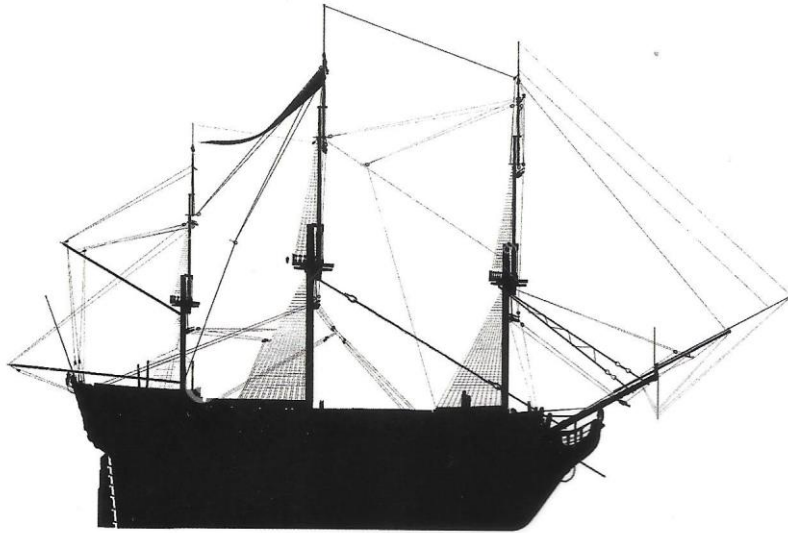


More of my  
**SIX MINUTE  
STORIES**



Mick Cooper

More of my  
**SIX MINUTE  
STORIES**

Mick Cooper

Proofing/Editing Bruce Parry  
Illustrations Alan Griffin

**I dedicate this book to all the good friends I have made through the years**

## **CONTENTS**

### **The Stories**

A question of balance

One bad apple

Blackbird on the lawn

Guaranteed for life

The other boot

The singer not the song

Santa's Bad Day

Christmas and Son

Little fears

Heroes

Cold Callers

The Town of Toys

Jack's bottle

A windy day

A Knight in space.

Stan and Audrey

Jack's last chance

Audrey's answer.

Egg bound

Tomorrow Radio

Water in a glass

From a prompt

Stories Time

Hunger Pains

Brill Days

The Doctor Freud Interview

The Traveller

The dark day

Holy Smoke

It's not you, it's me  
Waiting for what?  
I can't think of everything  
Rambles  
Ted's Naked Conundrum  
The witch who couldn't spell  
Jeremiah's Mystery  
Where can I buy me a Tardis?  
The paper anniversary  
Food glorious food  
Possessions  
The art class  
The cancellation  
The late Mrs Priscilla Dixon

## **Poetry**

In Hope  
The Jazz Man  
Red Guitar  
Hope  
The wonky Easter bunny  
The one thing I hate  
Autumns here  
Boxes  
The Poet  
John's untidy fairy  
The new hill  
Lucky Guy  
What can I write?  
The Dulcimer Master  
The key  
Playlet  
The bug  
Give it up for the heroes  
Different Worlds  
Chalk.

When the love has gone  
Life is so sweet  
The remedy  
Cupboard in the sky  
To the South  
Valentine 1  
Valentine 2  
Prinsted Bay  
When luck ran out  
Different Directions

## **Song Lyrics**

Jerry  
Lincolnshire Lou and Jenny from Fife,  
The only one I need  
Short stories  
Little Silver Street  
Boogie woogie Louise.  
The Lady wants a little lovin'  
Almost  
The further adventures of Tillie the Twirler  
Mister Music  
Another Newquay Summer  
So much for love  
St Pauls Grove  
The Sixties  
Don't get angry  
Never again  
Another time another place  
A place in my heart  
Most of all

## **More STORIES**

Oh Geoffrey !  
A hell of a vicar

Granny Ice Cream  
The Oriental Lamp  
In search of Sherringham Teddy  
Arnie's Gym  
Life with Lucille

---

## THE STORIES

### A question of balance

"Right you are then," said Jim, "it's about time we thought about organising Nan's party, and because she's made the ton, it's got to be something really special."

"Party? What party?" asked Sid, with some surprise.

"We'll have it on the Pier, get in a disco, and we'll have a band too, nothing like a good live band, and a cake,..."

"Wait a minute! Hold your horses. Who said she wanted a party anyway?" demanded Sid.

"Of course she does, everybody does."

"You mean, you do. So who else have you spoken to about this?"

"No one.... yet," admitted Jim.

"So.... how do you know Nan wants a party? Have you asked her? No!"

Slowly and sheepishly Jim replied, "No, well, you know, a 100 years old is a good reason to celebrate."

"You mean for you to get legless, don't you?"

"Yea, sure, we'll have a drink, a good drink." Said Jim

"So don't you think you should ask her first?"

"No, she'll be alright" insisted Jim

"So, who else are you going to invite to this party of yours, I mean of Nan's?"

"Well there's, Mum and Dad to start with." Jim tried to sound excited, but guessed Sid's reply.

"You won't get Dad there, that's for sure. He and Mum haven't spoken for ages, not since the divorce. No chance there!"

"Yes they will, they will for Nan anyway, I bet. Then all their kids too."

"Yea? There's two here, one in Australia and one still in prison, so how you gonna work that one?" Sid scoffed but Jim ignored him.

"Then there's all their kids, and all the close neighbours in her street. Nan goes into that Community Centre don't she? So there must be some people from there that we can drag in to."

Sid took a large gulp of his larger and chuckled to himself. "It'll be like the Titanic, and sink like a stone before it starts!"

"No it won't, but it's got to be organised properly. I'll give the pier a ring and see what they charge and how they want to run it. Where's me mobile?"

"You don't even know when her birthday is! Do ya? Sid Sid.

"Yea, 'course I do, it's," there was a long pause, "it's next month, isn't it?"

Sid smiled and said, "It's May the 19th!"

"OK know all, so it's the month after next, more time to arrange things. Titanic? yea, that's it, gotta get a few bottles of Champagne."

"What? Are you going to christen her with it? Break a bottle over her head or something." Sid laughed aloud at his joke.

"Don't be silly" Jim was in thought for a few moments.

"Listen to me," Jim was using his voice of wisdom and knowledge but Sid butted in. "It's all a question of balance. You have to get the priorities right. First you ask Nan if she wants a party. At her age she's probably going to bed at six in the evening, and you party won't even have started yet. When she wakes up in the morning, you'll just be finishing the party and sweeping up after. Always assuming you are still able to stand up!"

"I suppose that's another question of balance then?" they both smiled at the silly remark.

"Where is my mobile?" Jim searched in each pocket, but without luck.

"Then there's Aunt Rene, and George. Plus Stan and Reggie," Jim was adding to his mental list.

"Look here, the first thing to do right now is make a written list, get it down on paper, then you know what's going on," said Sid.

"OK, Hey Sally." Jim yelled to the barmaid, "Have you got a sheet of paper and a pen, ducks?"

She finished serving another customer, and then thrust a pen and some paper into Jim's hand. "I didn't think you could write, Jim." She laughed as she turned and walked away.

Jim laid the paper on the bar and scribbled a few names onto it."

He suddenly realised that the bar was wet and starting to soak into the paper. "Oh, sod it." He peeled the paper back and brushed it down his jumper. He started trying to write on the soggy page, but his Biro tore through the paper. He screwed the paper into a small ball in anger. "Damn it!" he said as he threw the paper ball at the barmaid. Suddenly there was a strange noise.

