

The Fat Smoker's Walking Club

by

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"THE FAT SMOKER'S WALKING CLUB"

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

JEAN (mid 30's), a bit dowdy, sits in her car, window down, tapping her fingers impatiently on the sill. She checks her watch.

Shortly, STELLA, in her forties but dresses much younger, exits her house. She shoots Jean a disapproving look.

INT. JEAN'S CAR - DAY

Stella sits, po-faced, next to Jean as they drive.

STELLA

(after a beat)

I don't know what you were thinking.

JEAN

After everything that's happened I needed to stay busy.

STELLA

Well you didn't have to rope me in. You should have checked with me first before putting my name down.

JEAN

I thought it would do us both some good.

Stella raises her eyebrows. Jean catches the vibe.

JEAN (CONT'D)

What?

STELLA

When was the last time you did any form of exercise?

JEAN

Actually I've got a whole library of exercise DVDs on the shelf at home.

STELLA

Watched them all, have you?

JEAN

Yes I have.

STELLA  
From the sofa with a packet of  
crisps?

Jean bristles.

JEAN  
To be totally honest, Steve was  
more one for the exercise.

STELLA  
Oh yes. Now you come to mention it  
I think I did once see an exercise  
bike in your spare room - drying  
your smalls!

JEAN  
I need to be doing something with  
myself, Stella. That's all.

STELLA  
Well, you could try tidying up. The  
last time I was at your house it  
was like a pig sty. And as for  
that...

She nods towards the back seat of the car.

JEAN  
I wanted him with me.

STELLA  
It gives me the willies.

JEAN  
It's just a jar of ashes.

STELLA  
Chargrilled human remains. That's  
what it is.

JEAN  
Honestly, Stella, you make my Steve  
sound like the leftovers from a  
cannibal's barbecue. I've brought  
him with me as a mark of respect.  
And because I still can't bear to  
be without him.

Stella glances at the large urn strapped into the back seat.

STELLA  
Still, it was a nice service. I  
suppose.

JEAN

Thanks.

STELLA

When they played *Heaven Can Wait* and Steve disappeared into that oven - it almost brought a tear to my eye. It's just a shame the vicar wasn't quick enough with the pause button because once a *A Bat Out of Hell* started up I half expected Steve to come shooting back out of the furnace, heroically ablaze...

JEAN

Steve loved a bit of Meatloaf...

STELLA

I dare say that's what killed him. And talking of food, can I be honest, Jean?

JEAN

Aren't you always?

STELLA

I think you skimped a bit on the spread.

JEAN

People don't go to funerals to eat, Stella. They go to pay their respects for the dead.

STELLA

Well, that's where you're wrong, Jean. People love to go out for a bit of grub. On the day Steve was cremated Nandos were doing an "All you can eat for a fiver" and they were queuing round the block.

Jean shoots her a look.

STELLA (CONT'D)

I'm just saying, that's all.

EXT. JEAN'S CAR - DAY

Jean's car approaches the gates to a country park.

EXT. COUNTRY PARK. CAR PARK - DAY

Jean and Stella climb out of the car.

JEAN

This is it, the Great Outdoors!

STELLA

What's wrong with the Great  
Indoors? That's what I want to  
know. With a sofa. And a telly.  
Central heating...

JEAN

It'll be *fine*.

Stella steps into a puddle-filled pothole. She shoots daggers  
at Jean.

Jean smiles back, weakly.

STELLA

All I need now is for this to be  
run by some annoying little bitch  
in Day-Glo Lycra.

EXT. COUNTRY PARK. CAR PARK - DAY

GILL (mid-30's), an annoying little bitch in Day-Glo Lycra,  
is organising the small group of PEOPLE who have congregated  
around her like a flock of overexcited, over-competitive  
sycophants in athlesiure.

Gill marches back and forth like an army general inspecting  
her troops.

STELLA

(to Jean)

Right. That's it.

Stella starts to leave. Jean grabs her arm.

JEAN

At least give it a chance.

Gill minces over with two other women, TINA (mid-30's),  
designer tracksuit and flip flops, and BRENDA (possibly early  
60's), all the gear and no idea.

