

Betty Berry visits the set of a film adaptation of her erotica novel

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Betty was apprehensive. Despite resolutions to the contrary, she had decided to visit the *Ricardo Haberdasher* film set. The very thought of actors simulating copulation made her feel queasy, but the re-writing of the character Debbie-Lou kept nagging away at her.

If the director had misunderstood Debbie-Lou, then how much more of her novel had he got wrong? Were *any* of the characters and plot lines going to resemble her original work?

She understood that she had signed over the film rights and with those, any entitlement to make demands about creative integrity. However, this film would have a considerable impact on her. Many people would watch it and perhaps make incorrect assumptions about her book and consequently her life. Without Betty's input, the film might be even more damaging to her reputation than the book had been.

Then there was Scarlett. Betty didn't like Scarlett playing a prostitute, because it might prompt people to realise her role in Betty's marital breakdown. Fortunately, devoid of indisputable evidence, Lara Lancashire had never been able to sell her story about the nature of Rodney's indiscretion. However, Betty knew that rumours had spread.

Perhaps she could appeal to the director's better judgement. At the very least, visiting the set would tell her more about the situation, which might help put her mind at rest.

"So what scenes are you filming today?" Betty asked Scarlett, as she drove them both to the studio.

"The flogging scene," explained Scarlett.

"What flogging scene?" asked Betty. "There's no flogging scene."

"There is now," revealed Scarlett, with a wicked grin.

"And *you're* in this so called scene?"

“No, I’m not actually needed today,” Scarlett admitted. “I just thought I’d come along to support you. You know, show you what’s what and all that. I think they’re filming on the dungeon set.”

“There isn’t a dungeon!”

“There is now.”

Betty was angry as she parked her car and followed Scarlett to the entrance. The assistant flashed her name card at a security guard. Then she tried to walk in with Betty at her side.

“Stop right there,” said security.

“I’m Scarlett Genovese,” explained the assistant, batting her eyelids. “I have a *speaking* role.”

“Not you, *her*,” he said, pointing to Betty.

“It’s Betty Berry,” explained Scarlett, as if the man should know.

He remained expressionless.

“Figgy Brown,” prompted Scarlett.

The man still showed no signs of recognition.

“She wrote the movie.”

“I thought Daniel Angelo wrote the movie.”

“Daniel wrote the screenplay but Betty wrote the original novel.”

The man looked Betty up and down, taking in her mushroom-coloured, polyester dress and thick, baggy tights. “Points for trying, I’ll give you that.”

Betty felt proud. The man clearly thought her far too dignified to be a naughty novelist. After everything she’d been through, it was a relief to know that not everybody saw her as a sexual fiend. The three years without making any press appearances had obviously paid off.

Scarlett said, “This *is* Figgy; you have my word. I’m her assistant.”

“You said you were an actor,” the man pointed out, in his gruff London accent.

“I’m both!”

“Multi-talented, are you?”

Scarlett felt frustrated. She had felt sure that getting Betty onto the set of her own movie would be a doddle. Eventually she realised that there was a way to prove who Betty was. She grabbed her smart phone and found the article 'Neighbours' Horror as Figgy Brown Hosts Sex Party'. She showed the page to the security guard. He squinted at the picture and then looked Betty up and down. "Well I never." He stared at her with a hungry grin.

Betty shuddered and recoiled, before following Scarlett into the building.

After what seemed like an age of walking down corridors and making turns left, right and centre, Scarlett finally led the way into the studio. Betty gawped. Why was there a brick wall covered in leather straps? Why on earth was there a swing in the middle of the set? Why did nothing look anything like any of the scenes from her book?

"And action," said a voice.

Betty watched in shocked silence as an orange-skinned man walked onto the stage with his back to Betty. Betty gasped, he was wearing nothing but studded, black leather straps! His round bottom cheeks burst from between three belt-like bands, quivering as he moved. Betty gulped in horror at the gently rippling botty flesh. None of her characters walked around with their rear ends on display and certainly none wore such a vile outfit. And why did the straps have metal loops attached? Then, the man turned. Betty let out a cry. Through a metal loop at the front, flopped an enormous thingy!

"What is *that*?" she cried.

"It's Blain!" swooned Scarlett.

Betty was horrified. "*That's* supposed to be Ricardo Haberdasher?"