"What's that?" asked Sid.

"It's my mobile, but where is it?" Again a flustered Jim searched and eventually found it in his top pocket.

"Hello." He said, and listened. As he did his face drained and his jaw dropped. "What happened?" he asked and listened. "I'll be right home, bye."

He turned the phone off and slipped it into his pocket.

"What's up?" enquired Sid.

"She's dead!"

"Who?"

"Nan, she fell down her stairs."

"That's terrible," added Sid. "She must have lost her balance, see, it was all just a question of balance after all."

There was silence for a time, Jim took a deep breath and then spoke. "I suppose the party is off now."

15/11/2013

## One bad apple

He took a spade and a Gladstone bag from the Landau and then slammed the door, which unsettled the jittery horses. Turning away he walked through the large ornamental Gothic gate. Dusk was settling on the countryside all around him. Owls were hooting and bats were in flight, looking for their next meal. The gravel crunched under his feet as he walked down the avenue of gravestones. The evening air around him reeked with the overpowering smell of death. He stopped, turned and walked into the middle of the stones and paused at a freshly filled grave.

A translucent white mist spread rapidly across a nearby meadow and into the grave yard and began to circle his ankles. Three inky black ravens appeared above and began swooping, diving and attacking him. He recoiled and held up an arm for protection. Then almost as suddenly as they had appeared, they vanished. It seemed that the newly departed's sentinels had finally accepted the stranger's presence leaving only blood marks on his face and hands. The mist faded quickly.

Grabbing a handful of the contents from the bag he began sprinkling a mixture of hazel blossoms, betchamy oil, lemon juice and stinging nettles over the grave. He stood transfixed, then waited and watched as the watery sun finally sunk below the horizon.

He forced the spade into the fresh earth. After several full spades had been removed, he hesitated, and gazed down as the soil began to separate and an object started rising from the grave.

Soon a head could be seen, moments later the upper torso was visible, and then a whole body. The earth fell away leaving it's clothing pristine and untainted. He held out his hand to help her out of the grave.

"Thank you," said the body, "and about time too! Tell me, what has happened to Snow White?"

"She has become suddenly very old and wrinkled and ugly" he said.

"Good, then my spell has not let me down! As I died I cast a curse on her, and now I am alive again and she is dying, and that's just as I planned."

The wicked witch pushed by him.

"Come along, we must get to the Palace."

He stood there, amazed at what he had seen.

"Come along, there's no time to waste," she urged, "We must get to the palace before your wife dies. I have to finalise the spell!"

He still did not move.

"How did you do that," he asked, "you were dead and now you are alive again."

She began to explain. "When I got to your wedding, the seven dwarfs snatched me away, tied my hands and then forced onto my feet, some iron boots they had heated in flames. The boots were burning my feet. The only thing I could do was to dance to ease the pain. Eventually, I realised it was killing me and that's when I cast the spell.

"What was the spell?" he asked.

"It was that at the moment I died, she would become very old and deeply unattractive to you. I need to get to her to chant the final incantation. If that doesn't work then I have a knife and I will slit her throat from ear to ear, and send her into the next world, and you, my Prince, will be mine forever."

"Yes of course, my love" he said almost automatically.

At the palace, they both looked down at Snow White as she lay in a bed. The Prince had to turn his head away as her ugly aging carcass repulsed him.

The Witch laughed at his reaction and from a leather wallet attached to her belt, she produced some small animal bones. She sprinkled them on Snow White's increasingly grotesque body and began chanting strange words. This woke up a chamber maid who had been sleeping on the floor, out of sight, on the far side of the bed.

"What are you doing!" she demanded, "Stop it, Stop it!" she shouted.

The witch ignored her and continued.

"Guards! Call the guards! Where are the palace guards?" yelled the maid. There was only silence except for the witches' chant. She gave a sly grin and chuckled aloud as the two women looked at each other.

No guards came to the rescue.

Then they both heard someone sneezing outside the bedroom door. It opened and in trooped the seven dwarfs. They stood around the bed and the witch. Sleepy sat on the edge of the bed and promptly fell asleep.

"I thought we'd find you here," said Doc. The witch continued for a moment and then turned to him. "You cannot stop me," she said.

"Let's talk about this," said Doc, "we need to think this out, and with that much thinking and talking we'll need some liquid refreshment." He took a bottle from the table, poured some into a tankard and handed it to her. She tasted its contents. "Hmmm, that's nice!" she said.

Doc sent Dopey to the kitchen for another bottle of wine. Dopey was not as stupid as most people think. He sliced an apple that had one bite missing from it, and crushed it into the neck of a half full bottle. On his return to the bedroom, he winked as he handed the bottle to Doc. By now the Witch had drunk most of the first bottle and was getting loud and merry. "More wiiiiine," she demanded, "Give me more wiiiiine." Doc handed her the new bottle and she poured it into her tankard and drank it quickly. As she did, Snow White's wrinkles disappeared. The Witches' speech became slurred, and she started giggling. "What is this wine? It's very moreish" she stated.

"Its cider," replied Doc.

"Cider wine eh? It's very good. What's it made of?" she asked.



"It's made of apples, in particular one very nice apple," said Doc.

"What? One very nice apple? What do you mean? What have you done?" She began to realise she was losing control. Her eyes looked down at the tankard and then down at Snow White just as her hair changed from grey to black.

"What?" she queried, "What's happening to her? And what is in this drink?" she quizzed.

"You should know, better than anyone, all it takes is one bad apple!" He smiled at her.

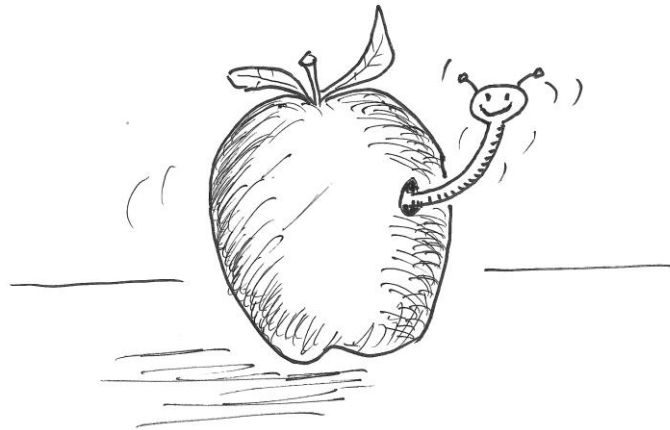
She bellowed "Oh no!"

Sleepy suddenly woke up and said "Oh yes." and all the dwarfs started laughing and dancing around.

Snow White, who was now awake and fully restored to her original beauty, stood up and rushed into the prince's arms just as the Witch fell onto the bed. Her face quickly became wrinkled, her hair unsightly and her dress ragged. The witch is still there now and to this day has never woken up again. She is waiting for any passing Prince to stop and kiss her. However, should you hear anyone near you snoring loudly, be carefully not to wake that person. It just might be the ugly old bitch,

I mean the Witch.

14/2/2014



## Blackbird on the lawn

"Are you all right Mrs Corbin?" she asks me and tucks the blanket around my legs. "I'm fine" I say, but to be truthful it's made no difference at all. My legs are still cold. She moves over the Harry, but he's asleep and then over to Beryl. She can dribble for England, all down the front of her blouse. Charley is watching his little TV, well he is most of the time, when he's not sleeping. He's usually waiting for the women's football. He gets more excited at the end of the game when they swop shirts.

