

Sundae

He felt the apples and shook his head. They were small and a bit *too* hard. He had his favorite fruit anyway: nectarines and dark plums and peaches, heavy with juice. He hesitated over the oranges. Took three, hefting each in his hand first, feeling the juiciness and weight. Put them in the bag also. He got the weekend newspaper while Jill totaled the bill. He paid her and sauntered out of the little corner convenience store to begin the trek home.

'See ya, Jack, bye....'

He waved his free hand and didn't look back.

Abruptly, two young men pushed past, the shorter one with bleached-blond hair doing most of the pushing. His companion stumbled backwards, and almost fell.

'Just fuck off, ya *cunt!*' The blonde again shoved the taller and darker boy, sending him reeling further.

The other regained his balance and took a step forward.

'Doesn't matter t'me,' he said. Then, almost too fast to see, his punch cracked onto Blondie's cheek.

Livid with rage and the imprint of knuckles Blondie lashed out, sending his opponent backwards again. 'Just *fuck* off. I'll lay you out, cunt!'

The taller boy retreated, massaging his chest and looked ready to retaliate again when Jack intervened.

'Hey! Stop! Calm down. You're hurting him. You're hurting each other.' He stepped closer, looking from one to other. 'Cool off. Go home. Don't hurt *yourselves*, okay.'

'Aaah, *fuck* off, you old fart.' Blondie and Jack stared at each other, until, frustrated by the interruption, Blondie screamed at the darker one, 'I'll get you later, *prick!*' And pushed past to his car and drove off.

The other boy shrugged, muttered 'Thanks' and walked away.

Old, am I? Maybe. Don't feel seventy but, he thought as he continued on with his three kilometre walk. In fact, as he got closer to home his thoughts and his steps got

lighter, faster, almost urgent. Sunday was the day he had fruit salad, fresh fruit salad. Juicy, mushy fruit salad. And sometimes with ice-cream. The bag with the fruit was heavy, just enough, but that was good. Oh, so very good.

He closed the front door quietly, locked it again, put the newspaper on the coffee table. The bag of fruit he carried into the kitchen. Then he stopped to listen. Only the kitchen clock.

She's still quiet. Good.

He pulled out two more plastics bags and triple-bagged the fruit, tied it firmly and then swung it around in a small circle a few times to make sure all was tight.

Feels okay.

Still griping the bag, he went to the stereo system and rummaged around for a few moments, then frowned. Where is it? Jack retraced his thoughts. Then he remembered last Sunday. She'd begged him not to play it any more. Said she'd burn it. And him. So he hid it.

Oh, no you don't, it's so fitting....

Jack went to the TV, stooped – humming and lightly swinging the bag – and gently retrieved the old 45 rpm platter from the space between the TV and the stand. He loaded the disc into the stereo and watched as the needle descended to the track. He cranked up the sound.

As Pat Boone's syrupy rendition of *You Always Hurt The One You Love* filled the house, he quickstepped with the bag to the top of the long, dark corridor. And paused.

Her moaning was just audible.

Now grinning, he spun the bag in a tight circle until *it* hummed. Then charged down to pound it onto the already-ravaged bedroom door, the fruit splitting and spreading like bloody flesh.

'I'm coming in, *BITCH!* I want my fruit salad and I want your faarking body t'make it!'