The old Aston Martin crunched over the gravel and eased to a halt beside the imposing stone steps that lead to the grand entrance of the two-hatted restaurant. The valet opened the passenger door allowing the elegantly dressed woman to alight. The driver, handsome in his dinner suit, let himself out and tossed the keys to the valet and discretely palmed him a fiver.

‘Thankyou Sir’ he acknowledge, touching the brim of his hat.

It was a lovely evening - the sun’s last rays a suggestion on the western horizon as they climbed the five steps to the imposing door which opened before them.

The young maitre d’hotel quickly came from behind the lectern in the foyer.

‘Good evening Madame, good evening Sir, welcome to *Luigi’s*’ He said gesturing them towards the lectern.

‘Does Sir have a reservation?’ he enquired

‘Er… yes’ the gentleman nodded, and was about to offer his name when the maitre d’ asked

‘Your name Sir?’, scanning the reservations list on the lectern before him.

‘Alf Rescoe’ the gentleman replied.

The maitre d’ looked up and as politely as possible said ‘I’m sorry Sir, I meant what is your name?’

‘*Alf Rescoe’* he replied slightly louder.

‘I don’t think Sir understands - I just need your name so I can check the reservation’

‘*My.. name.. is.. Alf.. Rescoe’* he said with obvious emphasis, ‘*Mr Alfred Rescoe* - and this is my wife *Mrs Rescoe’*

The maitre d’ paused, then looked intently as he ran his finger down the page before him, raising his eyebrows sharply as he came across the name *Mr and Mrs Rescoe 7:30pm* clearly written on the list. He retrieved a pencil and savagely scribbled out the name before looking up, a forced smile on his face.

‘Will Sir be dining inside or outside tonight?’ he asked pleasantly

The gentlemen looked to his wife for guidance who mouthed a word to him

‘Well, it *is* a lovely evening..’ he remarked as he turned back to the maitre d’

‘ I think we might dine alfres…’

‘… on second thoughts, we might just dine inside’ he sighed