At least I have a full belly. I'm not exactly sure what it was, but it was supposed to be lamb. Only a couple of hours until tea time, then a wash, and then they put us all to bed, and all before it gets dark. I sit here all day and look out the window. They need cleaning but no one seems worried about it. It's very quiet here most of the day.

The staff are very good but they always seem busy. Then yesterday, a man came in with a little keyboard, and some speaker things.

He played and sang lots of the old songs for a couple of hours, it was great. Some of us joined in with him. Funny thing was that after,

as he was packing up all his bits and pieces, Beryl woke up and asked him when he was starting. Silly cow.

I watch the birds fly by, and next doors cat chasing any bird that lands in the garden. Look there's one now.

"Blackbird on the lawn" I shout and Harry wakes and looks at me, and then closes his eyes again. It's pleasing to see a new mown lawn, because it always draws wildlife into the garden. Firstly, black birds. The children always used to shout 'Blackbird on the lawn' it was one of those family traditions. I've no idea how it started.

But the children are now all grown up and moved away. They all have their own families and their own lives, and I don't see them so often these days.

I'm a great grandmother, three times! I've got some photographs of them on my bedroom cabinet, with their names written on them.

Oooh look there's two Magpies now. They are looking for food for themselves and their young. They seem to methodically search the ground for any creature that hear their footsteps thinking it's rain. It's a good day today. One for sorry two for joy, isn't that how it goes? There's a blue sky and a warm sun. I still don't understand why I'm cold. My toes are hurting me, and my toe nails need cutting. I must ask Sharon to do that next time they bath me. Her name is Sharon, isn't it? I can't remember. I tried reading a book this morning, but the print was too small, so I gave up on that.

Fiona is due to visit me on Sunday. She's my eldest but missed last Sunday. One of her children was unwell. At least that was the story

I was told. It used to be every week, but it's more like every month now. She was married to Martin and had a good marriage.

Three beautiful kiddies, but then there was the accident on his way home from work. We all went to the funeral. It was very sad and it took the whole family ages to get over it. She was in a terrible way for months. Everything changed when she got his insurance money. She was different woman and as happy as a fishmongers cat.

There was a new house, new furniture, new car, and lots of foreign holidays soon followed. That's when she met Raphael.

He soon moved in and letting him do that was the worst thing she ever did!

He turned out to be a couch slob. He did nothing and I can't understand why she puts up with it. He's still there now, claiming off the state, and he doesn't give her a penny of it. It's beyond me to understand her. He plays a bass guitar in one of those hairy groups and they make an awful noise.

Look, there's two blackbirds out there now, "Black bird on the lawn" Oh dear, I've have shouted again, but looking around I see no one is bothered.

I've had a good life. Some ups and some downs. I had a good man until Stan popped his clogs. Now it's all down to the young ones, my bit's nearly done. Shame about that.

Four and twenty black birds baked in a pie, ah yes that's what we used to sing. A pocket full of rye. What is rye? Don't they make it into bread? Sing a song of six pence. I remember Sixpences. We have this new decimal money these days, but they don't give me any money. They say I don't need it, not in here, not in Wisteria Manor.

I think I'm getting hungry again, but it can't be tea time yet. They don't have any clocks around, they say it depresses some of us to watch time.

The trouble is, that one day is just like any other day, except when there's blackbirds on the lawn.

"Wake up Mrs Corbin," she says, "It's time for tea."

31/7/14

They gave us all different phrases, mine was,

"Then he set to work - stitch after stitch - making believe he was like a man on the keel."

And said write something in 20 mins.

Mine is not flash fiction, but I do like what I wrote, see below

## Guaranteed for life

Then he set to work, stitch after stitch, hour after hour until the job was done. John stood back and looked at them, admired them, loved them. "They're a fine pair of boots, it's a shame I have to sell them." He said as he placed them in his shop window.

Within half an hour, a man entered and asked their size.

"They are 10's sir," said John.

The man smiled and asked to try them on. They fitted perfectly.

He asked the price. "Sir, they are only half a guinea and guaranteed for life!"

"Guaranteed for life, really?" He asked.

"Yes sir!" said John convincingly.

The money was paid and he left wearing them.

There was a sudden loud crashing sound from outside. John looked out and saw his customer's legs protruding from under a horseless carriage.

"Right!" thought John, "I'd best go out and retrieve those boots, he won't be needing them anymore!"

19/9/2014



## The other boot

The removal men had left and now it was time to open all the cardboard boxes and place the furniture where it was wanted.

The task took several days and eventually the house was almost tidy. A number of un-needed items were taken down to the cellar for storage. As he looked around for a suitable location, and then noticed an old army suit case almost hidden under the stairs. He pulled it out and brushed off the dust and cobwebs of many years. Easily, the locks sprung open. To his surprise, the only content was one single heavy boot. He was sure it was something a soldier would wear. As he held it an envelope fell out. It contained four medals and a letter that read, Presented to Arthur Gray for heroic service at Gallipoli. He mouthed the inscription on one of the medals, 'for valour'

Then he realised that also under the stairs, behind where the case had been, there was a wooden leg. It was wearing the other boot.

10/10/2014

## The singer not the song

The rehearsal in the hotel ballroom wasn't going well. She had worked through most of the songs with the pianist before the rest of the band arrived so it should have been easy. A simple quick run through of each song in her set with the full band should be all that was needed.

One particular song was proving difficult. She started it and stopped it several times.

In a gush of frustration, she bellowed, "You've all got the dots in front of you, but somebody is not playing it right!" she looked around at the musicians. "Come on now, who's playing the bum notes?"

There was no reply. The band leader pianist made them start again, and again and yet again, but she still she wasn't happy. Her face was reddening and her breathing getting heavier and stronger and inside she was beginning to boil

As she sang she walked around with the intention of listening to each of the band, in the hope of finding the culprit. She was determined to find the bum note player. Suddenly she stopped singing and held up her hands and demanded silence. She stood in front of the trumpet player. "It's you!" she yelled pointing to him. "How the hell do you expect me to sing the song if you can't play the bloody song right. All the right notes in the right order! So now tell me, what's your problem?" Her chest heaved in anger. He looked up at her and tried a very nervous smile. She saw a young fresh boyish face with cherry cheeks daring to look up at her. Her feelings began to change and with a glint in her eye she took a liking to what she saw. Here was the type she liked. The innocent and young types was where she had her conquests in the past, and the kind she preferred. She put her hand on his shoulder and pushed her chest towards his face. "Perhaps you and I could sort this out together. It should be easy to change the score that you've got there.

Why not bring your part up to my room later, and we can work on it together? Until we get it right" He saw an over made up face glaring down at him. Bright red lips and heavily mascaraed eyes and a pungent perfume that began to make him reach. He quickly turned back to look at his sheet music and shuddered.

The pianist rushed over to his rescue. "This is my son Geoffrey, he's got a lot on his mind at the moment, finding it difficult to concentrate." he said, "He doesn't have the ability to writes scores and arrangements. Perhaps I can help you with it instead?" She was now looking at an aging bald headed man with beedy eyes a full belly, and her mood changed yet again. He was very definitely the type she didn't like or want. "No, no," she insisted, "It's OK, perhaps we could..."