GILL

(to Jean)

You, dear. What's your name?

JEAN

Jean.

GILL

Ooh, such an ugly name. And you?

STELLA

Stella.

GILL

Jean and Stella, meet Tina and Brenda. I caught them looking lost and forlorn over by the bins.

TINA

I was having a fag.

GILL

Are you sure you weren't about to dive in for a snack?

TINA

(aside)

I'm going to clock her one in a minute.

GILL

You four can be Team Hippo.

STELLA

Is she having a laugh?

GILL

And I think that's everyone. Right! Now teams, listen up!

Gill breaks into a combination of extravagant star-jumps and high-knee on-the-spot jogging.

GILL (CONT'D)

The first team to make it around the route and back here are the winners! The losers buy the fruit smoothies! Now. Let's. Get. Walking!

Gill spins around, her legs a sudden blur of motion. Pointing her finger into the air as if to show the way, she jogs into the park.

The overexcited crowd, keen to match Gill's enthusiasm, march forwards, purposefully.

Stella looks furiously at Jean.

EXT. COUNTRY PARK - DAY

The four women are walking, slowly, already some way behind the other groups. Following on behind, like a lost dog, is DAVE (late-30's), tired and unkempt. Looks like he needs ironing.

BRENDA

I must say, it's so nice to be out.  
Such lovely countryside. I wonder  
if this isn't National Trust. My  
Eric and me used to be members of  
the National Trust.

JEAN

Are you into history then, Brenda?

BRENDA

No. But we've visited some lovely  
tea rooms.

TINA

Hey, who's that bloke?

JEAN

What bloke?

Tina nods behind. They all glance back.

STELLA

Oi. You. What group you in?

Dave shrugs, continues walking after them, silently.

BRENDA

Ooh. The mysterious silent type.  
How exciting! You know, my friend  
Barbara was accosted once by a  
bloke in a park. Just sitting there  
she was, eating a sandwich when he  
comes up to her, unzips his  
trousers and shows her his cock!

JEAN

What did she do?

BRENDA

Well, she had a good look at it.  
Then she said, "There's more meat  
in this sandwich". Which is funny  
'cos it was a cheese sandwich!

She laughs. Alone.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Can't remember the last time I saw  
a nice cock...

STELLA

There's no such thing as a nice  
cock, Brenda. They're all horrible.

BRENDA

Oh I don't know about that.

TINA

Go on then, Brenda, tell us. When  
you see a penis these days, what do  
you look for?

BRENDA

My glasses!

She laughs. Alone. Again.

They walk on.

TINA

What I want to know is, why have we  
been split into teams named after  
large animals?

BRENDA

Have we?

STELLA

Yes, Brenda. We have.

TINA

I mean, we're the Hippos, that lot  
over there were the Elephants. Them  
lot over there are the Buffalos...

JEAN

Bison. I thought they were the  
Bison.

TINA

Is it some kind of sick joke, or  
what?

BRENDA

Personally I'd rather have been a  
giraffe.

STELLA

There were no giraffes.



BRENDA

No, but if there were, that's what I would've liked to have been. I love giraffes, me. So graceful. And really long necks...

STELLA

I'm not sure I can do this. You lot are doing my head in already.

TINA

Well I've got to see this through. I'd be killing me Dawn if I didn't. Well, no. Not literally killing her. What I mean is, I'm doing this for her.

STELLA

(ironically)

Sweet.

TINA

When my Dawn was a baby she used to love to suck on a chip. It was the only thing that kept her quiet.

BRENDA

How funny!

TINA

Thing is, now she's 14 and twenty stone. She spends hours on her devices, stuffing her face with crisps. She says crisps are fine, they're only potatoes. But they're not fine, are they, if you can't run for a bus and your bum hangs either side of your computer chair?

JEAN

All kids eat rubbish nowadays, Tina. You shouldn't blame yourself.

BRENDA

It's not just kids, though, is it? My Eric's just the same. He thinks a Mr Kipling's apple pie is one of his five-a-day.

TINA

Do you have any kiddies, Jean?

JEAN

No. Two cats.

TINA

Anyone mind if I smoke?

STELLA

I mind.

