

CHANGES

by

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(A living room of a flat that has seen better times. It is sparsely furnished but apart from a few chairs, on a table leaning against the wall is a sign emblazoned with the words Simmonds Traditional Fruit and Vegetables.)

ARTHUR (O.S.)

Come on son we can discuss businesses better in the Lounge.

(Two men enter, the elder one is in his fifties, his clothing like the room has seen better days, the younger man is in his late twenties his clothes although casual are smart and the in the latest trend)

JERRY

Look call me Jerry and if you don't mind I will call you Arthur, I have always thought of your family as forerunners in the game and I want people to see the name Simmonds Fruit and Veg for years to come.

ARTHUR

That's Simmonds traditional fruit and vegetables, son.

JERRY

(smiling)
Of course and it Jerry Arthur.

ARTHUR

((nodding))
OK son
(pause)
sit down. Would you like a drink?

JERRY:

No thanks, now lets get down to business, me and Brother want to buy or let's call it lease your market Stall
((Arthur nods))
now as you know we already have a pitch in Berwick Street but I have been talking to Westminster's market division and they as long as your name is on the licence we can rent the pitch off you. We worked out what even I thinking is a very generous offer, a retainer and a weekly fee paid to you for the rest of your life.

ARTHUR

(looking at the sign)
Been in the game all my life
(morose)
It's been in In my family for almost a 100 years. Simmonds Traditional Fruit and Vegetables, you know we used To
(MORE)

ARTHUR (Continued)

supply all the big restaurants, I remember xmas '88, we sold out of sprouts a week before xmas... I panicked but not Joe, he just said don't worry Arthur Monday we will have more than enough and sure enough as if he was Jesus, Monday morning 5pm he pulled up with a lorry load and by that Saturday we sold it all. ...I miss him I do, he would know what to do.

JERRY:

Look Arthur here look at this cheque, see it's made out to you - five thousand quid and every week you get two hundred pounds now with your pension you will be comfortable for the rest of your life.

ARTHUR:

Pension????

(Pause)

I never got round to sorting it out, I left all that sort of thing to Joe he was the brains. Did you know he's been dead for a year? now, been more and more difficult but the business ticks over and after wages and expenses I earn a sight more than what you are offering me.

JERRY

Now we based this on you having a pension, let me make a call to Charlie. You remember him

(takes mobile out and phones)

hello Charlie

((pause))

Yes I am with him now He aint got a pension so let's fiddle it a bityes we may lose something but

(smiles at Arthur)

he deserves respect.....What! Can we afford it? ...ok bruv see you later.

(To Arthur)

Well! Now I personally think Charlie is overdoing it but here's the deal you get £15000 and not £200 but £300 every week in your hand but here's the thing you get it in cash no tax so no ones know.

ARTHUR:

Well that is very generous.

(pause)

you know the fruit game was so good, then it happened and I remember what did it.

JERRY:

What happened?

ARTHUR:

Keeeee WEeeees, that's what happened and before that it was plaaantaiinn, all that foreign muck. Me and Joe always agreed on one thing no foreign stuff well except the traditional foreign ones like bananas, cape apples and like.

JERRY:

Well we do live in changing times Arthur

ARTHUR:

Well not me son I don't want any of that crap on my stall, listen last week some posh tart comes to my pitch, starts ordering quite a lot, and then she asks do I have any lemongrass - LEMONGRASS! I asked what she wanted it for she says to season the curry with I says to her slice some lemons up and put a parley in it, well you should of seen her face, she calls me a uncouth lout and walks away

JERRY:

Well the public do want all that foreign stuff; it's the way things are now. I actually like coconut cake, my missus makes it and she buys them, cuts them uses the skin and then gives us the juice to drink its lovely.

ARTHUR

Coconuts???!!! Only coconuts I seen was when I was a nipper at the fair. I remember one Easter me and Joe went to Hampstead Heath Fair never told the old man or mum. We took all out savings two pounds three shillings with us. That was fortune in those days I tell you. We felt rich well I wanted to spend most of my share on cotton candy and toffee apples but Joe says no lets win some prizes to takes home so when we tells em where we been we wont get a good hiding. So we went to the coconut shy it was a tanner a go, do you know we spent over 30 bob in that bloody place and guess what we got.?

JERRY:

What?

ARTHUR

Bugger all, then Joe had this bright idea to try the shooting rangeand sure enough we got home with nothing, actually the only thing we did get that day was a good hiding from the old man

((chuckles).)

JERRY(*smiling*)

Parents don't change do they , My dad used to hit me and Charlie, I think dads train in spanking, well I am going to be a better dad to my Ronnie then he was to me.

ARTHUR

Parents don't change do they , My dad used to hit me and Charlie, I think dads train in spanking, well I am going to be a better dad to my Ronnie then he was to me.

JERRY

I don't know , you can never understand women, sometimes I don't know why my Rachel puts up with me I gets up before she does and most days I comes back after she is in bed,

JERRY:

but I do spend every Sunday with her and Ronnie, after all a kids got to know their dad ain't they?