A mobile phone started ringing and the Geoffrey pulled it from his pocket and read the text. "Oh, Oh," he became very excited, "Oh her water's broke and she's started her labour, I must go, now!" He almost threw his instrument back into it's case, stood, grabbed his coat and without saying a word left the ballroom. The singer looked at the pianist, "so what do we do now, we need and trumpet and I can't play it and sing as well!" "Maybe we should take a break," he said "I have a few phone numbers I can ring to get a replacement. Let's take five, or maybe ten."

About an hour later, as the evening for the gig was rapidly approaching, the musicians and the singer were back on stage, but there was no trumpeter. As they were chatting, the ballroom doors opened and in came a uniformed man. He walked across the dance floor, and she tried to establish which particular uniform it was. She re-assured herself that if he's a military bandsman, he will be a very capable musician. The band leader shook his hand and spoke privately for a moment and then introduced him the band. "This is Gilbert, he'll be sitting in for my son this evening." There was a gentle round of applause as he took a seat and began to open his trumpet case. It was then that her eyes finally focused and she realised he was in the Salvation Army. She thought to herself, there's little he can do for me now! I'm way past my best, too far gone for sure.

The reminder of the rehearsal went without a hitch, and the evening gig was well received by all those present including the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress. The singer made sure to be well topped up with Vodka before her performance and she sailed through her songs effortlessly, and received loud applause and thanks after.

It was close to midnight. The lady had finished her work for the evening and was adding to her alcohol levels in the bar. The band had completed their performance and had gone. As she looked around for company and someone to talk to, she saw the new bandsman walk into the bar. He was, once again, dressed in his uniform and as soon as she saw the copies of 'War Cry' over his arm, she made a hasty exit to the lady's powder room. She didn't hesitate to check her hair or make up in a mirror and slammed and locked the cubicle door and sat defiantly on the toilet subconsciously claiming sanctuary. Sometime later she woke to see the light of a new day streaming through a high window over the top of the cubicle. She leant over and threw up and tried to stand. The pounding in her head and ricked back, not to mention the indented ring on her rear, made it almost impossible. Eventually she made her exit and somehow she found her bedroom door and fumbled for what seemed ages with the card door lock. Once inside, she closed the door behind her and leaned back against it. Taking a deep breath she listened. There was silence except for the thunder in her brain. She staggered forward and fell onto the bed, alone.

14/11/2014

## Santa's Bad Day

"I had the day so well planned out and then it all went wrong," said Santa to Clyde his chief elf.

"Really?" said Clyde, "Why? What went wrong?"

"Well..." Santa took a deep breath, "where do I start? OK. Everything was ready for the Christmas run, toys all made, reindeer all checked by the vet and passed roadworthy. The misses had washed and pressed my red suit with the cotton wool edging and I was looking forward to it all!"

"So?" queried Clyde.

"Well, then it snowed, and I don't like snow."

Santa took a mouthful of his mulled wine and munched on a mince pie.

"But everybody like it, the kids love it, the reindeer love stepping through it so why don't you like it?" questioned Clyde.

"It's too cold, I'm not a youngster anymore and my joints ache in the cold. Even with my quadruple thermals, the cold still gets to me!"

"I think I have the answer to your problem," said Clyde, "but it means I'll have to give you your Christmas present now.

Santa looked up, wondering what he meant.

Clyde handed Santa a parcel wrapped in Christmas paper, saying, "It's your Christmas present."

"Thank you," said Santa.

He quickly opened the box and to his surprise found a ticket.

"What's this then?" asked Santa.

"All the elves," said Clyde, "we all chipped in to get you a ticket for two on a summer holiday in Hawaii where it's always hot, you'll love it!"

"Oh that's wonderful, thank you so very much," said Santa, "But it doesn't solve my problem. How am I going to deliver all toys without getting cold?"



## Christmas and Son

Father Christmas woke up feeling wretched. He sneezed and he sat up on the edge of his bed, and sneezed again. “Oh no, not a cold, not at this time of the year!” he uttered in desperation. After slipping on a red dressing gown with white edging he made his way downstairs to the kitchen. Mother Christmas turned as he walked in, “Dear me you do look ill, I could hear you sneezing down here.” she said as he flopped down in a chair. “There’s no way you are going to be fit for Christmas Eve, you look like death only slightly warmed up” she added, and he didn’t have the strength to disagree. “Come on now,” she instructed, “you go back to bed and I’ll bring you a hot drink with something in it.”

“But who’s going to do the Christmas Eve calls If I can’t?” he asked.

“Well, we’ll think about that once you’re back in bed, come on, up you go.” And she ushered him back upstairs adding, “You didn’t have your flu jab this year did you? You Silly Billy.”

It didn’t get any better by Christmas Eve morning. “It’s no good,” she said, “Our son will have to go in your place!” At first he protested, “Oh no,” but then slowly realised there was little alternative. He had no strength to argue.

Their son had arrived as a surprise one day after Father Christmas had a few too many Sherries some years ago. The boy was summoned up to the bedroom. He slouched in, wearing a black grubby Led Zeppelin tee shirt, the hottest pair of Nike trainers and jeans that were slipping down his body. His baseball cap, with a rude word on it, was on sideways. “Yea what ya want?” he demanded as he slipped a piece of gum into his mouth and started chewing.

“Your father’s not at all well; you’ll have to do the Christmas Eve run with Rudolph.”

“Oh no Ma,” He whined, “Nah I don’t wanna do that, I got plans for a party tomorrah!”

She replied instantly, “Now if you don’t then none of the boys and girls around the world will get any presents for Christmas this year! And that would be terrible. You’ll have to do it and that’s that!” Their son groaned, turned quickly and left the room.

“I’ll speak to him,” she said as she followed him downstairs.

It was getting dark on Christmas Eve and snow was falling. Mother Christmas went to her husband’s bedside. “He’s ready,” she said “Come in son,” and the boy appeared wearing a red coat with white ermine trimming, big black boots and a clip on white beard.

“Wow,” said Father Christmas, “Now that is a surprise, you look very good son, in fact, you look perfect.” He sneezed.

The lad’s unheralded metamorphosis was a complete bombshell to his parents. He had given the whole predicament a lot of thought very quickly and realised that his father’s unhealthiness would disappoint so many children.

Also the thought that he would have to take over the family business one day dawned on him, so now was a good time to start.

“Perfect but for one thing,” continued Father Christmas. “He’s a beanpole, there’s more fat on a chip!” With that, the boy grabbed and pulled the pillow from beneath his father’s head, which in turn fell heavily back onto the bed. This infuriated all the germs in his body, all of whom had been planning a vacation. However, with this sudden abrupt jolting, word had spread on the bug net chat line, and after voting, the majority of them decided that after all, they would stay until the summer. They didn’t want to go out in the cold weather and catch any nasty bugs did they? So as a means of retribution, they made Father Christmas sneeze violently four times in a row. Mother Christmas handed him the Kleenex box and he quickly seized a handful and blew hard into them. “He has the list,” she said as the boy stuffed the pillow down the front of his baggy red trousers, “and he’s got the TOMY sat nav from the chief gnome in the toy workshop. Rudolph and the rest of the reindeer are ready, and raring to go,” she said with determination.

“Good,” Said Father Christmas as he sneezed again, “It looks like you’ve got the whole thing sorted and now all of the children will get the presents this year, well done son.” The boy’s cheeks reddened, he kissed his mother and left.

Early on Christmas day morning, Rudolph and his fellow reindeer brought the sleigh home after a long night. The boy had slept most of the way back, but woke just as they arrived. It was then he realised his mistake. He was sure that he had done a good job but became horrified when he found one sack of toys under a blanket, still in the sleigh, that had not been delivered. He rushed in to tell his parents. They were just as shocked to think some poor child was still waiting for the gifts.