TINA

Oh. Right. Suit y'self.

JEAN

What about you Brenda? Why are you here?

BRENDA

Telly belly.

STELLA

You what?

BRENDA

I saw my belly, on the telly. Sat there I was with my Eric watching the six o'clock news, something about the obesity epidemic or something. Then I saw it. Me with my face blanked out, walking down the High Street, big fat belly hanging below my pink M&S T-Shirt wobbling across the screen. I turned to my Eric. I said, "I think that's me". He said, "It is. I'd recognise those stretch marks anywhere".

STELLA

Bit sad.

JEAN

Well, I'm only here because my partner died.

TINA

That's right tragic, that.

BRENDA

Do you think we should have a break?

STELLA

Don't be mad. We've only been walking 5 minutes. I can still see the car park.

TINA  
How did he die, Jean?

STELLA  
Oh. Now you're asking.

JEAN  
He was...straining himself.

TINA  
What, you mean like on the toilet?

JEAN  
No. He was...exerting himself.

BRENDA  
You see. That could happen to me.

STELLA  
In bed.

TINA  
O.M.G! He wasn't on the job, was  
he? He was?!

She laughs hysterically. Then corrects herself.

TINA (CONT'D)  
Sorry, Jean. That's terrible.

BRENDA  
Just as long as it was with you,  
love. That's all that matters, eh?  
(beat)  
It was with you, was it?

JEAN  
Yes!

TINA  
What a way to go!

BRENDA  
When I leave this world, that's how  
I'd like to go...fucked to death.

They all look at her, horrified.

Oblivious, she glances over her shoulder at Dave and gives  
him a suggestive wink. He reacts, appalled.

EXT. COUNTRY PARK - LATER

Somewhere in the middle of nowhere.

Brenda is munching on a handful of leaves from a Tupperware container.

TINA

Are you sure we're going the right way?

STELLA

Certain.

(she taps her head)

Built in Sat Nav.

TINA

This fine rain's frizzing me hair something chronic.

JEAN

I wish I'd brought my other shoes now.

TINA

Well I only brought me flip flops.

BRENDA

You can't do hill walking in flip flops, Tina.

TINA

Well I didn't know we were going to flaming well hill walk, did I?

BRENDA

Anyone want any of these interesting leaves?

STELLA

No thanks.

TINA

What's that you've got there?

BRENDA

My packed lunch.

TINA

Looks more like a horticultural display.

BRENDA

Yes. It does put me in mind a bit of the Chelsea Flower Show.

TINA

Have you been?

BRENDA

No.

JEAN

Oh go on then, Brenda. I'll try a few.

Jean takes a handful.

JEAN (CONT'D)

What are they?

BRENDA

No idea. My Keith picked them. My son. He's one of them eco scavengers. Brings home all sorts. One week it's fancy funghi, the next a nice piece of roadkill.

STELLA

That's disgusting.

BRENDA

You can't beat a nice piece of squirrel. Although you do have to be careful with the mushrooms. My Eric came over all inappropriate once with that Bella from two doors down.

TINA

Poor woman.

BRENDA

Oh no. Bella's not a woman. She's the neighbour's dog.

JEAN

(to Stella)

My Steve would have liked it here.

STELLA

Do you think? Why don't you ask him?

JEAN

Don't be silly...

TINA

Eh? What's that? I thought he was dead?

STELLA

Go on. Tell them.

JEAN

Well he is. But...

Jean removes the large urn from her rucksack.

STELLA

She takes him everywhere.

TINA

O.M.G.

BRENDA

Big fella, was he?

STELLA

You could say that.

BRENDA

Actually, Jean, your story reminds me of Marjorie Braithwaite.

JEAN

Who's Marjorie Braithwaite?

BRENDA

An old friend. Well, I say old. She's dead now. Fell off the back of a number 12 bus on her way to the bingo.

STELLA

So?

BRENDA

Every time she had a bit of nookie with her fella, made her toes curl.

JEAN

Bit strange.

BRENDA

Not really. Turned out she'd been forgetting to take her tights off.

She laughs. Alone.

EXT. COUNTRY PARK - DAY

It is starting to get dark.

Tina stops.

