LUNCH WITH CARMELLA

You haven't been around here long enough to have known Carmella, huh, John?

Nope. I think I might've heard some one talk about her once, though...

...wasn't she known for being weird?

Yeah, she was. She was something.

I'll never forget the first time I found out about her. It was right after I started working here.

Me'n that old guy Charlie Graham were working alone in the mail room an' this crazy, raggedy lookin' lady comes in an' grabs Charlie an' kisses 'im.

Smack!

Charlie was surprised. Y'know, an' he asked her, "What was that for?" So she told him "It's my wedding anniversary today," an' then starts laughin' like crazy.
Well, that was unusual enough, but I found out later that her husband had died ten years ago.

So I thought to myself, "What have we got here?" I found out pretty soon.

Sometimes when I use to be delivering stuff I'd see Carmella sittin' on the steps doin' her work instead of doin' it in the office.

Carmella, how come you ain't workin' at yer desk?

Ah, it's too hot in there!

No kiddin'? How'd she get away with that? Didn't someone say something?

Well, I guess she mighta been sorta goin' crazy gradually over a period of years, she'd do something a little nuttier an' no one would say anything.

Then she'd do somethin' even a little nuttier an' still no one'd say anything. By the time she was completely nutty everyone was used to her.

She had so much seniority they couldn't fire 'er. Besides people liked 'er. She was an institution.

I guess they wouldn't a tolerated 'er in private industry, but that's one nice thing about workin' for the government. The government has more tolerance for diversity.

Gulp...
She didn't give a damn about how she looked, which is pretty odd for a woman. I remember one time Rose Rizzo was bawling her out about it.

Carmella, shame on you! Your dress is dirty.

Yeah, but it's only dirty on the outside.

Once during a transit strike she tried to roller skate to work. She made it about fifteen blocks, then she had to get a ride from someone.

They say she started to go looney after her husband died. She had a coupla kids. I don't see how they coulda been, but I heard they were normal.

When her daughter got married she xeroxed a buncha copies of the wedding invitation an' was goin' around handing 'em out to everyone at work.

Thanks, Carmella, but are you sure yer daughter wants me to come? She don't even know me!

Ha ha sure it's O.K. The more the merrier.

Her son-in-law worked at an airline an' he could get her a certain amount of free trips. So one time around Christmas she says she's goin' t' Alaska.

She even took my address so she c'd send me a card.

So then she comes back an' gives me a little spoon that says "Miami, Florida" on it. She don't go to Alaska.
AFTER ANGIE, THOUGH, SHE TAKES OFF ON VACATION AGAIN. ONE DAY I GET A LETTER FROM SOMEONE WITH AN ANCHORAGE, ALASKA POSTMARK ON IT.

I OPENED IT UP AND THERE WAS THIS PIECE OF TOILET PAPER. THE ONLY WORDS WRITTEN ON IT WERE, "THE LAND OF THE MIDNIGHT SUN," PLUS CARMELLA'S SIGNATURE.

I FOUND OUT THAT ABOUT TWENTY-FIVE PEOPLE HAD GIVEN THE SAME TOILET PAPER LETTERS FROM HER... WELL, ACTUALLY ONE LADY GOT A LETTER ON A NAPKIN.

HER WHOLE DIVISION GOT TRANSFERRED DOWNTOWN ABOUT A YEAR AGO. TOO BAD. I MISS 'ER. SHE WAS WEIRD BUT SHE WAS FUN, AND SHE HAD A GOOD HEART.

WELL, I'VE GOTTA GET GOIN' NOW. LUNCH IS ALMOST OVER... YOU COMIN'? NOT JUST YET... I WANNA SIT HERE A COUPLE MINUTES AN' DIGEST MY FOOD.

WELL, IN THAT CASE, I'LL SEE YA LATER, O.K.? O.K., I'LL KETCH YA HERE AT THE 2:30 BREAK.

THE RETURN ADDRESS WASN'T AN ADDRESS. IT JUST SAID, "UP IN THE SKY."