“Whose house did you miss?” she asked and he checked his list.

“It was Emily, on that housing estate near Portsmouth.” He confessed.

“You’ll have to go straight back now, quick before it gets light,” said his mother. The boy knew she was right, but didn’t like the thought of breaking this news to Rudolph and the rest. After he promised them all an extra bag of hay and a day off tomorrow, they set off on the trip back to the forgotten child. As they flew it was getting much brighter. The new dawn was gradually creeping over them. They circled over the estate looking for the right house and a place to land.

Then he saw a young lady crying and waiting at the door of a house. She had tears streaming down her cheeks, but as soon as she saw the sleigh, with Father Christmas in it, a wide smile spread across her face. “He’s here, he’s here, he didn’t forget me after all” she shouted back into the house.

She walked out to the sleigh leaving footprints in the snow behind her. The boy gave her a sack brimming over with presents. “Ho ho ho” he said in a deep voice slightly over acting.

“Oh thank you so very much Father Christmas,” she said, “You didn’t forget me after all. You are wonderful.” She leaned forward to kiss him. As she did his beard slipped off and she saw it wasn’t an old man. It was a boy who was just a little older than she was. Then she saw the twinkle in his eye and thought to herself, ‘He’s cute!’ She began to hear an angelic choir singing but couldn’t understand where the sound was coming from. He quickly kissed her and dropped a chewing gum pack in her hand and then jumped back onto the sleigh. The choir sang louder. The boy smiled and waved to her as they flew off on the second return journey.

There was a chilling mist over the Channel as they travelled. The snow had stopped and the sun was easing its way up from the distant horizon.

“Hmm she was a pretty girl,” he said to himself, “I must go back and see her again very soon.”

12/12/2014

## Little fears

I woke after a pretty good night's sleep, reached out and switched on the bedside lamp.

With a hearty gust of energy I threw the duvet over to one side and sat up. Before I could swing my legs over the side of the bed, I noticed something very strange, in fact unbelievably strange.

My feet seem to have disappeared. I could feel my blood pressure instantly objecting and my heart was desperately trying to get out of my mouth.

What! I yelled, how can that be?

Then I rationalised the situation. I must still be dreaming. That's it!

So I pinch my arm and it hurts, really hurts! I was definitely not dreaming.

I looked again and now my ankles and legs up to my knees were missing.

I wanted to stand up, but how could I?

In desperation I swung myself around to the edge of the bed and tried to stamp on the floor, and I could. But how could I with no feet, legs and now no knees?

My head was swimming with a million questions and ridiculous improbable answers. I reached for my trousers but how on earth could

I get myself into them? By now everything below my waist was missing.

I appeared I was gradually and quickly disappearing from my toes upward!

But why? And How, and somebody please save me!

After a struggle I realised I actually could stand as I saw my chest vanish.

What is happening? I craved to know. Am I going to disappear completely? The fear that it would then seem that I never existed terrified me.

My arms faded and I saw my head in the mirror. Just my head.

I was in a helpless hopeless situation. It was going to happen, I would disappear, I couldn't think how to stop it, but I would still be here.

Now they will have to call me Mr Cellophane,  
that's if they ever notice me again.

23/1/2015

## Heroes

The battle was over, the horrors of Hougoumont had ended.

It was a battle like no other battle before it, but the battle was won, and we were the heroes. There were bodies everywhere.

We buried our dead and tended our wounded, taking time to recover our sensibilities.

Later we took many hours to walk across the land that was Belgium and were pleased to reach the coast.

The channel was not kind to us. I never saw greener faces throwing their insides overboard.

The good feeling of Portsea Island English soil under our weary feet brought quick relief to our shattered souls and bellies.

We walked on North over the hill of Portsdown and down along a leafy lane and came to an inn on a crossroads.

Some of us wanted to press on but most of us could smell meat roasting and the relishing thought of washing some down with a mug or more of ale was not possible to resist.



The landlord and his wife made us very welcome and his pretty daughter, a comely wench who flirted with the men, was a sight for sore eyes.

We told them our tales as we fed and drunk well.

Bye and bye the landlord returned with a board, and words scrawled upon it, with charcoal.

He said, the nation would be ever grateful to us all and nailed the board to the wall. Then he said in our honour he would name the inn, 'The Heroes of Waterloo.' Some of us could read those words on the board.

After resting, we said our goodbyes with the thought of our homes in minds.

Many of our men set off heading for Surrey and London. Others went to the West. We all took the road that began the rest of our lives.

29-4-2015

## Cold Callers

He walked slowly to the front door and opened it.

He saw a young man holding a blue plastic bottle. He thrust a lanyard ID card forward and said "Hello, Good morning, I'm from the Royal National Animal Trust and we are collecting money to save the Dodo."

"I thought they were already extinct." Said John with a smug grin on his face. The thought that this was a scam began to trickle through his mind.

"No No , said the caller, "A few have been found on the hills of Outer Mongolia, and they want to bring them back to Whipsnade Zoo and breed a larger colony from them. There's great excitement in the scientific world!"

"Really!" John sounded as though he was interested. Then he pointed to the sign on his door. "Didn't you see that? No Cold Callers!"

"Yes I did, but as we are a charity, I it would be OK. and it is a very good cause."

"You're a charity? Said John in loud disbelief. I'm a charity too, If you had to live on my pension, you'd know exactly what I mean. There's never enough money to last the week. You've never got two coins to rub together. Look at this door mat. It's worn out by cold callers begging me for money!

I've got shopping to get and I've got no money to buy anything, not a penny, and you're asking me for money for your charity!"

The caller said nothing and began to look worried.

John continued, "See these shoes? I've had them soled and healed three times, and I've had them nineteen years, and you want charity from me?"

In fact if you could lend me a fiver, I could eat, not just today, but it would last all this week.

I promise I will pay you back next Thursday when I get my pension, honest!"

The caller's hand began to slip towards his pocket, and stopped.

"On the other hand if you could make it ten quid? That would last for the rest of the month!"

The cold called shook his head and then picked up his case, turned and disappeared down the path to the gate.

30-8-2015

## The Town of Toys

The phone rang and Sooty answered it. "This is Hector," said the caller, "Phoning from my house, have you heard the news?"

"No" whispered Sooty, because everybody knows that Sooty can't speak.

"It's Postman Pat, he's fallen off of a ladder, and broken his leg and so now he can't deliver the post!"

"How did he do that?" asked Sooty, very quietly.

"He was helping Bob the Builder, you know that guy who's as thick as two short planks. Fell, and broke his arm. So now who's going to deliver the mail?"

"Hold on," said Sooty, "first you said leg, then you said arm. What has he broken?"

“To be truthful,” said Hector,” I’m not exactly sure what he’s done, but one thing I do know, he hasn’t broken any records with his non speedy deliveries!”

"Leave it to me," murmured Sooty, "I'll sort something out."

He was pleased to have something to occupy his mind as he had been very upset since Soo had left the house and not said a word. Of course, it was pure coincidence that Sweep had gone missing at the same time.

He thought aloud. I could ask Andy Pandy, or Teddy or Looby loo. No I don't think they would be interested. It's always 'Time to go home' for them. That's a very strange arrangement, all sleeping together in that basket. I know I'll ask Bill and Ben.

