

When Daisy met Charlie

By Bev Ainscow

Daisy yawned, clicked off the TV, another quiet evening alone watching Nature, featuring Jane Goodall and her famous apes. Daisy padded to the bedroom, opened the door and gaped. A huge brown chimpanzee was in her bed, wearing blue plaid pajamas. He was tapping away at his laptop with one long finger, earphones attached, giving him a strangely human look. Daisy blinked, rubbed her eyes and thought, wow, has my ship come in at last. She spritzed perfume, swabbed a dollop of Crest in her mouth, and switched to a silkier number. Then she slid under the sheets. The chimp tapped away, so she edged closer, laid her hand on his thigh.

“Be with you in a sec, hon,” he said, “got to finish this presentation for tomorrow’s pest control seminar, best job I ever had, erasing termites. I’m Charlie, by the way.”

“I’m Daisy, nice to meet you.”

Daisy’s second husband, George, had been a hairy hunk, with deep set eyes and a flat nose, so she felt familiar in the chimp’s eventual squeeze. It reminded her of happy times before George ambled off to the Rwandan jungle, never to return. Charlie curled his toes round Daisy’s ankles in a trapeze-like hold, grunted excessively, but otherwise Daisy was well satisfied with their first night.

“Sweetheart, do you have any bananas for breakfast?” he asked, then headed out the door to work. Apart from four or five banana peels left on the kitchen floor and slurping his coffee from a saucer, Charlie had perfect manners. Daisy decided he could stay.

After work he brought her some flowers, with a few blooms bitten off, then thumped his chest, and wrapped his long arms around her waist twice with some left over.

“Honey, tonight I’ll cook. How about pineapples and bamboo shoots sauteed in barkroot oil.” Daisy loved how he swung around the kitchen, his cheery manner, even his habit of picking things out of his head and nibbling them. He offered her one, when

she refused he dropped it in the pan. They sat down to eat, Charlie thumped his chest again.

“I love the way you do that,” purred Daisy. “Reminds me of something I saw on TV. Let’s watch tonight with wine and After Eights.”

“That would be lovely, Daisy dear.”

At 9 pm they snuggled on the sofa, his long arm draped over her shoulder dragging on the floor. Suddenly he leaned forward with a screech, “that woman, the one with shorts, a British accent, and a clipboard. I know her, taught me everything I know.”

Daisy’s heart dropped, “I knew it, you’re married!”

Charlie lurched off the sofa, faced her with arms crossed, legs bowed, panting heavily, “Daisy, my love, you’re my soul mate. That woman is just Jane, too nosey, always watching me, writes down every move I make. When I saw your face on TV, I crashed through the vines to the other side. I’ll never get up to monkey business, I’m a one-woman chimp.”

Daisy melted at this declaration, even though his bowed legs made her wonder if he’d had rickets as a child, and wouldn’t look good in a tuxedo.

“Oh Charlie I love you too. Come to class tomorrow, teach my kids how to thump their chests, sway their rumps and swing from the lights.”

“Of course, I will,” he grunted.

Test scores surged after his visit, and the principal begged Charlie to run for school board. But Daisy was still unsure about this Jane woman. She suggested they see a shrink, learn some communication skills, deepen their relationship. Charlie chewed a twig. The psychotherapist was bi-species, an expert in hairy-smooth conflicts.

“Get a hobby, something you both love and take it from there.” Charlie suggested climbing trees but Daisy said she wasn’t built for that.

“How about swing dancing,” said Daisy.

Charlie screeched with delight. At the class he lifted Daisy high up in the air and swung her round his head with one arm helicopter-like.

“Put me down you great ape,” she hissed.

“Sorry sweetie, got carried away.” Daisy felt a flush of pride when he wiped his brow and unbuttoned his shirt to reveal a thick hairy chest. She could see other women eyeing him.

That evening there was a shift in their relationship. He confided, “Jane was hairless, born in the wrong body, but she told me something I’ll never forget.”

“What?” Daisy asked.

“She said that 98% of chimpanzees’ genetic code is the same as humans. I was floored, never heard that before. The rest of the tribe howled and rolled over in hysterics, but it made sense to me. I’d always felt like an outsider, too much inbreeding, chest thumping, and power struggles for leadership. When I saw you on the Nature program something clicked, and I leaped.”

“Charlie, really, 98% of the same genetic code? That’s closer than either of my two husbands.”

Daisy felt at peace. Charlie hung from a branch redesigning the back yard.

“What you need, Daisy, my love, is more underbrush and vines, big leaves overhead, maybe a giant sequoia, and I’m the man to do it.”