

Nothing to laugh at, at all.

by Claire King

When your Gran was little, she'd sit on the pavement waiting for the crab man to come past the top of her street. He'd throw her a skinny crab leg like she was a stray puppy and she'd suck it for hours. She didn't have a Dad; she was a bastard. OK, I did just say that for effect but it's what the neighbours called her.

Your Gran left school at fifteen and started work. Yes, work. What do you think, she had a year off in Cleethorpes? She married her first boyfriend, first baby at nineteen, second at twenty. I was the second baby, she gave birth to me in one of those terraces they demolished last year. No, she wasn't a hippy. Your uncle Jack was born in hospital and he had to wear hospital nappies. The nappies were terry - you washed them. Except the hospital didn't have enough time for that, so when they got weed on they were put straight onto the radiators to dry. Your Gran had a massive fight with the nurses. I know, it's hard to imagine, but she did. In the end, Sister let her check out. So a year later I was born at home and your Grandad went mad because then they had to throw out the bed sheets.

Your Grandad liked things spotless. The house had to be clean - I mean thorough-clean - when he got home from the pit for his tea, or he'd throw his plate at the wall and the gravy would run down onto the carpet. There was always gravy. Afterwards, when he'd calmed down, he would knock your Gran about a bit. Don't look so surprised; it was normal back then. All the miners hit their wives. On Sundays she'd cook a roast. The difference with a roast dinner was you got four kinds of veg and two kinds of potatoes. Your Grandad would go down The Star, and she had to have it on the table for him, hot, when he got back in the door, or else. She'd have us watch for him coming down the road.

It wasn't like she had all day to spend hoovering, what with two babies, and no car. Twice a week she would push us down to Hillards, a couple of miles down the road and back uphill again

Available online at *«<http://fictionaut.com/stories/claire-king/nothing-to-laugh-at-at-all>»*

Copyright © 2010 Claire King. All rights reserved.

with the shopping. The other days she would walk to the bakers, the greengrocers and the butchers, just for what we needed that day. At least our milk was delivered. It clinked onto the doorstep before breakfast, silver topped bottles brought by a man in a milk float. I'm not sure they still have those. It was like a van but different, it was electric. Yes, they had electric cars in the olden days. Look on the internet. No, not on Facebook.

Well here's the punchline then, since you're busy. When your Uncle Jack and I left home, so did she. She packed a bag and moved right away. To a boring island with a garden full of vegetables, and a house she can leave to get dusty without getting a kicking. So yes, you're right, you two have nowt in common. But she's your Gran. Why don't you give her a call?