Bill floballobbed, and Ben Flibalibbed and Weed weeeeed saying no they couldn't help on account of the fact that they couldn't move!

Sooty walked away in a silent quandary.

I could ask Danger Mouse, but I expect he would be too busy saving the world to bother with coming to our little town to solve our problem.

Who could drive Postman Pat's van? Maybe Worzel could? He'll do anything for a cup of tea and a piece of cake, Sooty mumbled to himself.

We need to be rescued! Yes, that's it! International Rescue, Bring in the Thunderbirds. Suddenly there was a loud fanfare of trumpets from nowhere.

No hold on a minute. We'll need to get a licence for them to fly over the Town of Toys, and that has to be applied for in triplicate or quadruplicate and through the proper official channels and will take ages! What a load of Pugwash. I really must learn to write.

I won't ask Horrid Henry, nobody likes him! There's always Peter, but he's a bit too blue these days, know what I mean nudge nudge, and those Camberwicks have all turned a funny shade of green.

The Flintstones, would make it seem like a Keystone Cops film, and they're always stoned anyway. So forget them. Who else is there?

Pinky and Perky? Those ham actors. No, not a chance.

The Mr Men, not them again, they're always changing their moods.

Teletubbies? Now let me see what are their names? Tinky Winky, Dipsy, Laa-Laa and Poo, oh no it's Po. Their parents must have had a sense of humour when they named them!

The Clangers would be too noisy, and Parsley? He's just a big pussycat and not quite sure which side he's batting for these days.

The Blobs would Morph into the Mr Men and I've already discounted them! They'd be useless.

There's always Pingu and Paddington and Shaun the sheep.

He thought seriously for a moment, No perhaps not, but what can we do?

“Ah yes I've got it,” he said in hushed tones, “The Wombles! Opps, oh no, on second thoughts, not likely, they never stop singing, can't have that!”

Sooty sat there thinking and scratching his chin, and decided he needed to see the vet in the morning about his eczema.

Now who else is there, surely someone will deliver the post.

Again he ran though the list of possibles in his mind.

There were none left, until Sooty whispered loudly, I'll go and see the Woodentops.

Sooty knocked on the Woodentops wooden door, and two wooden children opened the wooden door.

“Is your daddy Woodentop there please?” he uttered under his breath.

Sooty explained the situation to Mummy Woodentop and Daddy Woodentop. Mummy Woodentop asked why it was always called the mail. Why wasn't it called the femail? She demanded equality as the biggest spotty dog

you've ever did see started eating the wooden children. Only half of Jenny Woodentop was left as he sprinkled salt on Willie Woodentop's nether regions.

He had already eaten baby Woodentop as a starter!

Soon, it was an even bigger, biggest spotty dog you've ever did see. Well it wood be wouldn't it?

On his way back down the lane, Sooty saw Muffin the Mule grazing in a field. He was accompanied by several females who were always ready to answer to his beck and call. He was now in his seventies, which is very old for a mule, with just a few grey hairs showing. He had made his reputation and his millions by knowing the right strings to pull and had been the town Mayor for 27 years. This is very unusual as the normal term of office is just one year. It has been said he had close connections with that most hated International crime syndicate known to all as,.... The Muffia.

On one occasion, he was said to have placed a severed human head between the bedsheets of his deadliest enemy.

However, these days, he's old and been put out to pasture.

He's not the plod father he was.

Later walking along Sesame Street, Sooty bumped into Joe 90 and Catweasel. Joe suggested he should consider Balamory, but Sooty said he didn't know anyone called Barry Murray.

Sooty then had a brainwave and silently suggested, "Perhaps Pratt Weasel, I mean perhaps Cat Weasel could use his mystical powers?"

What we need is some of your magic, in a roundabout sort of way."

There was a sudden whoosh and brilliant flash of light. Standing before them was Torchy the Battery Boy. He was bright spark and once he heard of their plight and was only too happy of bring enlightenment on their dilemma.

"Postman Pat, that's PP incapacitated Hmm?" mused Torchy, "PP absent on duty, PP unavailable, PP, Ah yes that's it, PP Pink Panther, you must find the Pink Panther, he and Postman Pat's black and white cat Jess, will save the day!"

Shortly after Noddy and Big Ears returned having won the Monte Carlo Rally in their little car. "Hello everyone!" said Noddy, "Has anything interesting happened while we were away?"

"No, nothing!" said everybody

From that day, the mail was all delivered quickly and on time and to the correct addresses. A month later, the Pink Panther and Postman Pat's Black and white cat went off to sea in a beautiful pea green boat, once they had drowned the owl.

Postman Pat was back on duty in a few months and life returned to normal, or as normal as it can be, in the Town of toys.

12-9-2015

For Tracy Teashop, yes, I know it's Tracy Teasdale, but I can't spell Teasdale.



## Jack's bottle

He slobbered into a half consciousness, with one shoe missing, sprawled out along the sofa. He opened an eye peering through an alcoholic haze searching for Jack's name on the bottle.

It was not to be found.

He slipped a leg off of the sofa and tried to sit up. He lost his balance and fell to the other end of the sofa, and then onto the floor with a thud.

Jack's bottle was lying under a nearby chair. He tried reaching it but as he did, it seemed to be moving away from him.

He pushed hard with both legs and grabbed the neck of the bottle and hastily rushed it to his mouth. There was nothing. He gaped at the bottle and realised it was empty and angrily threw it down. Where could he find more whiskey? That was his only thought. Nothing else mattered.

18/3/2016

## A windy day

Mr Jenkins left the Co-op as he did every Monday morning with a plastic bag full of his provisions. Today it was a small brown loaf, bacon, a ready meal and a bottle of milk.

He unhooked his dog from the hitching post outside and they began walking home. The wind was blowing hard. He pulled his jacket together try to button it, and wished he had worn his overcoat.

Crossing the park, he saw a young lad pulling on a piece of string. At the other end, high in the air, was a large kite. It was dancing around madly at the mercy of the wind.

It swung left then right, and was blown around in all directions.

Suddenly it sunk down, and to his surprise, underneath the dog's lead where it became entwined. The wind blew even stronger lifting the kite which lifted the dog into the air.

"Oh dear," said Mr Jenkins, "Now that's a fine kettle of fish! Young man can I have my dog back please?"

The lad looked at him but he was speechless. Then Mr Jenkins felt a strange sensation as he too was lifted into the air.

For a few seconds Mr Jenkins was unsure what to do, that is of course if he could do anything about his unexpected elevation. He looked down determined to demand that he and his dog be returned to terra firma immediately.

The wind now became gale force and to his surprise the lad was also airborne.

Mr Jenkins and his dog, the lad and his kite were blown around frantically at the mercy of the wind. He was actually beginning to enjoy the view and the sensation of flying.

A seagull flew by with a quizzical look on it's face, as though to say 'What are you doing up here?'

It was then that Mr Jenkins felt a cold shiver as he wondered how on earth are well all to get down safely?

They sailed out from the park, down the avenue and the shopping centre and on towards the docks.

They seemed to be getting higher. A light aircraft flew by in the distance as the skies grew much darker.

The plastic bag with his provisions in it became heavy and the handle was beginning to cut into his fingers.

Gradually the bag slipped out of his grasp and into the distance below.

Again and again, the wind that had now become a storm buffeted them around in all directions.

Mr Jenkins looked down and saw that they were now high above the aerodrome. He wondered if anyone in the control tower would see them would call the police and bring some help.