"Of course."

"But his hairy hornpipe is showing!"

"The movie *is* based on an erotic novel."

"I thought it was going to be tastefully done."

"It is tasteful. That outfit's real leather."

“Why is he wearing reins? I thought Jay-Maria was the horse in their ...” Betty lowered her voice, “pony play.”

“They’re not reins. It’s a dominator outfit.”

“Domino – what?”

“I’ve explained dominant and submissive roles to you before.”

“What happened to strong in the office; shy in the bedroom?”

“Most of that was in your original Richmond Tabernacle book. Ricardo was less shy.”

“Less shy’ is not the same as parading around in ... *that*.”

“They may have changed the characters a little, but doesn’t he look hot?” Scarlett looked lost in her own little world. Her pupils were dilated and her lips slightly moist.

Betty chanced another look. The fellow’s thingy was still on display, wobbling up and down as he strutted around the set. She felt revolted and a little chilly. *Somebody ought to get him a coat.*

Then, Blain walked to an area of the set that was hidden from Betty. She enjoyed this brief moment of freedom from the morbid curiosity that caused her to keep watching. Almost immediately, he walked back into view, carrying a woman – a woman who was completely naked!

Betty staggered. Was this even legal?

“It’s Amber Jones,” sneered Scarlett. “Look at her. She’s totally wrong for that part.”

“I’d rather not look!” explained Betty. She wasn’t sure that she’d ever seen a naked woman before. Was it even acceptable to look? If she did, would that mean she was a lesbian?

Yet somehow, she couldn’t stop herself from glancing again. It was then that she noticed a plot error. Amber Jones’s bajingo was completely bald! Betty had heard of the peculiar practice of trimming the lady garden but had hoped it was an urban myth – like candle play and threesomes. Betty failed to understand why any woman would take a razor to her most sensitive parts, or worse still, pay to have hair ripped away, but didn’t like to judge. However, on this occasion, the pubic

upholstery (or lack of) was totally wrong for the part. Jay-Maria was supposed to be a delicate virgin. It was unrealistic for her to have experimented with the more advanced varieties of personal topiary.

Then, without a word, Blain bent Amber over the swing. Before Betty could work out what was going on, Amber cried out. Betty blinked in horror. Had Blain just hit her? Then came a second slap, loud enough for Betty to hear the moment of impact. Amber cried out again. Betty's eyes widened. Blain delivered a third slap to Amber's behind. Her bosoms wobbled, as they hung over the edge of the swing, in a manner that looked most uncomfortable.

Before Betty knew what she was doing, she shouted "Stop! Stop! *Stop!*" She hurried towards the nearest camera man. "Turn it off." Then she called, "Somebody get that poor girl some clothes." She paused and then added, "And some soothing cream if you've got any."

"Excuse me!" shouted an irritated voice.

"Yes, hello!" replied Betty, turning to the source of the voice. She saw a squat, red-haired man with pink horn-rimmed glasses. He was almost as wide as he was tall and wore a lime green suit. Betty knew what he was right away – an arty type.

"Who the hell are you?" he demanded.

"I'm Betty," she explained. "Also known as Figgy Brown. To whom do I have the pleasure?"

"Daniel Angelo," said the man, through gritted teeth. "I'm the director *stroke* screenplay writer."

"Oh splendid!" Betty was delighted. "I was hoping to get a chance to talk to you."

"Really?" he scowled.

"What's this I hear about Debbie-Lou's character being changed from a bookshop librarian to a prostitute?"

The man frowned. "We felt that giving Ricardo an experience with a hooker would show how hollow and empty his life was before he met Jay-Maria."

Betty thought of Rodney and felt a pang of distress. Is that why men visited ladies of the night, because their lives were hollow and empty?

“Now if that’s all, I’d like to get on,” said the director.

“But Ricardo is an upstanding pillar of the community who happens to be uptight about intimacy. He would find ladies of the night intimidating and vile.”

“Hey ...” muttered Scarlett.

“He is uptight about *emotional* intimacy, not physical,” explained Daniel.

“No, it’s definitely both,” corrected Betty.

“Who is directing this movie?” asked Daniel. “You or me?”

“I created the character, and I’m telling you that he’s afraid of *all* intimacy.”

