

25th November, 2001

## REVEREND SUCH-AND-SUCH

DEAR DIARY, who do you turn to when the church betrays you? Worst still, the corruption unravels itself at a funeral. I can't think of much worse than a lying clergyman at a funeral – what a combination!

This is the story; my Aunt had a fight with cancer. Unfortunately, with additional ill health and age not on her side, she fought and lost. The family laid her to rest and followed her wishes to hold the service at the church she attended for the past 12 years, the Holy Fellowship of something or other in Peckham, south east London.

Reverend Dr "Such-&-Such" M.F. (which later on, I'll tell you what myself and my sister said M.F. stood for) looked every inch the fraud. Purple robe like a black Pope John Paul the Pimp, driving a Bentley like a baller, his Shirley Temple hair shining from a blue-black shoulder length jheri curl. Following three paces behind him, his Geisha Girl look-alike wife in full Japanese attire. What a sight to behold.

If their appearance wasn't bad enough, the final part of the service was conducted in Japanese by Reverend Dr Such-&-Such's wife. Why? I don't know. None of us non-Japanese speaking mourners were given sub-titles or an explanation. For all we know she was reciting the nine times tables. Even when I think about it now, it confuses me as to why a portion of the service was conducted by a Japanese woman called Kameko!! It was a bizarre day made even more so with Kameko's strange recital.

We travelled to another part of London to the cemetery. As an active member of the church, my Aunt isn't supposed to pay for Reverend Dr Such-&-Such's kind words at the graveside. The woman at the undertakers said that if there was a fee, and she'd be very surprised if my Aunt had to pay such a fee, it would be as minimal as £5. The burial service fee turned out to be £100. Reverend Dr Such-&-Such assured the family that it was a normal administration fee. I won't type what I thought, all I know is God was supposed to strike me down there and then. I even braced myself to be struck down by lightning but it never came.

The hall was booked at the Holy Fellowship in Peckham until 9pm. My family provided the refreshments for the mourners. There were cases and boxes of food and drink everywhere. The Reverend Doctor said that he would lock the bulk of the drinks away in the holy

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cupboard so that none of them would grow legs and walk. Grow legs and walk my arse... my language at the time was a lot more colourful; very explicit – too vulgar to repeat right now.

After the Reverend Doctor filled up his stomach with curry and rice and chicken wings and salad and two pieces of fish, he washed it down with three polystyrene cups of rum punch. He then retired to his quarters, with holy cupboard key swinging from a chain on his robe belt.

An hour later, the Reverend Doctor said he had received an urgent phone call from Ghana and had to send the mourners home so that he could catch a plane. It was 6pm; the hall was booked until nine. The Geisha girl and the Reverend Doctor headed for the door and off they sped in the baller mobile.

Well of course you can imagine the look on everyone's faces. Everyone's expression read, "what in the name of everything holy happened"? Tongues couldn't wait to wag outside on the pavement.

My aunt was well off; she was left a lot of money by her late husband who died when his liver shrunk to the size of a raisin due to Wray & Nephew poisoning. She got into buying, renting and selling houses in south east London back in the day. She was the Sarah Beeny of the 70s. Anyway, it turns out that my aunt had paid £3,000 for a new kitchen for the church. She paid for and cooked Sunday dinner for the church every weekend. Reverend Doctor felt the need to sell the food to members of the church; gossips say he pocketed the money. She funded a small nursery school in Ghana even though she's Jamaican. She paid for 75 chairs for the congregation. She lent the thieving, lying Reverend Doctor Such-&-Such £10,000 of which will never be seen again and on top of all of that, the odd couple had locked the cupboard and gone off with the key. The key to the same holy cupboard that held the drinks for the people who attended the funeral that my family paid for!

Some people might think "a fool and his money" and all that, but a church is a church is a church and that sort of thing shouldn't be happening there. May my Aunt rest in peace and I hope she's standing at the gates of Heaven when Such-&-Such comes knocking, wearing his purple robe and his blue-black jheri curl. Such-&-Such can see how fast he can drive his Bentley in the opposite direction through the gates of hell.

*August Mayfield*