prostitutes become more frequent.

Jennifer stood by the kitchen sink, her plastic gloves protecting her fingers from the sting of the detergent, washing the dishes clean of the traces of food she'd so lovingly and dutifully prepared. It was so unfair! If she'd ever chosen to have sex with anyone other than her husband, she would instantly be shunned by her neighbours and friends, and might even face the collapse of the marriage she'd worked so hard toward making a success.

The next time she saw Cherry Bangle it was at an appointed time. Jennifer was rather disappointed to find that the girl was punctual, almost to the second. She stood by the window, watching the whore stub out with the toe of her pointed stiletto shoes the cigarette she'd been smoking before she strode up the drive.

Jennifer opened the door.

"Why hello, Mrs Jackson," the prostitute said cheerfully. "Is your husband ready?"

Jennifer nodded her head. She was too embarrassed to say anything.

"So where is the lucky man, love?"

Jennifer found her voice. "Our bedroom. Up the stairs. Top of the landing. First door on the right."

"Right! Great! Thanks, Mrs Jackson," Cherry said, passing Jennifer by in the

hallway and ascending the carpeted stairs on her tottering heels, leaving coin-shaped indentations where her heels had trod. Jennifer watched the woman turn at the landing and then push open the bedroom door.

“Hello, Ken, sweetheart!” Cherry said, in far too cheery a voice for Jennifer’s sensitivity. “So, what’s it going to be?”

And then the door closed behind her, and Jennifer didn’t hear whatever it was that her husband had answered. But as much as she wanted to blot out of her mind any awareness that her husband was currently enjoying carnal relations with a prostitute, as she sat in the living room, watching a Saturday afternoon soap opera, she could still hear the unmistakable cries of a woman in apparent sexual ecstasy. And weren’t those also the grunting, snorting sounds of her husband following a very similar rhythm? And the bed-rest was definitely thumping against the wall in a correspondingly regular fashion.

Eventually, Jennifer’s hour of purgatory and Cherry’s agreed duration of service were over, and she heard the prostitute descend the staircase after making her (far too amorous) goodbyes. The door closed behind her and Jennifer drew in a deep breath. At least that was over!

It was half an hour or more later when Kenneth finally made his way down to the living room. He was dressed only in his vest and white boxer shorts, his feet bare and his legs hairy. He slumped in his sofa and, without checking whatever it might be that Jennifer had been watching on television, picked up the remote and switched it over to a sports channel where a game of baseball was in full swing.

“*Damn!* She was good!” he exclaimed, with a broad unapologetic smile.

“Was she, dear?” asked Jennifer anxiously, rather hoping he might yet express a quite different opinion.

“She was *damned* good! You don’t find girls as good as her at Miss Pussy’s very often. If ever at all! In fact, I think even the girls at the Metropolitan aren’t up to her standards!”

“Did you enjoy yourself, dear?”

“Yes, I did. And I’ll make damned sure I see her again. I can see that Cherry Bangle will be a frequent guest to the Jackson household.”

“Will she, dear?” asked Jennifer, who’d been rather dreading that resolve. But as she was able to observe, it had been a long time, if there had ever been a time at all, since Kenneth had expressed nearly as much enthusiasm for his lovemaking with his wife as he was now expressing for his whore.

And so it was that Cherry Bangle became a regular visitor to the household maintained by Jennifer’s labours with the duster and vacuum cleaner, and paid for by the issue of her husband’s labours in the office. In fact, it was every Saturday at two in the afternoon and every Wednesday at eight in the evening. These were appointments that Jennifer rather dreaded and her husband so obviously looked forward to.

Cherry would arrive, her cigarette stubbed out before opening the low front garden gate, and smile amiably at Jennifer who opened the door, before ascending the staircase to accompany Kenneth who’d be waiting impatiently for her in the bedroom. And then the two of them would have sex, noisily, undisguisedly, and sometimes for rather more than the scheduled one hour. And when Cherry finished, she’d be down the stairs, perhaps smoothing her tight skirt or adjusting the bosom just about held in

place by her skimpy top, and out of the door, perhaps to see another client.

Jennifer wasn't at all sure she ever wanted any words to pass between her and this slutty whore. Those words she did say were as polite and restrained as she could let them be, but Cherry was far more affable.

"Nice weather, isn't it?" she'd say. "Are you going to do some gardening? Those geraniums you've got are fantastic!" Or she might comment on how well Jennifer had her hair cut: "You must give me the name of your hairdresser!" Or compliment her on her dress sense: "That's an Agnes B, isn't it? Or is it Christian Dior? What really? Neither of them! I wouldn't believe it possible!" Or she might remark on the care Jennifer had taken on the house: "Goodness! This place is spotless. And you do it *all* yourself!"

