

# The Lesser Sin

by Tanaqui

"We were so worried about you, weren't we, Herbert?" Aunt Edna pinched Stanley's cheek and threw the remark back over her shoulder at her husband. He'd taken a while to climb out of the driver's seat of the elderly Ford pickup they'd arrived in.

Stanley took the chance to extricate himself from Edna's over-emotional embrace and shake Herbert's hand.

"And Bonnie!" Edna gave an excited shriek as his sister appeared on the porch. Stanley was surprised at how speedily the old lady mounted the steps and enveloped Bonnie in an effusive hug. Over Edna's shoulder, Bonnie rolled her eyes at Stanley and signed, "No change!"

"And who's this?" Edna let go of Bonnie and looked disdainfully at Mimi, who had followed Bonnie outside.

"Hi." Mimi held out her hand. "I'm Mimi. I'm Stanley's—."

"Wife!" Stanley interrupted her, bounding up the steps. He put his arm around Mimi and drew her against him, a big beaming smile on his face. "Mimi's my wife. Mimi...", he risked a glance at her and gave her a warning look, "this is my mother's sister, Aunt Edna, and her husband, Uncle Herbert."

A second glance told him Mimi had managed to get her eyebrows down where they'd been up by her hairline, and that she'd recovered her composure a little. "Pleased to meet you," she croaked out.

Edna accepted her hand briefly, before running her gaze up and down Mimi. "You're not from around here, are you?"

"DC." Mimi had dropped her hand. Now she slid it behind Stanley and punched him in the back. Hard. He wasn't at a loss to guess why.

As Edna made a noise that showed her contempt for anyone who came from further East than Topeka, Stanley gestured towards the porch seat and said, "Why don't you sit down and catch up with Bonnie, and I'll get us something to drink."

He looked over at Bonnie and saw she'd picked up that *something* was going on, but was clearly confused as to exactly what it was. Turning away to the house, Stanley signed where Edna couldn't see him, "Mimi. Wife. Not fiancée."

Bonnie's expression cleared and she nodded at him. With a nervous-looking smile, she gestured at Edna to join her on the porch seat.

Mimi followed Stanley into the house. "What did you tell them we're married for?" she hissed.

Stanley gave her an embarrassed shrug as he started pulling glasses out of a cupboard. "They're... extremely old fashioned. If they thought we were 'living in sin', Edna would turn right around and march out of here. And that would be a shame after they came so far, wouldn't it?"

Mimi turned her gaze heavenward for a moment, but didn't comment. Instead, she set to helping him prepare a jug of lemonade and some cookies.

When they were settled outside and the drinks poured, Edna gave her a grilling that Szell in *Marathon Man* would have been proud of: where she came from, and how she met Stanley, and what sort of family she came from. Apparently not completely dissatisfied with the answers, Edna finally put her glass down and said, "So, tell me about the wedding. I'm so sorry we missed it."

Mimi made a dismissive noise. "Oh, it was very quiet. Just Bonnie as a bridesmaid, and a few friends...." When a slight frown began to settle on Edna's face, she hastily added, "And the minister, of course. It was a *lovely* service, wasn't it, Stanley?" She turned and gave him a wide smile that he knew was entirely fake. He was so going to pay for all of this later. But for now....

"Oh, yes." He nodded enthusiastically. "You would have really liked it. I'd show you pictures but, you know... all the cameras stopped working after the EMP." He cleared his throat. "But enough about *us*. How have you and Uncle Herbert been....?"

It was early afternoon when they waved Edna and Herbert off down the track; the elderly couple were keen to make it back home before dark. As they watched the Ford turn onto the highway, Mimi murmured to Stanley, "You do realize that when we *do* get married, we won't be able to invite them?"

Stanley shot her a sideways grin. "And wouldn't that be such a shame?"

**Disclaimer:** These stories are based on the Junction Entertainment/Fixed Mark Productions/CBS Paramount Television series *Jericho*. They were written for entertainment only; the author does not profit from them nor was any infringement of copyright intended.