STELLA

What are you stopping for?

TINA

I have to sit down for a minute.

She sits on a fallen tree nearby and takes out her fags.

TINA (CONT'D)

What's that bit of skin between the big toe and the other one called?

JEAN

I don't know. But I think we should keep going. It's starting to get dark.

TINA

Well whatever it is mine's flaming killing me. Look at it - it's red raw.

She shows them her foot.

JEAN

We haven't made the first marker yet.

TINA

Stuff the marker. I need a fag.

STELLA

Oh no you don't.

Stella grabs the cigarette. She throws it down on the ground and tramples it.

TINA

Hey! What d'you do that for? You can't go around trampling on people's cigarettes.

STELLA

I won't have anyone smoking near me. My body is a temple.

TINA

Yeah, the flaming Taj Mahal, by the look of it.

STELLA

I am not fat!

TINA

Whatever.

Tina takes out another cigarette. This time she lights it.

JEAN

Will you two stop fighting? The others are already well out of sight and I'm not sure we're even going the right way.

STELLA

We are going the right way!

Dave coughs. They all look at him.

STELLA (CONT'D)

I forgot you were here.

TINA

What's your name, love?

DAVE

Dave.

TINA

Fag?

She offers him the packet. He gratefully accepts. He sits down on the tree next to Tina.

BRENDA

To be honest, I could do with a toilet break.

TINA

Another one? Honestly, Brenda. You and your bladder.

BRENDA

Who said anything about me bladder? I'm going for a sh -

TINA

Enough, Brenda!

Brenda disappears off into the trees.

TINA (CONT'D)

(to Dave)

So, love. Why are you here?

Dave shrugs.

TINA (CONT'D)

Don't say much, do ya?

DAVE

Wife left me.



JEAN

Oh. Sorry to hear that.

DAVE

Left me for some git in Subway who was more interested in feeling her baps than filling her sandwich.

The women exchange awkward glances.

DAVE (CONT'D)

No. It's alright. Cos she came home from work two weeks ago and caught him in bed with the young girl from Poundland.

TINA

I bought a hairbrush from Poundland once. Cheap plasticky thing. Honestly, every time I brushed me hair I looked like I'd been plugged into the National Grid. I looked like flamin' Ken Dodd!

JEAN

I sympathise, Dave. I went through something similar.

STELLA

Don't be silly, Jean. Your partner died. Dave's...just wished she had.

TINA

Did he want to be cremated, Jean? Your fella?

JEAN

I don't know. We never really talked about it, Tina.

TINA

Because you've got to think of the environment these days. Big fella like that. Think of all the smoke. I dare say he burned for days. Still, better than putting him in the ground, I suppose. Think of the size of the hole! No offense, like...

Tina puts her flip flops back on.

JEAN

What's keeping Brenda...

STELLA  
All that roughage.

TINA  
I'd better go and see if she's  
alright.

Tina limps off into the trees.

STELLA  
I can't believe I let you talk me  
into this, Jean. I mean. Why do I  
need to be here, anyway?

JEAN  
Because it's good for you.

STELLA  
Because you think I'm fat, more  
like. But I'm not.  
(to Dave)  
You know I could neck half a packet  
of Hob Nobs at tea time without so  
much as a pound going on. But her.  
She's only got to look at a Twix...

JEAN  
*Stella!*

Tina hurries back.

TINA  
She's dead!

JEAN  
What?

TINA  
She's flaming well dead.

STELLA  
What are you talking about?

TINA  
Brenda!

STELLA  
No. She's probably just dozed off.

TINA  
No. She's definitely dead.

She takes out her mobile.

TINA (CONT'D)  
No flaming signal.

They all take out their phones. Shake their heads - the same.

STELLA  
(to Jean)  
The Great Outdoors, eh?

JEAN  
I don't understand. Was she ill?

TINA  
I don't know!

STELLA  
Who cares. At least the  
conversation might improve.

TINA  
Right. That's it.

Tina punches Stella on the nose.

STELLA  
Ouch! What was that for?

TINA  
You've had that coming, you have.  
You've been nothing but snarky all  
day.

STELLA  
You hit me!