“And I’m experienced in cinema, and I’m telling you that the audience will want to see some tits and ass in the first ten minutes.”

Betty was concerned, and not just about the presence of bosoms and behinds. According to Daniel’s version, Ricardo’s first experience was with Debbie-Lou, not Jay-Maria. Betty turned to Scarlett. “Are you naked in this?”

Scarlett looked away, shrugging.

Daniel explained, “I don’t tell you how to write books. So I’d prefer it if you didn’t tell me how to make movies. Now if you don’t mind ...”

“Actually, there’s more,” interjected Betty.

“I feared there might be,” sighed Daniel.

“Ricardo isn’t violent.”

“I know.”

“Why was he hitting her then?”

“He was *spanking* her.”

“Yes, exactly.”

Daniel turned to Scarlett. “Is she for real?”

Scarlett nodded, helplessly.

“Spanking is not abuse – it’s a *treat*,” Daniel told Betty.

“I don’t think Jay-Maria would think so,” objected Betty.

“Yet she’s more than happy for him to shove a pony tail up her arse,” said Daniel.

Betty felt helpless. It was true that her book had included an act of botty infringement, but it had been purely to cater for

readers' demands. She had accidentally acquired a following from a faction of people, with very *fundamental* tastes. Not wanting to disappoint her adoring fans, she'd catered to their interests, even though it had meant compromising the integrity of her characters.

She thought about it. Perhaps Daniel was trying to cater for viewers' demands in the same way. She could hardly judge him for sacrificing creative integrity when she had done much the same.

Betty looked at Amber who was now wearing a robe and bending over having her bottom powdered by a makeup artist. Betty felt sorry for the girl, having to expose her most intimate regions to an artist. She looked around for Blain, but he was nowhere to be seen. "Can't Blain just *pretend* to hit her? You can add the noise later," suggested Betty.

"You don't understand the first thing about film!"

"I do!"

"We need him to slap her to get the movement."

"But they're actors. Can't they act movement?"

"Not rippling flesh, no."

"And Ricardo's costume is all wrong. He's supposed to be shy in the bedroom. Why is he wearing domino reins?"

Daniel's eyes widened. "Mrs Brown, I appreciate your advice, but I know what I'm doing. If you didn't like it, you should have raised your concerns when you read the draft I sent you."

Betty remembered the script she'd been sent special delivery. She'd filed it, unopened, with her adult goods collection, afraid that reading it would further pollute her innocent mind and consequently, corrupt her life. In hindsight, that had been a mistake. Had she read what that brute Daniel had planned, she may have been able to save Amber from violence and cruelty.

"I could see Ricardo's thingy," Betty pointed out. "I really don't think that's artistically correct. Less is more."

"No, Mrs Brown, *more* is more, which is why we got Blain to play the part." Daniel licked his lower lip. "I do

appreciate your input, but we need to get on. Either sit quietly, or leave.”

Betty scowled. She didn't appreciate being told to sit quietly on the set of her own film. Defiantly, she marched over to Amber. “Are you all right, my love?” she asked the young actress, kindly.

“I'm fine, thanks,” Amber enunciated crisply, showing a combination of amusement and irritation.

Amber turned to Daniel. “I was thinking, perhaps I should move back *into* his slap, so that when he spansks, it pushes me forward on the swing.”

“Excellent idea,” agreed Daniel. “That'll create great movement!”

“You don't have to do this,” Betty told Amber.

“Oh really?” retorted the actor, sarcastically. “There was me thinking somebody was forcing me to earn £2,000 a day in a career that I love.”

“Two thousand?” exclaimed Betty. Then she added, “A small price for one's body.”

“Perhaps we should leave,” Scarlett suggested, gently.

Betty thought about it. The last thing she wanted to do was step away, allowing this atrocity to continue. But on the other hand, staying without being allowed to talk would be agonising. She'd have to look at thingies and bosoms and real spanking. She didn't think her nerves could take it, even in the interest of artistic integrity.

“Can I have your phone number?” Betty asked Daniel, sensing that now wasn't the right time to air the remainder of her grievances.

“You can contact my P.A. if you really need anything,” said Daniel. Then, ignoring Betty, he yelled, “Blain! Stop slipping Viagra and get your flaccid dick and flabby paunch back on set.”

Betty was certain that leaving was the right decision. She didn't like the way people around there spoke.