

SUZETTE

'My sister is a dog... no really, she is! Let me explain.

You're new in town aren't you, so you wouldn't have met my mum, Doris.

Quite a character she was. She lived right over there in Myrtle Street, next to the motel.

That's right, the one that's for sale. I'm bunking down there - until it's sold, that is.

When she died, the priest described her as a woman of brawn. I'm not sure she would have liked that, but I can tell you she was a woman not to be crossed. I think of her when I see those barges on the river over there.

Almost impossible to manoeuvre and when they get moving there's no easy way to make them stop. So it was with mum. Once she'd set her mind on something, it was full steam ahead.

People got used to her ways, though. "Harmless" they called her. I'd watch as she thrust her broad face into theirs, spittle flying as she told them her latest theories of reincarnation – a favourite topic of hers. They'd wipe their faces, hiding their grins until her retreating bulk turned the corner.

Ah yes, she was well known alright. As familiar as the old post office over there, she was. Jeez, everyone in town has a story about her.

My sister?

Well I didn't find out about my sister until after mum's death. Mum dropped dead you know. One minute she was hauling a sack of flour up the steps and then she stopped, looked heavenwards and keeled over. Right there on the steps. It took me a while to realise what'd happened. Shock I suppose. The place wasn't the same without her slow, heavy tread.

On the day I got the call from Macpherson, I was clearing her things out, as you do. A black sack for charity, green bag for recycling and a pile of things to sort out later. I should have known there was something amiss.

Macpherson's best known for getting locals off drink driving charges, I hadn't thought of him reading wills, but that's what he did. He said he needed to talk - to tell me about her will and that there were a few things to sort out.

So I made a bit of an effort that day. Shave, clean shirt, even a tie and off I went. Macpherson came straight out, no mucking about and shuffled me into his office. I can tell you, it wasn't what I expected. I mean old Macpherson is a bit on the shambolic side isn't he? But there was nothing shabby about that office. Modern, slick it was, overlooking the courthouse. Not a thing on his desk apart from the folder with mum's name, Mrs Doris Morrison.

He sat me down, couldn't look me in the eye though, shuffled through the folder and then got on with it. I couldn't take it in. Everything was to be shared fifty /fifty between myself and *my sister*, Suzette. My brain couldn't catch up. I reached out and clutched his arm. Say that again, "Suzette has the right to live in the house until her death." He said.

I pulled the paper away from him and read it myself. There it was. *Bloody Suzette. When I get home, I'm going to kick the shit out of her.*

It was as if she'd read my mind. His fat, pudgy fingers stab at the will. *If Suzette dies of unnatural causes all of my wealth and possessions are to go to the Society for Animal Rights.*

So, there I was, stuck with Suzette.

That was five years ago but thank goodness she's finally ailing. She's getting treatment right now, but the good news is they don't expect her to pull through.

Suzette. I ask you, what kind of name is that for a bloody dog?'