

## A Pig Thing

Becky takes her place in line. Frank from accounts is waiting for Tina to make him a bacon sandwich. It's not on the menu but Tina has a soft spot for Frank.

'Sorry love,' he says looking back, 'I'm holding you up'.

'It's okay,' Becky replies as she leans forward to pick up a lifeless, clingfilmed sandwich. 'Cheese' it says on the corner in felt tip. The canteen doesn't cater well for vegetarians. As an afterthought she picks up a banana and a small packet of biscuits as well. She finds she needs more at lunchtimes now, otherwise the queasiness of the morning returns. Then as she's sorting through her purse for the right money she's suddenly taken aback by how appetising the smell is from Frank's bacon sandwich.

On Thursday she's following her usual lunchtime routine again. She's running a bit late and the selection at the canteen is even more pitiful than usual. She's behind Gary from personnel when suddenly she notices two slightly shrivelled pork sausages lying in the corner of a tray. To Becky's disgust she finds she really wants them. 'Somebody's mother,' she says to herself. She hasn't eaten meat for eight years, but it's no good. She really wants the sausages. Gary looks like he's going for the curry but for a horrible moment Becky thinks he might change his mind and have the sausages instead.

'I'll have the curry, I think, Tina,' he says. It's okay.

'Rice or chips with that, dear?' Tina asks. He has the rice.

'I'll have those two sausages please, Tina.' Becky finds herself saying and she can hardly believe it. 'Somebody's mother' she thinks to herself again. But the decision has been made.

It's not like you this, is it? says Tina as she adds some mashed potato. 'You're usually a cheese sandwich and a yogurt type, aren't you?' She finishes off with a portion of processed peas.

'Thanks Tina,' says Becky.

Two weeks later Becky is at the canteen again. She's joined by Pat who is usually at the gym at lunch time. The fitness phase is over then, thinks Becky.

'What are you doing?' asks Pat.

'I'm having lunch,' she says, trying to play it cool even though she knows exactly what Pat means.

'You're a vegetarian and you're eating gammon.' Pat replies scathingly.

Becky decides to come clean. 'It's this baby, my body just doesn't feel like my own at the moment.'

'You're pregnant,' says Pat, a little more loudly than she'd meant to. The noise level in the canteen drops slightly for a moment.

'Well, thanks Pat. I was wondering how I was going to broach the subject with everybody.'

'Sorry,' Pat busies herself arranging her own lunch on the table. 'You can have one of my chicken nuggets, while you're at it, eating for two and all that.'

'No thanks,' Becky replies. 'It's a pig thing.'

By the end of August she calculates she has eaten one third of a pig.

'The roast pork is lovely,' she hears Tina saying, disturbing her in her own little world.

'It was supposed to be Coronation chicken today but I knew it was going to be your last day for a while.' Tina presents her with a generous plateful and she hasn't the heart to say she doesn't really feel like eating much today. She wonders again if it was such a good idea to work until so late in her pregnancy. Every step feels like a huge effort as she pushes her tray along the runners to the till.

'Are you all right?' Tina is asking. 'You look a little pale.'

'I'm fine' she says, but she isn't and as the first pains come over her she feels Tina's strong arms around her.

'It looks like today's the day,' she says as she helps Becky to a chair.

The next morning the sun finds its way into her hospital window as her breakfast is brought to her on a tray.

'What a beautiful baby girl,' the midwife is saying and Becky assumes she says that about every baby. She peers down at the bundle of aertex blankets to get a closer look. The baby is squeaking quietly. She inspects the small upturned nose and then the eyes. Too close together surely. Piggy little eyes, she thinks.