And then Cherry would continue on her way, either up the stairs to commence fucking her husband or down the garden path to where she would light her cigarette, occasionally turning her head to wave goodbye to the window of the bedroom above, where no doubt Kenneth was also watching the slut leave.

Despite the fact that Cherry's very presence was a very real affront to her, Jennifer actually found herself rather liking the girl's compliments and the way she smiled at her in such a friendly manner. Her friends, whom she might meet while shopping in town or at whose homes she might visit for an hour or so in the afternoon while their husbands were at work, were usually so tired and complaining, often taking the opportunity of their encounters merely to unload onto Jennifer a litany of the trials their children had at school or to boast about their husbands' achievements in the world of salaried professional employment. Never once would they broach the

subject of the whores their husbands regularly entertained and who, for all Jennifer knew, could include Cherry Bangle. Conversation would tenderly step around the one taboo subject that caused her friends to pity her so much.

“Where are your children?” one neighbour asked once when they’d hardly got to know each other at all, sitting in the living room surrounded by plastic toys and two crawling toddlers. “Are they at school? Or do you send them to a play group?”

Jennifer lowered her head, the shame of her barrenness humiliating her. “I don’t have any children,” she confessed in a low voice.

“No children!” her neighbour exclaimed, studying Jennifer carefully. “Oh well! You don’t want to know what a trouble they can be! Why! Jimmy here... The problem we had getting him a place at the nursery!”

But however amiable Cherry might be, Jennifer wasn’t at all sure she liked to be reminded in such a regular and blunt way the extent to which Kenneth felt it was necessary to go elsewhere for the pleasures that properly a wife should provide for her husband.

“I don’t like your whore visiting you here!” she bravely asserted to Kenneth one evening over supper. There! She’d said it!

Kenneth raised his head from his meal, a boiled potato pronged by his fork. “So, you’d rather I visited her? That costs more, you know. Why don’t you want her to come here?”

“It’s not decent! It’s not right! It’s not how it ought to be!”

“It’s how it is with a lot of the guys at work, Jenny dear. In fact, Patrick has two or three different girls see him a week. And his wife doesn’t complain.”

“I don’t care. This is our home. Our matrimonial home. I don’t clean, dust and tidy it just for you to make love to a shameless slut. It’s not decent!”

“Jenny. We don’t have children. It’s not as if we’re trying to protect them, is it? Perhaps if you’d been able to bear children, it’d be different. But there’s only the two of us. And it is a man’s prerogative to have sex when he needs it. Just as it is a wife’s duty to honour and obey her husband.”

Jennifer lowered her head. She knew she was defeated.

“And anyway, Jenny, making love is thirsty work. I’ve been meaning to ask. Could you bring in a tray of wine and some biscuits about half-way through? Say about half two if it’s a Saturday. Just leave the tray. It’s the least we can do for our guest.”

Jennifer gasped.

“You want me to come into the bedroom while you’re... you’re... having sex with another woman and leave you something to drink?”

“Just a couple of glasses, love. White will be fine. We’ve got some Chardonnay. That’s what Don at work insists from his wife. Only, being the boor he is, he’d rather have beer than wine. Though a Bud or a Miller Lite mightn’t be a bad idea on a hot day!”

Jennifer was resigned to her duty. And so it was that the coming Saturday, she drew a deep breath at the bottom of the stairs, the clock having passed the half past two mark, and ascended each step very carefully and cautiously, carrying a tray, one of their wedding presents, on which she placed two glasses of Dry White wine and a selection of twiglets in a bowl.

Each step was an agony, each step just one more towards the scaffold, while the sounds coming from the bedroom got ever louder and ever more distinct. “Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!” she could hear her husband grunt. “Urrgghh! Ahhhh!” came the corresponding cries from Cherry Bangle.

Jennifer pushed open the door, mechanically strode across the bedroom and placed the tray on the dressing table on the other side of the room from where her, their, marital bed was occupied by her husband and his whore, and then, with the same mechanical efficiency, strode back out of the room.

Once she’d pushed close the door to her bedroom, she was able to experience again in her memory what she had seen and had tried to blank out of her mind while placing the tray so carefully beside her porcelain ornaments on the dresser, and just by the chair where Cherry Bangle had tidily laid out all her clothes with the exception, Jennifer couldn’t help noticing, of her fishnet stockings and suspenders.

