

Pride and Joy

A small, dark shop. On the walls and the counters we see stuffed animals – it is a Taxidermist. The shop is empty. Suddenly the front door opens and a bell rings. A man walks in carrying a shoe-box. He is an old man, warm and affectionate. He looks around the shop and, seeing that it is empty, coughs to indicate his presence. No reaction. He taps on the counter but again no reaction. He sees a book on the counter. Flicking through it releases dust which in turn causes him to sneeze. When this happens, a man appears from the back. He is perfectly normal and not as macabre or twisted as the interior of the shop may have suggested.

SHOPKEEPER: Sorry. I was out the back. Didn't hear you.

OLD MAN: Not to worry – I was quite content looking at your work. It's very impressive.

SHOPKEEPER: Yes. Years and years have gone in to this. A lot of it was passed down to me by my father but I've kept this business going for 40 years now and have never had a 'bad day at the office'.

They both laugh.

OLD MAN: Oh that must be such a nice feeling – all these treasures, all these memories. You're very lucky.

He looks a bit forlorn.

OLD MAN: (*picking himself up*) So what's that one you've got there?

He points to a creature on some cabinet.

SHOP KEEPER: That one? Oh that's one of the first stuffings that I did. Dad came downstairs one day and said, 'Son, it's time for you to learn your trade'. And I've never looked back since then.

OLD MAN: But what actually is it?

SHOP KEEPER: You know, I don't actually know! I just got on with it and never asked any questions. I knew I was in safe hands.

OLD MAN: Must have been nice to have had such a bond. Must have been nice.

He becomes forlorn again.

SHOPKEEPER: So I notice that you're carrying something there? Care for me to take a look?

OLD MAN: Ah yes! It's not worth very much, I know that, but to me it's priceless. In all my life I have never seen a better one of these – its shape, its form, just the look in its eyes. It is, without doubt, my pride and joy.

SHOP KEEPER: Well that's quite some item you must have there then.

OLD MAN: My pride and joy. And I know that you're the man to preserve it.

SHOP KEEPER: Well you're very kind. Better take a look.

The Old Man hands the box to the Shop Keeper who nearly drops it.

OLD MAN: Careful!

SHOP KEEPER: These hands aren't as sturdy as they once were.

He takes the box and sets it down very careful on the counter. We see the gleam in both of their eyes. The Shop Keeper takes the lid off. His face is filled with disgust.

SHOP KEEPER: Oh...my...God!

OLD MAN: It's a goodun isn't it?

The Shop Keeper is stunned.

OLD MAN: It's my pride and joy. Never made a better one in me life.

The camera comes from behind the shoulder of the Shop Keeper and in to the box to reveal an enormous turd.

SHOP KEEPER: What....how....

OLD MAN: So can you stuff it for me?

Pause

SHOP KEEPER: What?

OLD MAN: Can you stuff it for me? It needs to be stuffed, er...put on a plinth I think they call them, and a plaque on the wood that says 'Ted Wilson – One Giant Turd'.

SHOP KEEPER: (*stunned*) But I've never stuffed a...

OLD MAN: You've never stuffed a turd?!? Call yourself a reputable taxidermist and you can stand here and tell me that you've never stuffed a jobbie?

SHOP KEEPER: No! Usually we deal with animals and most people complain about that! If we started stuffing turds then...

OLD MAN: Now you listen to me. All my life I've done things for others. I served in the Army, I worked on the shop floors, I've done my bit for the system. And finally, in the Golden Years of my innings, I've produced something that I can be *proud* of. Something that I can show people at parties if I want to, something, *something* I can show my grand-children. When I get some. And you think you can stand there on your high horse and tell *me*, Ted Wilson, that I can't have my turd stuffed?

SHOP KEEPER: (*balking*) And how do you suggest that I...do this?

OLD MAN: I don't know! You split it open, you stuff it with...feathers – how should I know! You've had the training, you've had the family business for 40 years or whatever it is. If you don't know how to stuff a turd then I don't know what the world's coming to!

SHOP KEEPER: Now listen here...

OLD MAN: No you listen. I've got to go home now cos I've got things to do – I can't spend all day discussing the art of preserving poo. It's a textbook operation and *it's your job*. Now I'll pop back tomorrow to pick it up, OK? And remember: 'Ted Wilson – One Giant Turd'.

He leaves. The Shop Keeper looks at the door, mortified. He then picks up a pencil from the desk, looks down his nose in to the box and prods it. Having done this he puts the pencil in to his top pocket. Realising what he has done a few seconds later he begins to cry.

END

D JEFFRIES 2000