

## Speak of the Devil

My devil and I have an agreement. He stays quiet for the most part and when it's appropriate, I let him have his fun. So you can imagine the trouble I got into when my devil made himself known at a dinner organised to meet my best friend's new fiancé.

Leila has been married before. Twice before. Both times to the same man. But this time, she was marrying Alvin, not Dave. Their romance had been not so much whirlwind as maelstrom - they met on a Mediterranean cruise whilst Leila was trying to get over the breakdown of her marriage to Dave. Funnily enough, she went on a Scandinavian cruise to get over the breakdown of her first marriage to Dave, and he ended up flying to Helsinki and proposing again on a husky-sled ride.

Anyway, back to the dinner and the devil...

I was trying to squeeze into the dress that fitted last summer. My devil had been suggesting to me all winter to eat more chocolate, now that the evidence proved it was good for you. I was never quite convinced that a bar a day was the recommended daily intake, but ... even with killer heels, I looked and felt stodgy.

My devil was being unkind too. *"You should have joined the gym when they had the special offer on, Della."*

"I know," I huffed just as my husband Brian appeared.

"You look lovely," he said with his eyes on the crossword crumpled in his hand.

## Speak of the Devil

“No wonder you were so long,” I sighed. Then my devil added, *“Did you spend all that time trying to work it out with a pen and paper?”*

“Very funny. Where’s my nice shirt?”

*“Do you have one?”* my devil asked before I could stop him.

“What?” said Brian.

“Which one?” I smiled.

“The beige one.”

“Stone, dear. We call it stone these days. It’s in the wardrobe, far right, with all the natural colours.”

“I think you’ve been feeding me too much chocolate, Della. Do I look alright?”

I took in the bulging buttons. “Perhaps you should put the fawn one on instead.” He stared at me blankly. “Dark beige, Brian. Dark beige.”

See, the devil had already got the better of me. And that was before we’d even got to the restaurant.

All the way there, I couldn’t help thinking about Alvin and whether or not he would look like a chipmunk. I’d taken my grandson to see the film and unfortunately, my devil had conjured up an image of a man with quick eyes, a pointy face and buck teeth.

Leila’s small but loyal group of friends gathered at the table. Including Dave. And Dave’s new girlfriend - a spray-tanned dolly bird who looked like she was having trouble following the conversation. It turned out she was. She’d flown over from Moscow two weeks before and barely spoke two words of English. She laughed a lot though. Well, squawked, really. My devil was feeling very naughty.

## Speak of the Devil

“So Dave, where did you meet Ivanka?” I asked. “*And how much did she cost?*” My devil added, just as Ivanka downed her vodka in one.

“Sorry?” Dave frowned.

At that point Leila gushed in, carrying on her arm, the hapless Alvin. Not so much chipmunk as Trappist monk. His shiny head protruded through a ring of fuzzy red hair and if he said more than three words throughout the whole meal, I didn't hear them.

My devil and I did notice how often Dave looked at Leila and Leila looked at Dave and after several glasses of vino my devil seemed to notice that Ivanka looked at Alvin quite often too.

I felt my devil building up for a big one and unfortunately I couldn't hold it down.

“*So Leila, what was the attraction to Alvin?*” Leila glared behind her wine glass. I felt it might be good to add something myself at this point. “Apart from the good looks, that is.” Sadly, Ivanka chose that moment to laugh again and even Brian got a fit of the giggles. Dave would have laughed but he'd gone to the gents. Alvin blushed beetroot and fiddled with his glasses, waiting for Leila's response. My devil bounced around my insides with glee.

“It's his intellect I fell for,” she announced, rather haughtily, I thought. Dave had returned and stifled a snort in his pint. Alvin cleared his throat as though to defend his honour, but shrunk silently into his seat instead.

“I luf a men vif a beeg intellek,” Ivanka added for good measure.

I swear I saw Alvin's mouth flicker into a smile. Leila scowled. Dave looked deflated. Brian downed his beer in one and my devil was definitely in

## **Speak of the Devil**

the zone. *“They say that the definition of an intellectual is someone who’s found something more interesting than sex.”*

All eyes needled into me in the stunned silence that followed. I swallowed my devil down, feeling decidedly sick. Alvin stood to leave. Leila pulled him back down. Ivanka giggled endlessly and Brian took me home.

My devil and I haven’t seen eye to eye for a while now. So when the wedding invitation arrived, I wasn’t quite sure what to do.

“We have to go. She’s your best friend,” Brian said. I knew he was right, but I still felt guilty over the dinner debacle. I didn’t think she’d ever trust me and my devilish mouth again.

As it turned out, the wedding was glorious. My devil behaved. The sun shone bright in the autumn sky. Copper leaves drifted about the happy couple as they posed for photos.

I leant into Brian’s comforting body. “They look rather good together, don’t they?”

“Well, they should. This is the third time they’ve been married.”

I waved at Leila and Dave. “They do say better the devil you know.”

*Slingink Inspirations Jan-Feb 2010 Fiction Winner – **Vicky Daddo** (VickyDaddo)*