And on the bed itself, where almost all the sexual passion of her life had been enacted in steadily decreasing regularity over the years, that was where Kenneth, her husband, was thrusting his naked buttocks, his testicles flopping with the same rhythm as his coital thrusts, into the space between two parted legs. But as Jennifer noticed with horror, the orifice into which her husband’s penis was penetrating and about which he never ceased to grunt “Fuck!” as he did so, was not the orifice whose counterpart was the only one of Jennifer’s to have experienced Kenneth’s thrusting member, but the anus, an orifice in Cherry Bangle that seemed much larger and much more capacious than Jennifer could imagine an anus ever being.

Jennifer hurried down to the living room, sat down on the sofa and stared at

the Constable reproduction on the wall above the fireplace. And, at last, when the horror of her thoughts became too insistent, she burst into tears, sinking her head into her outspread fingers and feeling the warm salty drops seep through, wetting the gold of her wedding ring as they did so, and dripping onto her chin and kitchen apron.

This was how it was to be from now on. Jennifer would meet Cherry at the front door, still amiable and cheerful, either asking questions about domestic matters or complimenting Jennifer on her dress sense. Then after a half hour or so, Jennifer would bring a tray loaded with wine and nibbles into her bedroom, all the while aware that next to her there was the sight of her husband being fellated by the woman who'd been so genial to her earlier. Or of Kenneth fucking her hard and hard again in the arse or in the vagina. Or even of him fucking his whore in the mouth with the same violence he fucked her lower orifices. And from the two of them, but especially from her husband, she would hear the most profane and obscene language. And then later, cordially and even cheerfully, Cherry would say goodbye to her on the doorstep, sometimes hovering just that little bit longer so she might take down the particulars of a shop where she could avail herself of something about Jennifer's home or person that she had taken a liking to.

And then, one day, Cherry arrived on a Wednesday evening when Kenneth was away at a conference, but one hastily convened and for which it had all been rush rush the day before in packing his suits and ties into his cases.

"Hello, Jenny sweetheart. Gosh! Those shoes of yours are lovely. Quite the thing! They're not Gucci are they?"

"Er... no, they're not!" admitted Jennifer, flattered despite herself.

“Well! They’re excellent copies if they’re not!” Cherry smiled. She tilted her gaze up the stairs toward the bedroom. “Kenny waiting for me, I guess.”

“No, not today,” said Jennifer, perhaps unable to totally disguise her glee, although for all she knew her husband was probably at this minute fucking some whore he had met at the conference hotel. “He’s away. He won’t be back till Saturday.”

“Saturday, eh? Our next appointment. And he was my last for today! Well, that’s a disappointment!”

“I suppose you’ll just have to go home,” Jennifer remarked.

Cherry smiled again. “I guess so. Well! It’s quite a way and I’m tired. You couldn’t let me stop for a cup of tea or coffee first could you? I’m quite tuckered out! It’s been a long day!”

Jennifer’s initial reaction was to say “No! Go away, you thieving whore! You steal my husband’s affection and now you want his fucking coffee!” But these were not the words she said. Instead, she smiled in return and said “Well, all right. I was just putting the kettle on anyway.”

Cherry followed Jennifer down the hallway into the kitchen. She whistled as she entered, supported by tottering heels, and the definition of her long legs and bosomy body silhouetted against the doorway. “Phooee! This is one smart kitchen!”

“Haven’t you seen it before?”

“No. Not at all. All I’ve seen of your home is the bedroom. And then mostly just the bed. But that’s the case with most of my clients.”

“Is that so?” wondered Jennifer politely, filling the kettle from the water filter

and then clicking the switch so the red light shone. “Do you have many clients?”

“Mine’s a busy trade, Jenny love,” Cherry admitted, sitting down on the stool. “I have two or three from this close alone. And there’s more than a dozen from Kunley Crescent. And there’s all the more casual trade I get. Sometimes the phone never stops ringing!”

“And are they all men like my husband, your clients?”

“Like your husband? I guess so. A lot of the regulars are professionals or executives. But it’s all sorts really.”

“And have you been a... been a... have you been working as a... for long?”

“What? As a sex worker? Quite a while, love. I used to work as a secretary. Some kind of insurance or loan business. But after my husband left me, well I just didn’t make enough to cover the bills. You know. Way it goes!”

“And my husband... I mean... what is it...?”

And then Jennifer paused. What was she trying to say? What was the question she wanted answered? She busied herself by spooning some granules of coffee into the mugs she’d taken out of the kitchen cupboard.

“I’m sorry, Jenny sweetheart? What did you ask?”

