

'Paddy' by Jules Garvey-Welch

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I love this internet malarkey. I've just ordered a new rear shock absorber, headlamp and bezel for the Anglia. Some bloke in Derry selling parts from his private garage. I'd never have found them if Delores next door hadn't sorted out my Modem Router. You can't keep me off it now. I'm like a kid with a new toy.

Bought a lovely set of Ming vases off eBay, genuine article, have the certificate to prove it and only fifty pounds each. I saw some identical on Antiques Roadshow and they wanted thousands for them. It just goes to show; you need to shop around.

She's a lovely girl so she is. Lives on her own. She has a fiancé but I don't think it'll last. He's a shifty looking character. Delores could do so much better, a nice girl like that. We've become quite good friends over time. I think she sees me as a bit of a father figure, which is nice as I haven't got any kids of me own.

I was married, back in the day. Geraldine her name was; she was from the South Coast of England. We met at one of them holiday camps. She was a dancer and I worked in the open air pool as a life guard. I had a smashing physique back then. Used to do a muscle man routine after the bingo. The girls loved it. I've still got my gold lamé briefs somewhere.

It was one of those whirlwind romances. We'd only been going out a month when I proposed. Had a quiet ceremony at the registry office and then back to the camp for a knees-up with some of the crew. They even organised married quarters for us. We were happy as anything until just a few weeks before the end of the season. That was when smarmy Marco came along. He was a student from Italy whose grand-father had shares in the site. He was a good looking bugger, but I never expected Geraldine to just up and run like that. Without so much as good bye. Soon after, I got a letter asking for an annulment on account of non-consummation!

It wasn't true of course. We had most definitely consummated it, in chalet 435 on the Formica table, but it was quicker to go along with it. After all there was no chance she was coming back. She told me she was pregnant with his child and they'd decided to move over to Florence to be near his family.

It put me off women for years. It's only recently, now I'm in my twilight years, that I've thought about settling down again.

Actually, I've already met someone. Got talking to her on the internet. A friend of mine from the classic cars club put me on to her. That's how he met his wife see. They love an Irish man out there, in Thailand. He said he thinks it's the accent.

I think they like the older man as well cus she's only twenty-four. I know there'll be those who think the forty-year age gap is too big. But I've always kept myself in shape. I sent her one of the photos from when I did my muscle man act,

Her name's Tookta. I looked up the meaning and it said it meant a diligent and persevering worker. So I think we are well suited.

She said I reminded her of some bloke called Justin Bieber. I told her I'd never heard of him but she claimed he was a handsome fella, so I didn't question her.

I've already bought one of those 'teach yourself Thai' DVDs' I listen to it after The Archers. I've got the basics covered. 'Hello, goodbye, do you like pigs pudding?' She said when she arrives I'm to take her shopping as she loves new shoes. Funny thing is her feet are two sizes larger than mine and I always thought these Asian girls had small feet. She's got nice broad shoulders too.

It's taken ages to organise a visa. Some complication with her birth certificate. I called her just yesterday to see if it had been sorted. It was a bit of a poor line though, it made her voice sound really deep but I expect it's the humidity out there.

Anyway must dash, I've got to collect a parcel from the post office. I expect it's the pills I ordered on line, recommended by one of the lads at the club. Bit of an appetite these Thai girls and it's been a while.