

Ruth jumped up and pounded his back. The rubber dot shot out of his esophagus like a bullet and stuck to the glass on the china cabinet. Ellis leaned on the table and gasped, "What the hell are you tryin' to do, kill me?"

"You're the idiot that wanted to drink out of my slipper," said Ruth.

"Yeah," said Ellis, "And you're the one that didn't warn me that it was loaded."

Ruth was too mad to answer, so she smashed the heart-shaped box over his head. He wore it around his neck like a yoke as he crawled along the rug on his hands and knees, gathering the scattered candy.

#### BETTY GETS HIRED ON

The management at the Loma Alta Cafe, in a break from their tradition of hiring late-twenties, early-thirties divorced women as waitresses, took on Betty, a short, dumpy, post-retirement girl with an ink-black bouffant, a million dirty jokes, a laugh like a donkey, and a pair of short, shapeless legs that looked absolutely ridiculous in the short-skirted uniform.

The other girls laughed at her behind her back, calling her 'Sexpot' with a roll of the eye. But the old girl could move around the tables, and she even made the cook blush (something that was thought impossible since Bill was considered by everyone who knew him as the most disgustingly demented human being on the face of the earth) when she gave him a hard and unexpected goose to, "Hurry that idiot up on my short stack he's been sittin' on."

She was even earning a little grudging respect with the amount of tip money she was pulling in, until she went too far by sitting on the lap of one of the regulars and sticking her tongue in his ear. Some things were just considered unfair tactics.

They decided to have a word with her, before things got out of hand. If this didn't get nipped in the bud, the next thing you know she'd be running around topless.

So when Betty stepped back by the coffee machine to suck up a cigarette, Delores came up to her and said, "Don't you think it's a little ... undignified, shall we say, sitting on a customer's lap, Honey, an old girl like you?"

Betty squinted at her through the smoke she was blowing,

stabbed the butt down hard in the ashtray, and said, "Honey (dripping venom), you do it your way, I'll do it mine," giving the cigarette one last vicious stab and grabbing the coffee pot. She started out for the floor to do refills, then spun and turned back to the tight-lipped Delores. "I'll tell you something, Hon. That guy left a five-dollar tip for the dollar ninety-eight breakfast special, and I'll tell you something else," moving in close to the younger woman, "If I had a body like yours, he'd of left twenty. So why don't you loosen up, huh?"

Delores finished ringing up a ticket. Amy came back for the pitcher of ice water and asked her, "You talk to the Sexpot?"

Delores nodded.

"Think it did any good?"

"No."

From the floor they heard Betty's gravel voice saying, "Ellis, I'll pour ya another cup of Java if you promise to keep your hands to yourself, you old pervert," bringing laughter from the crowd and Ellis' hand out from under the table to make a fake grab at the old girl's crotch. Betty slapped it hard and said, "Watch it Ellis, I'm not that kind of girl, you know."

Bill came out from the kitchen for a cup of coffee, pulling at the seat of his pants, trying to dislodge his underwear from where it had been shoved and said, "That old broad is something else, ain't she?"

Delores nodded, and Amy said, "Chippy from the word go."

#### LOPSIDED BLUES

Betty had to think of her reputation. Her customers in the cafe were getting a little too fresh. So when Ellis, as she was refilling his coffee, asked her if she'd give him a little leg, she said, "No, Honey, no leg today, but how 'bout a little tit?" and she reached into her uniform, pulled out her breast prosthesis, and laid it on the table in front of him.

He gasped and recoiled, his eyes as big as the sunny-side eggs on his plate, as big as the pink rubber nipple on the disembodied breast. He slid away from it on the bench seat, sputtered, and spit out the words, "MY GOD."