Jennifer turned round to face Cherry who, for a change, did not have a broad smile across her face. In fact, it was an expression of genuine concern. At this sight and also at the thought that normally at this time, Jennifer would be preparing a tray to take up to the bedroom, something snapped inside her. The coffee jar, whose lid she had just secured, dropped out of her hand and bounced on the spongy kitchen tile, while her face, rather less resiliently, cracked and shattered into countless fragments

of misery. She stood there, in the kitchen, by the boiling kettle, her face a disintegrated mess of tears, her hands uselessly dropped to either side.

It was Cherry who took Jennifer in hand, after kicking off her stiletto heeled shoes, and guided her out of the kitchen, one arm around her shoulder and the other gripping Jennifer's arm. And then sat her down on the sofa where Jennifer had intended later to watch a series of situation comedies, quiz shows and soap operas, and let the housewife lean her head, her permed hair crushed to one side, on her bosom, while gently stroking her shoulder and back. All the while, Jennifer just sniffed and wept, her voice too sunk inside her to come to the surface. Cherry, meanwhile, said nothing at all except the occasional "There! There!" while her client's wife buried her cheek into Cherry's warm chest.

It must have been ten minutes or more before Jennifer regained enough sense of propriety and consciousness to utter, again and again, as if it was a mantra: "I'm sorry! I'm sorry!" And all the while, Cherry made only soothing noises and stroked Jennifer's hair, neck and shoulder as one might a crying child.

Then she said: "It's not you who should feel sorry, Jenny dear! What have you ever done to be sorry for?"

"Why? To be like this... to be crying... to be..."

"You have every right to cry, sweetest. It's your husband who should be sorry. Like all my married clients should be. It's a crying shame what they put their wives through!"

"But it's you who..."

"If it wasn't me, love, it'd be someone else," Cherry remarked with just a hint

of bitterness in her normally sunny voice.

Jennifer rested back on Cherry's bosom. Hearing someone, anyone, for the first time, express thoughts so much like her own, began to dry her tears in a way a handkerchief could never do, not by soaking up the flow, but by damming its source.

"You're a very pretty lady, Jenny," Cherry remarked after a while. "You take so much care and attention of yourself. You have a sweet face, a sad little smile and you have a trim body under your skirt and blouse."

"But my ankles..."

"Your ankles are nothing. Your husband doesn't appreciate the beauty he has at his disposal all the time, but instead contents himself with a woman like me, who in a single day will have sex with a dozen or more men like him. Isn't there something wrong there?"

"A dozen or more men...?"

"At least! I never keep count. Too depressing. What you need is someone to make you feel loved. Someone who will make you feel treasured."

"But where can I find that? If not with my husband, who with?"

"Jenny! Do you need to ask? I'm free at the moment. Your husband was to be my last client for the day. If you like, I could give you the affection you seek?"

Jennifer's head rose abruptly, but she didn't struggle to free herself from Cherry's arms.

"Are you suggesting that you...? That you and I...? That we...?"

"If you wish, sweetest."

"But that's perverse! That's disgusting!"

“It is rather less disgusting and perverse than what I often do, love. I can assure you of that.”

“But am I supposed to pay for it? Like my husband?”

“Pay for it? Well, of course. It’s what I do for a living. But I charge my lady clients substantially less than my gentleman ones.”

“Lady clients?”

“Of course! Ladies want love as much as men. What do you think?”

“I don’t know! I don’t know!”

“I’ll tell you what, Jenny sweetheart,” smiled Cherry lifting Jennifer’s face up towards her own and gazing into her eyes with what was clearly a practised eye, “You being in so much distress and your husband being such an unreasonable sod and you being so kind to me all these times I’ve visited, bringing in that tray of wine and nibbles, and you being, after all, such a very attractive woman, with such a narrow waist and such an exquisite swan-like neck...”

Jennifer felt weak under the gaze and under the shower of words. She smiled at Cherry despite her reservations about her propriety, her emotions and her duty to her husband, and let Cherry grasp her head behind her ears and under her perm.

“...and you having such very very pretty knees that pop out beneath your dress, and such elegant feet with painted toes which demand to be sucked and such straight white teeth, and such bright shiny blue eyes, and having the personality and radiance of an angel...”

Jennifer’s heart beat harder and more insistently inside her breast as Cherry leaned closer and closer, the words coming out like warm breezes of comfort on the

face, seeing for the first time the hints of freckles around Cherry's nose, that one of her lower front teeth was slightly chipped and that her chin was pointed with a slight dimple...

"...and such a beautiful and attractive woman such as you. Why! The first time will have to be free!"

And with that the two women's faces met at the lips, their hands grasped each other's arms and legs and their breaths came out equally short and urgent.

"I don't usually kiss my clients!" Cherry announced, before doing precisely that to Jennifer's lips.