ARTHUR:

Yes, do you know the only time I was with my dad was on that stall, he never went anywhere, never went on holidays with us, mum made sure we got our two weeks by the sea she took us to Southend.

Mrs. Harts boarding house Do you know she never had any fruit in her place and her veg well I got to say was pretty manky.

(Jerry looks at his watch.)

JERRY

Anyway Arthur lets get it settled

ARTHUR

Not on my pitch, see that sign, it says Simmonds traditional fruit and Vegetables and that's how it should be, this is England, ok I will serve anyone but they got to understand on my pitch they get traditional veg and fruit none of this exotic stuff, do you know what I was asked for the other day.?

JERRY:

No, what?

ARTHUR:

Star fruit, I asks what is that, bloke describes it to me and I says not here I points to the sign and says why don't you have a Saatsuma, we only starting doing them 2 years ago, personally I prefer a nice big orange, bloody Saatsuma's you eats one and you only want another one now you eats a orange and that's it.

JERRY

I know Arthur but look lets get back to business are you interested in our...

ARTHUR

Look son I been in this game since a nipper, this is important what I am saying (pauses) I am trying to educate you, look how long you been in the game

JERRY

Well 5 years but.

ARTHUR(screams)

5 years and you thinks you knows it all!!

(Pause)

I am 61 now most of that time I worked that stall, and you new ones thinks you knows it all I could still teach you a thing or two.

(Pause)

I got an idea.

JERRY

What is that Arthur?

ARTHUR:

I will still sell you the pitch but I come and work it a few days a week. How about that son? I will give you my years of experience.

JERRY

I don't know about that Arthur, see I already got people to work the stall.

(Pause)

Anyway you can always visit, now I got all the paperwork here let me explain to you the ins and outs of it all

ARTHUR

I am a bit disappointed son, after all I have years of experience and how do you know the person running the pitch will be ok. Who is going to run the stall for you?

JERRY

No worries there Arthur, I am going to personally n it, while Charlie runs the other pitch. So everything will be cushty.

ARTHUR:

Well if you don't want my years of experience? Do you know we were the first stall to sell mangoes? I remember old Freddie Clark comes up and sees them,

(Grins)

He says to me where do these pears come from, I laughed and says these aren't pears there mangoes, do you know I have never had one, I wonder what they taste like?

JERRY:

You should try one I hear they are quite tasty, like a funny peach really

ARTHUR

I LIKE PEACHES, THIS WEEK I MUST OF SOLD OVER 50 BASKETS OF THEM . NOW MANGOES I SELLS MAYBE 30 BOXES.

(long pause)

You know that pitch is still a good earner, maybe I won't sell it son.

JERRY:

Arthur let me ask you a question?

ARTHUR:

Go ahead.

JERRY:

I been looking at your books and what has happened, your stall seemed to be rolling in it but now you take a quarter of what you use to take.

ARTHUR

(Ruffled)

Still a good earner I pay 3 staff good wages

JERRY:

Yes but it still seems to be a lot less than you use to take

ARTHUR

It's all that foreign muck they want now and

JERRY

And???????????

ARTHUR

I got to admit Joe was the wheeler and dealer of the family; I swear he could make fruit grow out of thin air. Anyway its still as thriving business or else you would not want it, you already got 3 pitches in the market. (pauses)Yeah! That's right, why do you want to have another pitch?

JERRY

Well the truth is we want to expand, after all its all about takings ain't it and I have always thought your pitch was one of the best in the market and like you we are a family business and we want to start a dynasty which has some pedigree so maybe a 100 years time people will think of Carters like they do Simmonds.

ARTHUR

(Chuckles)

Hope not son business is going down.

JERRY

Look, Arthur I got the papers here and I can have the cheque drawn up as soon as I get back.

ARTHUR:

Well,I don't know, son, I still got some years left in my and you do know we got contracts with some of the local restaurants what will happen to them?

JERRY:

Don't worry about them, it will just continue as normal.

ARTHUR:

You heard of Raglands the supermarket chain.?

JERRY

Yes, I have heard of them.

ARTHUR

(lost in his own world)

We used to supply them, Joe went to school with Terry Ragland .. bet you never knew the owner of Raglands was

(MORE)

ARTHUR (Continued)

born in the same street as us. Actually I always thought he was an annoying little oik. I remember one day coming back from school and seeing several thugs jump him, well Joe turns to me and says let help the little blighter, so we jumps um and sure enough they run off. Us, Simmonds always been handy with our fists I was once told I could of turned pro but then there was the accident..... Anyway fruit and veg is in me blood. I still thinks we would work well together son.

JERRY

Now, Arthur we have discussed this and it wont happen.... but you can always visit the stall.

ARTHUR

Visit? But I gots regulars , there's Mrs. Hendricks do you know she has been a customer for over 20 years, comes up everyday 4 apples and 5 oranges, double that on Saturday, now she's dam fussy. oranges thick skin, and apples, in the summer she likes golden delicious in the winter capes. Now.....