TINA  
You're just lucky I don't bitch  
slap you into oblivion!

JEAN  
Would you two just stop it? I don't  
understand why she would suddenly  
just drop dead.

DAVE  
Maybe it was those leaves she was  
eating.

JEAN  
Hang on a minute. Those leaves we  
were eating...

TINA  
O.M.G. You. You and Brenda!

JEAN  
I don't feel well.

STELLA  
Right. That's it. Let's go.

TINA  
O.M.G. This is terrible.

Stella starts to lead Jean away.

JEAN  
Are you two coming?

TINA  
No. I'm going to stay with Brenda.  
I can't leave her.

Dave shrugs.

TINA (CONT'D)  
Send help!

STELLA  
We won't.

JEAN  
Stella!

STELLA  
Come on, Jean. You could be dead  
before we reach civilisation.  
Honestly. What more could possibly  
go wrong?

EXT. THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE - DAY

The crack of thunder. Heavy rain starts to fall.

JEAN  
You and your big mouth.

STELLA  
Just keep going. It can't be much  
further.

JEAN  
That's what you said over an hour  
ago.

STELLA  
Oh, so for once I was wrong!

JEAN

I'm fading fast. I don't think I  
can go on.

STELLA

What is this? "Go on without me.  
I'm done for?" This is real life,  
Jean. Not some bloody Lassie movie.

JEAN

I need to sit down. Just for a  
bit...

STELLA

But Jean, we might be nearly  
there...

JEAN

But we might not.

Jean slumps with a squish to the ground.

STELLA

Well, ok. Just for a minute.

They sit for a while and catch their breath.

JEAN

I never imagined it would end like  
this. You know, when my time came.

STELLA

Oh Jean. You sound as wet as this  
weather. You're not going to die.  
At least...not yet...

JEAN

You know it's weird, but since  
Steve died I've been having  
these...visitations.

STELLA

Grief can do funny things to the  
mind.

JEAN

I've been visited daily by Davina  
McCall.

STELLA

That is weird.

JEAN

This was all her idea. Wait until I see her again. That's if I ever really saw her at all...

STELLA

Oh God. The end must be nigh. Come on. Get up.

JEAN

Just another minute?

STELLA

No, come on. We need to keep moving.

Jean gets up. They walk on, slowly.

JEAN

If only my Steve was here.

STELLA

Oh for God's sake, Jean. Would you stop harping on about your dead fella?

JEAN

Stella!

STELLA

Well. It had to be said. It's always "Steve this" and "Steve that" with you. Honestly, you think more of him now he's dead than when he was alive.

JEAN

That's not true.

STELLA

You do remember Steve, do you? The eBay obsessive. You were always moaning about him. You know, the guy who spent all his time and money at boot fairs buying other people's junk to sell on the Internet?! You were an eBay widow, Jean.

JEAN

Like you're so bloody perfect.

STELLA

And this is the same bloke who would drive to the off-license every night to buy forty fags and eight cans of lager!

JEAN

What's wrong with that?

STELLA

The off license is only at the end of your street! Jean, can't you see it? Steve wasn't your support, he was holding you back!

Jean gets tearful.

STELLA (CONT'D)

Oh, now, look. You're getting yourself all upset.

JEAN

I'm not getting myself upset. It's you.

STELLA

Me? What have I done?

JEAN

You think I'm weak.

STELLA

Yes. If you want the truth, I do. There. I've said it. And it's because you're weak that I'm stood here. It's because you're so weak you couldn't go for a bloody walk on your own! And do you want to know another thing. It's because you're weak you carry Steve around with you in an urn! But do you know what Steve really was? An excuse. He gave you an excuse to carry on being the way you are.

JEAN

Maybe I don't like the way I am.

STELLA

Then it's time to change, Jean. And it's certainly time to get rid of those bloody ashes you keep carrying around with you like a security blanket.

JEAN

I can't scatter Steve here, Stella.  
It's not right. He wouldn't like  
it. He wouldn't know where he was.

STELLA

What are you on about? Steve's not  
really in that jar, Jean. It's just  
a lot of dust. It doesn't live. It  
doesn't breath. It's just dust!