Then he quizzed to himself, how would they do that with them down there and us up here? A sudden strong gust blew them past the airfield and on over the housing estate.

He then realised the seemed to be losing height as he could see people below looking up at them.

It was then he saw what he thought was the answer on the ground below.

However the same problem remained, how could they get down?

A number of children had gathered below, amazed at what they saw.

Mr Jenkins called to the lad, "Let it go! Let go of the kite." And as he did, they all gradually descended.

Mr Jenkins held out his arms and spread his legs endeavouring to glide down to where the children had been playing.

He had seen a bouncy castle and was aiming himself and his dog and the lad towards it.

They landing on it and bounced a number of times eventually coming to rest.

He crawled to the edge and finally managed to stand on the ground. His dog rubbed against Mr Jenkins leg in appreciation of his survival.

The lad stood quickly and ran off screaming into the distance.

"Well!" said Mr Jenkins, "That's the last time I go to that Co-op."

29/7/2016



A windy day, artwork by Jon Everitt, printed here with his kind permission inspired the story A windy day.

### A Knight in space.

The joust had begun. Sir William was sat on a horse and wished he was anywhere else but here. The horse moved forward, slowly at first, almost automatically as the joust marshal shouted instruction to charge. At the far end of the field he saw a fully armoured knight on horseback charging towards him. In Sir William's hand was a lance which was his only weapon. His throat was suddenly very dry and beads of perspiration ran down his face.

His horse began galloping and Sir William was trying not to fall off. There was a thump and Sir William felt immense pain in his chest. He tumbled to the ground heavily and landed amongst the grass, weeds and horse dung.

His head was spinning viciously He could see nothing and was unable to focus his eyes. The world about him was rotating faster and faster. He felt himself being lifted and his whole body being spun and shaken. Then gradually he felt nothing and all became calm and silent.

Slowly, he opened his eyes and realising he was still alive, hurriedly thanked the Gods.

Sir William could hear strange sounds and the air smelt very different. He could not understand where he was. There were strangely shaped walls around him but were they real walls? Lights flashed everywhere in rainbow colours. Have I finally reached heaven or is this the hell I have been fearing he wondered? Then he heard a voice say "Capricorn 10 to ground control, come in ground control, we have a problem, er,... we have an intruder.

12/8/2016

## Stan and Audrey

She had been busy in the kitchen for sometime and Stan smiled as she placed a plateful of his favourite meal, on the table in front of him.

"Oh! Thanks love, that's champion."

He eagerly tucked in, like a lion devouring it's prey.

Soon his plate was empty and she took it and replaced it with his pudding. He didn't waste any time in starting on it. His wife sat at the table opposite him.

After a few moments he looked up to see her gazing at him. "What's up love?" he asked.

"Nothing" she said blankly.

Shortly after he saw that she was still looking at him.

"You're giving me a very strange look love, what's wrong?" he quizzed.

"No, nothing," she hesitated, "But a... Why don't you," she hesitated again, "Why don't you take one of your pills?"

"Oh no love, I took them all this morning with my breakfast. Wouldn't miss any of those, don't want to upset the doc do I?" he said proudly.

"No, I mean, you know, those special pills."

He was clueless for several seconds and then it finally dawned on him. "Oh you mean,... those pills." His mind was racing and couldn't understand why she suddenly suggested this, what on earth has she been reading, or watching on TV?" he wondered. Now HE hesitated. "We haven't done that for years, love, I think I've forgotten how to. I lost the instruction book years ago!" he continued, "What's brought this on? Why now?"

"Well Stan we're not getting any younger, you know Stan, are we? And, who knows, it just might be the last chance we get!" she tutted under her breath, stood up and took his empty bowl into the kitchen. Stan sat silently for a while confused about his wife's sudden and unexpected desires.

He cast his mind back a number of years and could still clearly remember the day the specialist told him he had prostate cancer. "We've caught it early enough," he said "So after the treatment we will give you, you'll be as good as new, probably live to 100!" he smiled.

"Is that so doc," asked Stan, "is that a promise?"

The specialist didn't reply as they shook hands and Stan left. This was followed by many sessions of radio therapy and then a year of monthly hormone injection into his belly. The specialist had also said he would lose his libido. At first, Stan didn't know quite what that meant, then he was given a prescription for some special pills.

Stan stood and walked to the sideboard. From the back of the drawer he grabbed a small box and opened it. He pulled out a bubble pack of four tablets.

Audrey brought in his cup of tea and then returned to the kitchen. She shuffled plates and bowls around in the sink, lost and feeling alone.

He sat back at the table, undecided. Audrey returned and again sat across from him at the table. She saw the small box in his hand. "Oh, have you taken one?" she asked.

"Yes,.....I've taken,.... two," he said reluctantly.

She smiled and taking his hand, pulled him from his seat.

In the bedroom she quickly undressed and got into bed. Stan was undressing in slow motion and eventually sat on the edge of the bed before, sloth like, getting into it. "Have you still got your vest and pant's on Stan?" she demanded angrily.

“And my socks too,” he said as he slipped a leg out and high into the air. She saw the red sock’s MU logo clearly in the dim light. He smiled to himself and pulled his leg back under the bedclothes. There was silence for some time, and then Audrey decided she must take some action. She leaned over and kissed him on the cheek.

“Hey, what’s that?” he demanded indignantly.

“It’s foreplay Stan,” she said.

“What? Foreplay? What’s that when it’s at home?” he said loudly, “FOUR? Who else is coming then?”

“No! You sill happeth,” she said now feeling very displeased. Audrey again laid still feeling exasperated.

After what seemed like a life time she tried again, slowly leaning over him, but this time there was no protesting as she kissed him. With no reaction from Stan, she again laid back and wondered why she had suggested this in the first place. Then she felt a strange sensation, something seemed to be wrong, and slowly she looked over to Stan as he snored loudly.

“Oh no,” she thought to herself, “what a dead loss you are Stan Turner!” She noticed the bed clothes on him appeared to be elevated. She lifted them and smiled a flushed smile at what she saw, almost bursting into laughter. She began to remember days and times when the young energetic Stan was all over her, and never left her alone. Days with a warm future and the man she had chosen. Days that they both enjoyed but now long in the past.

She now realised that her plan had not worked and was very unlikely to, so she slipped out of bed, dressed and went down stairs. Stan slept on for several hours oblivious of his wife’s frustrations. Audrey still had a few things to wash up and then was happy to sit and watch the final episode of Poldark.

22-9-2016 M Cooper

## Jack’s last chance

She had been busy in the kitchen for sometime and Jack smiled as she placed a plateful of his favourite meal, on the table in front of him.

"Oh! Thanks love, that's champion."

He eagerly tucked in, like a lion devouring it’s prey.

Soon his plate was empty and she took it and replaced it with his pudding. He didn't waste any time in starting on it.

His wife sat at the table opposite him.

After a few moments he looked up to see her gazing at him. "What's up love?" he asked.

"Nothing" she said blankly.

Shortly after he saw that she was still staring at him.

"You're giving me a very strange look love, what’s wrong?" he quizzed.

"No, nothing," she hesitated, "But a,... Why don't you," she hesitated again, "Why don't you take one of your pills?"

“Oh no love,” he said loudly, “I took them all this morning with my breakfast. Wouldn’t miss any of those, don’t want to upset the doc do I?” he stated proudly.

“No, I mean, you know, those special pills.”

