

thought he heard the clarinets playing I've Got You Under My Skin, but he was in pain, he couldn't be sure.

Dave and Ginger looked out from their hiding place behind the recliner. They figured it'd be best if they laid low for a couple of days.

NADINE AND RUSTY DROP BY TO CHIT-CHAT

Nadine dropped by Ruth's house for coffee, her little hyperactive dachshund, Rusty, in tow.

Ellis, Ruth's husband, turned off the T.V. and headed back to the bedroom to take a shower, not wanting to listen to the ladies talk drapes, daytime soaps, and new diets. Rusty sniffed his ankle as he walked by the dining room table. Ellis kicked at him. Rusty skittered away.

Ruth said, "ELLIS."

Nadine said, "Come over here, Rusty-Poo, and sit down by Mama," patting the leg of the chair.

Ruth poured the coffee while Nadine got up to let Rusty out the sliding glass door to 'do his little job.' He did it, kicked back some grass, and sniffed the air. He caught a wiff of Ginger, the tiny, spindly-legged, perpetually-shivering Chihuahua that lived next door, out to 'do her little job' too,

Rusty pawed the fence and howled.

Ginger pranced around and whimpered, waving her butt in his direction.

"RUSTY, RUSTY, GET IN HERE, GOD DAMN IT," yelled Nadine. Next door, Juanita stepped out onto the patio and put her hands on her hips, disgusted at what she was seeing. "GET AWAY FROM THAT FENCE, GINGER, YOU'RE ACTING LIKE A WHORE."

Rusty came reluctantly back to the house, his wet, pink protuberance dragging the ground.

Ginger hung her head and made her way across the lawn, looking wistfully back over her shoulder. Juanita shoo-ed her inside, saying, "You bad girl."

Rusty sat by Nadine's legs, shamefaced. Then he got up and paced the floor. He decided to go exploring down

the hall when Nadine said to Ruth, "We've been thinking of having him fixed."

Ellis stepped out of the shower and there was Nadine's stupid dachshund, Rusty, looking at him with a gleam in his eye, looking specifically at his thick, hairy calves. He said, "Beat it, you dumb mutt."

But Rusty, aroused, wasn't going to be stopped that easily. Ellis tried to stop the little dog's charge with a quick snap of his wet towel, but he missed. Rusty clamped onto Ellis' lower leg like an elongated barnacle on a white, hairy pier piling, and started humping.

"OH JESUS H. CHRIST," Ellis shouted. He danced down the hall to the living room on one foot, spinning, cursing, and shaking his afflicted leg, screaming, "GET THIS GOD DAMNED MUTT OFF ME."

Nadine looked down into her coffee cup, blushing, while Ruth roared, "ELLIS, YOU BASTARD, LEAVE THAT DOG ALONE."

CLETE AND JUANITA DROP BY TO CHIT-CHAT

Ellis paid the delivery guy, including a stingy tip, and brought the pizza inside.

Ruth set up the T.V. trays while he opened the box and fixed a big pitcher of wine coolers.

Then the doorbell rang. Ellis looked at the pizza, then at the door. The bell rang again, insistent. Ruth looked through the curtains: it was the neighbors, Clete and Juanita, looking hungry. She whispered to Ellis, "Hide it."

Then she opened the door, "Clete and Juanita. What a pleasant surprise. Oh, and Ginger too. Boy, it is our lucky night."

Ginger was Juanita's Chihuahua. She pranced into the house, leading the way for her owner, would've bitten Ellis on the ankle if the leash had been two inches longer. "My, it smells good in here," said Juanita.

"I'll say," said Clete.

"Our new air freshener. You like it?" said Ellis.

"Smells Italian," said Clete.