JEAN

(tearful)

It's all I have left of him.

STELLA

Here. Give it here.

Stella grabs the urn from Jean's rucksack.

JEAN

Stella, no. Give it back.

They wrestle with the urn.

STELLA

Jean, would you just let it go!

Jean lets go. The urn falls and smashes.

STELLA (CONT'D)

Oh. Jean. I'm sorry.

Jean starts to walk away.

STELLA (CONT'D)

Jean? Where are you going?

JEAN

Just leave me alone!

EXT. THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE - DAY

Jean trudges on, alone. Snivelling.

Exhausted, Jean falls melodramatically to her knees.

Davina McCall appears, like an apparition, in a watery haze.

DAVINA

Jean. Get up. Come on. Get up.

JEAN

Davina? This is all your fault.



DAVINA

My fault? I've been blamed for a lot of things in my time, Jean. Admittedly, it's usually angry wives complaining that their husbands have bought my exercise DVDs for all the wrong reasons, but...

JEAN

You talked me into this.

DAVINA

Oh Jean! I didn't talk you into anything. I'm just a figment of your imagination.

JEAN

(crying)

And I've lost Steve. Forever!

(she points, vaguely)

Over there.

DAVINA

Jean. Listen to me. Just the other side of those trees over there, there's a clearing...

JEAN

The car park? Am I back at the car park?

DAVINA

It's about a mile.

JEAN

Why are you helping me?

DAVINA

I support people through adversity, Jean. Have you seen Long Lost Families? It's what I do! Consider me your guardian angel!

Davina disappears. Jean blinks into the rain.

EXT. COUNTRY PARK. CAR PARK - DAY

The rain has eased as Jean bursts through the trees towards the car park.

An ELDERLY COUPLE getting back into their car see her darting towards them like the Wild Man of Borneo, waving and shouting extravagantly. Alarmed, they jump into their car and drive off.

Jean stumbles into the car park, trips on the puddle-filled pot hole and falls, tumbling onto the gravel.

She lays on her back, looking up at the sky.

Dave appears in a haze, looking down at her. A big cheesy grin. Jean smiles, stupidly, feverishly, back.

She passes out.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD - DAY

Jean awakes in a hospital bed. Dave's face is smiling down at her. A big cheesy grin.

DAVE  
Hello, Jean.

JEAN  
Dave?

DAVE  
I'm here to help you, Jean. It's  
what I do.

JEAN  
Are you my new guardian angel?

DAVE  
No. I'm the hospital porter. I've  
come to take you to X-Ray.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Dave pushes Jean along the corridor in a wheelchair. Stella hurries towards them.

STELLA  
Oh Jean, thank God. When I saw your  
empty bed...

Jean ignores her.

STELLA (CONT'D)  
Jean...

They stop.

STELLA (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry. Ok?

JEAN  
How's Brenda?

STELLA  
Not dead. Unfortunately.

Jean gives her a look.

STELLA (CONT'D)  
What?

They move on.

JEAN  
Have you posted this online?

STELLA  
No.

JEAN  
Because if I'm being abused on  
Facebook...

STELLA  
You're not.

JEAN  
Or trolled on Twitter...

STELLA  
Jean, despite your best efforts  
you've managed to remain completely  
anonymous.

Jean smiles - this is the way she likes it. They arrive at  
the lifts.

DAVE  
(to Stella)  
Staff only I'm afraid.

STELLA  
Right. I'll be off then.

JEAN  
You know I think we should start  
our own walking club. With Tina and  
Brenda. We could call it The Fat  
Smoker's Walking Club.

STELLA  
(as she departs)  
Not happening Jean.

Dave pushes Jean into the lifts.

JEAN  
I don't suppose you fancy swerving  
X-Ray and taking me to the canteen?

DAVE  
I can't do that, Jean.

JEAN  
I know. I'm probably fat enough  
already...

DAVE  
No. It's not that. I don't know  
where it is. It's my first day  
today.

Jean nods. That makes sense.

DAVE (CONT'D)  
Anyway, I don't think you're fat.

JEAN  
You don't?

DAVE  
No. I think you're lovely.

Jean smiles. The lift doors close.