

You should see your face

Brian, my husband, is what some might call, the perpetual clown. His idea of fun is to hit you with some mind blowing statement, then watch your re-action. Having bled your emotions dry, he'd then admit, through tear blinding hysteria, it was a wind up. His punch line? 'You should see your face!'

Last week was a prime example. Between last minute Christmas shopping, and trying to finalize the arrangements for our staffs Christmas party, I was thoroughly exhausted. Therefore, when smarty pants came away with a flippant remark about my weight, hinting that the turkey I was stuffing, wasn't the only thing that had got fat, I finally crumpled.

Tiredness, and the feeling of being taken for granted ganged up with my crumbling emotions, and I burst into tears .

'Oh no, please, not Christmas greetings!' his eyes turned sky-wards, as did his beseeching hands. 'What is it with you women, have you no sense of humour?' His face crumpled into a stupid smirk. ' Seems you haven't a funny bone in your bodies.' Then, twittering like a budgie with a drink problem, added 'Sorry, forgot about your humerus!'

I sulked, and tried to sniff up the tears that were threatening to water down the stuffing.

'For heaven's sake woman, lighten up,' he jollied at me. 'Why not give your face a Christmas treat? Let it smile!'

I tried desperately to control the ball of white rage rising from the pit of my stomach. If the kids hadn't been just a wall's depth away , not only would I have shown him Christmas greetings, but I'd have wrapped him in tinsel, strung the Christmas lights around his neck, and hung him with the Christmas fairy at the top of the tree.

Now, don't get me wrong, darling hubby's twisted sense of humour, partnered by a tongue sharp enough to slice frozen bread at ten feet, was definitely advantageous to our thriving business. We sold party novelties, this included Brian's brainchild, "Exclusive to you, crackers ." By crackers, we meant either the traditional pull type, or, an arranged way-out or perhaps humorous theme, but all designed to your own specifications and for whatever event you required. We were indeed onto a pretty neat profit. Add Brian's police pension, and yes thank you, we are very comfortable indeed.. But there does come a time, when enough's, enough.

It was after the fire of anger subsided, and settled into an ash of tainted vengeance, the idea came to me. That was why, two double brandies later, I had enough Dutch courage to make two phone calls. An hour later my master plan was in position. I was ecstatic.

The staff party was in full swing when my special guests arrived, Brian, for once was speechless, as a couple of his old police buddies entered the room., delighted, he started to make introductions.. However the two plain clothed policemen tactfully explained, this was definitely not a social visit, they were, in fact, here on official business.

Feeling smug, I watched my hubby's eyes narrow, and his face change more colours than a kaleidoscope.

The elder of the two policemen, the one I knew to be a D.I., withdrew an official looking document from his pocket. 'Brian Dawson....'

I'd pulled off a master stroke. I glowed, as his former colleague informed him of a computer error which had caused him to retire three years too early. Cautioning him, he continued. ' We believe that you were aware of this, and you may now be charged with fraudulently accepting monies to which you were aware you had no entitlement. At this stage, it is my duty to inform you....' And so he continued.

'I've done it!' I whopped in delight, to no one in particular 'I've pulled my own cracker. Yep, I'd finally put one over on good old Brian.'

'Who's got no sense of humour, now?' I demanded, turning to my husband in my triumph. I was just about to reveal the hoax and "ice my cake," by adding his very own catch phrase 'You should see your face,' when I discovered, not only was I talking into space, but my eyes were instinctively following those of everyone else as they stared across the room, faces etched with horror.

An invisible boot kicked my gut, jolting me back to reality as I watched Brian raging across the room and grab our accountant by the throat. His voice, an authoritative, echoing boom, as he warned the man, 'You blithering idiot. If I go down on this one, I'm taking you with me!

My trembling hand flew to my mouth to suppress my screams of horror. My revenge on my husband had back-fired on me..

I gazed around the room. The once bright, festive gaiety now waned in the light of the implication made by my husband. My flushed cheeks paled, as a cold hand clamped across my heart. Visions of my brand new shiny car with its personalised numbers plates, our lovely home, our Villa in Crete, flashed before me, ensuring that my life-style, along with my feeling of triumph, evaporated faster than snow in a heat wave. Gobs-smacked I collapsed, a deflated heap, into a chair.

Everyone was staring at me.' I had no idea...' I stammered, my mind in turmoil.

Our friendly police officers stared at me, eyes filled with sympathy. No doubt they were thinking just how much my revenge was about to cost me.. The D.I opened his mouth to say something. 'Oh no.' I cried, my hand again across my mouth, 'please, no, don't tell me, I'm married to a bent cop.'

There was a rippling of embarrassed giggles.

Brian, face distorted, bounced across the room to me. As he came nearer to me, I could see the distortion, was with laughter. Then, stilted between hiccups and sniggers, he said 'You., should... see your face.....' Pausing only long enough to rub his sore sides and wipe the tears from his eyes, he informed me that his old mates had put him in the picture. Then I was in his arms ' That my darling wife, must have been the best Christmas cracker we've ever thought up..' and amid cheers, he grabbed a piece of mistletoe, kissed me thoroughly, before adding ' I love you... Merry Christmas, sweetheart.'

Janette Alexander.