feeders & eaters
and Other Stories
by Neil Gaiman
with Mark Buckingham
This is a true story pretty much.

It was late one night in a city where I had no right to be—not at that time of night anyway.

I won't tell you which one.

I'd missed my last train and I had nowhere to sleep so I prowled the city centre until I found an all-night café somewhere warm to sit.

I wasn't hungry, but I bought a slice of toast and a cup of greasy tea.

So they'd leave me alone.

Feeders & Eaters

Hey you... I know you. Come here.

Then he said my name.

Um... Hello?

Don't you know me?

Eddie Barrow?

'Wonders, mate. You know me.

I ignored it. You don't want to get involved with people like that.

I suppose that was what was so horrible.

I did.
WE'D WORKED ON A BUILDING SITE TOGETHER, TEN YEARS BACK, DURING MY ONE AND ONLY REAL FLIRTATION WITH MANUAL WORK.

HE LEFT THE FORCE AFTER SOME TROUBLE BETWEEN HIM AND ONE OF THE TOP BRASS. HE SAID IT WAS THE SUPERINTENDENT'S WIFE MADE HIM LEAVE.

Eddie Barrow was at the police some times he'd tell me true stories tales of fitting up and doing over or punishment and crime.

Eddie was always getting into trouble with women.

They really liked him. Women.

I used to watch him to see how he did it.

Big.

Strong.

Not very bright.

But it didn't seem to be anything he did. Eventually I decided it was just the way he was.

And terribly terribly good looking.

When we were working together on the site they'd just hunt him down, give him sandwiches, little presents. Whatever he never seemed to do anything to make them like him.

They just liked him.

Eddie? What happened to you?

How-how Jameson? happened?

Yeah?

You look dreadful.

Mmm-hmm.

Happens to us all.
"I skipped my tea. I didn't say anything, and maybe he thought I wanted to know more, that I cared."

"To be honest, I had enough problems of my own. I didn't want to hear about his problems with whatever it was—drink, or drugs, or disease—or madness."

"I listened."

"I came here. A few years back, came down when they were building the by-pass, stuck around."

"Got a room in an old place round the back of Prince Regent Street. Got a room in the attic."

"I always had my meals with the family."

"It's funny with old people. You don't think they feel things like we do. I mean, here's her, old enough to be me gran."

"Anyway."

"She was coming out of the loo."

"She never come down for meals, so it was a week before we met."

"We were up in the attic in separate."

"I had a family house. Really there was the family, and there were two boarders."

"Me and Miss Corvier."

"She was old. So old..."
"I CAME UP TO MY ROOM ONE NIGHT, AND THERE WAS THIS BAG OF MUSHROOMS. IT WAS LIKE A PRESENT. I KNEW THAT STRAIGHT OFF.

"FOR ME."

"NOT NORMAL MUSHROOMS, THOUGH. I KNOCKED ON HER DOOR."

"ER, ARE THESE FOR ME?"

"OOF, THEY'RE ALL RIGHT FOR EATING. SHAGGY INK CUPS, THEY ARE."

"EAT THEM SOON. NOW THEY'RE BEST FRIED UP WITH A LITTLE BUTTER AND GARLIC."

"BUT YOU CAN EAT THEM?"

"OF COURSE. IT'S ASTONISHING THE THINGS PEOPLE DON'T EAT!"

"ALL THE STUFF AROUND PEOPLE COULD EAT, IF ONLY THEY KNEW IT."

"I USED TO EAT A LOT OF MUSHROOMS, BUT I CAN'T ANY MORE. WHAT WITH MY STOMACH."

"I WENT BACK INTO MY ROOM, THE OTHER HALF OF THE ATTIC."

"THEY'D DONE THE CONVERSION A FEW YEARS BACK.

"AFTER A FEW DAYS, THE MUSHROOMS DISLODGED INTO BLACK STUFF LIKE INK, AND I HAD TO PUT THE WHOLE MESS INTO A PLASTIC BAG AND THROW IT AWAY."
Hello, Mr. B.

How were the mushrooms?

Right, Miss Corvier.

Very nice. Thank you. Lovely.

She’d leave me other things. Little presents, and then I didn’t see her for a while.

I was at dinner with the family, the lad at the poly, we’d gone back to his family for the holidays.

It was summer, and really hot.

And someone said, they hadn’t seen her for about a week. And maybe I could look in on her.

So I did.

She was in the bed. She wasn’t well. She had all these sheets around her and she said:

Edward?

I don’t want to be a burden on anyone, but I’m so hungry.

I’ll get you something to eat, then.

Meat. That must be fresh meat, old raw. I won’t let anyone else cook it for me. Meat. Please, Edward?

Raw.

No problem.
"I thought about nicking it from the cat’s bowl but I didn’t."

"I went down to the butchers and got her half a pound of best sirloin."

"Get down, it’s not for you, Puss. It’s for Miss Corrigan. She’s not very well and she’s going to cook it for her dinner."

"She was up and about again soon after that. She was fine."

"And then Thompson went missing..."

Thompson?

He looked up then as if he’d forgotten. I was there, and he said...

I was never much of a one for cats, not really dogs I liked. Big faithful things. Do anything for you, a dog will.

When I was a lad, we had a cat. It was called Ginger. Turned out there were some people a few roads over who had a cat they called Marmalade.

Sneaky little bastards. You can’t trust them.

So I didn’t think anything when Thompson went away.

Some cat getting fed by all of us.

The family were worried."

...not me. I knew it’d come back.

The cat.
"I thought maybe it was stuck up in the rafters or out on the roof.

"It was coming from Miss Corrigan's room, the other half of the attic. I knocked but no one answered.

"The door wasn't locked, so I went in. I thought maybe the cat was stuck somewhere or hidden or something. I don't know.

"Whatever..."

"Mrrr..."

"But when you can't sleep these things get on your nerves."
You killed him.

He was all that I had to keep me going. And you killed him. He was my fresh meat.

You killed my fresh meat.

If you know how, you can make them not die. So the meat stays fresh so the life stays in it...

And I need my meat. I need the life.

I'm an old woman.

I don't want to be a burden on anybody, now.

Now who's going to feed me?

I...

That means I have to go now.
That's what happened. Like I said before, it's a true story, pretty much.

On the train home I encountered a woman carrying a baby.

It was floating in formaldehyde, in a heavy glass container.

She needed to sell it, and we talked for a while, about her reasons, and about other things.

But it is not necessary to speak further of that here.

It really happened.
AN IMAGE TO MAINTAIN...

Hi Neil, it’s Bucky.

You okay? Great.

Written anything for me lately?

No? Oh...

Need an inker on any of your other books? Not at the moment...

Mm? I see...

Look, I hoped I wouldn’t have to resort to this but...

Remember my wedding?

Remember the evening party?

You... Disco dancing!

Well, I got it all on video...

What’s that...?

You’ve just started work on a new story for me. That’s great.

I knew you’d see sense...

Mark Buckingham ‘93