JERRY

Everyone will be dealt with, don't worry.

ARTHUR:

But, but, but you don't understand the people who rely on us, do you know that we been in the business for almost a 100 years?

JERRY

I know, Arthur, the Symonds family is very respected in the business, that's why we want to keep your name.

ARTHUR

You wont damage it will you, son.

JERRY

Damage it!!!! Never! We have always looked on you as parents.

ARTHUR:

Really, I never realized that.....so you see me as your dad

JERRY

Yes, in a way I remember first time I saw you, my mum says to you , what are the parsnips like and you smiled and said these parsnips if her majesty had them before her she would want to knight 'em . So my mum bought me and cooked them as the veg for the evening meal and Charlie turns to me and says one day Jerry we are going to be looked at like the Simmonds, yes, you were the inspirations for us going to be in the business.

ARTHUR(stunned)

We were.....I never realized.

JERRY:

So in a way you are not selling the stall you are passing on a legacy.

(pause)

which may I say I am proudno privileged to one day be working on that stall where my mum bought her parsnips.

(pause)

So Arthur we would be carrying on a tradition in which you and Joe were shining examples.

ARTHUR

(Wiping eye)

Your mum bought her parsnips from us.

JERRY:

Every Wednesday like clockwork and either me or Charlie went with her.

ARTHUR:

Blimey, I never knew that, we did a lot of parsnips, actually I am not very partial to 'em but business is business son.

JERRY:

Yes it is so you said you don't have any kids but you did, you set me and Charlie a great example. You were the reason we went into the fruit and veg business.

ARTHUR:

I never thought of it that way but I do remember the mums coming with their kids and those little terriers picking up the odd apple, do you know Joe once said to me don't give those apples away but I says its good business. Do you know they all think I am simple but I knows things.

JERRY

Yes do you know I always liked you, you had that I don't know what they call it but I think it was a welcoming way.

ARTHUR

(smiling)

Yes, people always seemed to prefer me to Joe, he was the dour one.

JERRY:

So Arthur, you see we are carrying on the tradition

(Pause)

so you would not be selling the stall but passing it on.

ARTHUR:

Star fruit!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

JERRY:

Yes no star fruit on the stall

ARTHUR:

No jack fruit.

JERRY:

Arthur, I promise you won't see any exotic fruits on the stall. So how about signing that contract then you can be getting a nice piece of wedge and everyone can be happy.

ARTHUR:

Well I suppose its ok.

(He puts on a pair of glasses.)

ARTHUR: (Continued)

lets have a read. Joe always said to me never sign anything till you read it.

JERRY:

Ok but it's a load of legalize but its just like we discussed only thing I am going to change is the amounts we give you.

ARTHUR

(Reading contract)

Yeah.....

(Jerry hands Arthur a pen))

JERRY

Here. You sign there.

(Arthur signs.)

ARTHUR

There we are.

(He looks around the room.)

ARTHUR (Continued)

leeches.

JERRY

What???????????

ARTHUR:

Don't sell any leeches, son promise me that.

JERRY:

Arthur, leeches are not a fruit, they are blood suckers.

ARTHUR:

I know what I am talking about, they come from China. Look like strawberry that got acne.

JERRY

strawberry with acne mmmmmmmmm.....comes from China.....

ARTHUR

Yes China you know that place that place that brought us chop suey, I love a good chop suey.

JERRY

I got it!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

ARTHUR

You ok?

JERRY

Yes you don't mean leeches you mean lyches.

ARTHUR

lyches????????? ...well its horrible looking, don't want it on my stall.

JERRY

Actually it's not your stall anymore, only it will carry your family's name.

ARTHUR

But, son I thought.

JERRY

Don't worry you won't see any foreign fruit, we are going to use your stall for potatoes and the basic fruit.

ARTHUR

(Cries)

I knew I could rely on you.

JERRY:

Now did you sign both copies
(puts the one copy in *his pocket*)
Now you keep the other one.

ARTHUR

(wipes his eyes)

Ok.

JERRY

Now son, only one more thing to do.

ARTHUR

What is that...

(Jerry picks up the sign)

ARTHUR (Continued)

Oi! What are you doing with my sign.

JERRY

This sign is part of the business mate, if you read the contract its says all properties now belong to us and that includes this sign will say Simmonds Fruit and Veg although once you are dead its going to read Carters Fruit and Vegetables.

ARTHUR

But but but what about traditional, I thought you agreed with me son.

JERRY

I am not your son and this is business, you are going to get well paid over paid to tell you the truth so just do what you did when Joe was alive grin and just say Yes.

ARTHUR

I thought you understood.....I have changed my mind give me that contract.

JERRY

(Sneering)

Too lateSon its signed and sealed so (*picks up the sign*) see you Arthur you will get your money so just sit there like a good boy and shut up.

(Jerry exits.)

ARTHUR

Bloody Keeewees!!!!!!