He was clueless for several seconds and then it finally dawned on him. "Oh you mean,... those pills." His mind was racing and couldn’t understand why she suddenly suggested this, what on earth has she been reading, or watching on TV?” he wondered. But now he hesitated. "We haven't done that for years, love, I think I’ve forgotten how to. I lost the instruction book years ago!" he continued trying to break the tension with a joke. Nothing was said for a time then he asked, "What's brought this on? Why now?"

"Well Jack you’re not getting any younger, and nor am I, and, who knows, it just might be the last chance we get!" she tutted under her breath, stood up and took his empty bowl into the kitchen. Jack sat silently for a while confused about his wife's sudden and unexpected desires.



He cast his mind back a number of years and could still clearly remember the day the specialist told him he had prostate cancer. "We've caught it early enough," he said "So after the treatment we will give you, you'll be as good as new, probably live to 100!" he smiled.

"Is that so doc," asked Jack, "is that a promise?"

The specialist didn't reply as they shook hands and Jack left. This was followed by many sessions of radio therapy and then a year of monthly hormone injection into his belly. The specialist had also said he would lose his libido. At first, Jack didn't know quite what that meant, and then he was given a prescription for some special pills.

Jack stood and walked to the sideboard. From the back of the drawer he grabbed a small box and opened it. He pulled out a bubble pack of four tablets.

Audrey brought in his cup of tea and then returned to the kitchen. She loudly shuffled plates and bowls around in the sink, feeling angry.

He sat back at the table, undecided. Several minutes later Audrey returned and again sat across from him at the table.

She saw the small box in his hand. "Oh, have you taken one?" she asked with some excitement.

"Yes,.....I've taken,.... two," he said reluctantly.

Her smile broadened. She took a deep breath and taking his hand, pulled him from his seat.

In the bedroom she quickly undressed and got into bed.

Jack was undressing in slow motion and eventually sat on the edge of the bed before, sloth like, getting into it.

"Have you still got your vest and pant's on Jack?" she demanded angrily.

"And my socks too," he said as he slipped a leg out and high into the air. She saw the red sock's MU logo clearly in the dim light. He chuckled to himself and pulled his leg back under the bedclothes.

There was silence for some time, and then Audrey decided she must take some action. She leaned over and kissed him on the cheek.

"Hey, what's that?" he demanded indignantly.

"It's foreplay Jack," she said.

"What? Foreplay? What's that when it's at home?" he said loudly,

"FOUR? Who else is coming then?"

"No" You sill happeth," she said now feeling very displeased. Audrey again laid still not quite knowing how to get his attention.

After what seemed like a life time she tried again, slowly leaning over him, and kissed him again. There was no protesting from Jack.

She laid back and wondered why she had suggested this in the first place. Then she felt a strange sensation, something seemed to be wrong, and slowly she looked over to Jack as he snored loudly.

"Oh no," she thought to herself," what a dead loss you are these days Jack Turner!"

She slipped out of bed and started dressing.

Audrey noticed the bed clothes on him appeared to be,.. elevated.

She lifted them and smiled a flushed smile at what she saw, almost bursting into laughter.

She remembered days and times when the young energetic Jack was all over her, and never left her alone. Days with a warm future and the man she had chosen. Affectionate days that they both enjoyed but now long in the past.

She realised that her plan had failed and went down stairs.

Jack slept on for several hours oblivious of his wife's frustrations. Audrey still had a few things to wash up and then was happy to sit and watch the final episode of Poldark.

8-11-2016

Audrey's answer.

"What time does your dart match start, Jack?" She asked.

"Oh, usually about 8 o'clock, but, it really all depends on what time the lads all get there."

"Do you want a cup of tea?"

"No thanks love, I'll have a few jars down at the Queens Legs, it's always good the oil the elbow before we start!" he joked. She knew the local pub was really called the Queens Head but it was always known by everyone as the Queens Legs.

Audrey said nothing and took his empty plate into the kitchen.

"So what time will you be home?" she yelled.

"We usually finish about 9.30 or thereabouts you know, but I'll stay have a few more with the lads, so should be home about," he thought for a moment, "about 10.30? ,.... ish" he added.

She opened a cupboard and smiled the package that had been delivered earlier in the day.

"Where's my arrows, love?" he yelled.

"They're in the sideboard drawer," said the kitchen voice,

"the same drawer that you keep your special pills in," she added.

He suddenly felt a cold draft down his back remembering how he felt, just like a child who had just had the back of his legs slapped, the last time they were mentioned.

Audrey had been ready willing and desiring, but he had come short and fallen asleep at the crucial time. It was several days later before she spoke to him again.

"Bye love," he said and the front door slammed. She poured a glass of wine and sat reading a magazine. Only a few weeks earlier she had seen several adverts that interested her, one of which seemed to be the answer to her problem. A catalogue was included in the parcel and she was amazed at the endless display of helpful items of all kinds.

Jack always enjoyed a night out with the darts team at the pub, and spent a lot of money on drinks, and even won a darts game on rare occasions.

Somehow he managed to get home but struggled with his key in the front door lock. Try as he might, he could not find the hole. The keys fell to the floor and he swayed in the darkness, almost tripping over the welcome mat and banging his head on the hanging pot of geraniums.

He could see two or three keyholes, but eventually managed to find the real one, open the door and stagger in.

"Yep!" he belched, "Think I had a little too much lemonade tonight!"

He managed to get to his favourite arm chair and dropped down into it. It took a few minutes for him to focus his eyes.

Jack surveyed the room and then he grabbed the newspaper, and began trying to read it, belching again, loudly.

"Is that you Jack?" said a voice from above.

"Yes love, it is me, unless you were expecting someone else?" he joked.

Audrey left her bedroom and appeared in front of him.

He looked up and saw her standing in the frame of the door.

Eventually he realised she wasn't wearing her dressing gown with the pussy cats all over it and her fluffy slippers.

"What's that you've got on, dear," he asked through his alcoholic haze.

She stood there wearing a shocking pink almost transparent negligee, caressing it with the palms of her hands. Audrey leaned back against the frame, posing as though she was being snapped by one of the glossy magazine photographers. Unfortunately, the door wasn't closed properly, and she slipped back, but quickly manage to regain her balance without losing too much of her dignity.

"And what's that funny smell? Is something burning in the kitchen?"

"It's my perfume Jack," she growled through her teeth.

Undoing the tie ribbon she let the coat slip to the floor.

He saw she was only wearing a scanty half cup black bra and panties.

“Ooooh, dear, you’d best to put on your dressing gown love, you’ll catch your death of cold walking around with no clothes on like that”

She was speechless for several moments,

“But Jack, this is supposed to turn you on, get you excited, have you got no,…” She took a deep breath and undid her bra and let it fall to the floor. Her breasts drooped a little and several wrinkles in the face and neck disappeared.

Audrey saw her reflection in the mirror over the fireplace, smiled at it and then returned to the kitchen. From a drawer,

she took a small long cardboard box.

Holding it tightly, she kissed it.

Audrey could hear Jack snoring, and as she passed by him she said, “Who needs a man anyway?” and went upstairs to the bedroom.

6/12/2016

## Egg bound

I was given an egg to look after!

What the hell am I going to do with it?

I took it home and put it in my fridge.

I tried to watch television but the egg kept appearing in my head. Out in the garden, I pulled a few weeds, but wondered how the egg was.

It was no good! I went back into the house, took the egg from my fridge, and broke it into my frying pan.

Several minutes later I slipped it onto a plate with three slices of bacon, covered it with Tommy sauce and ate the lot, and very tasty it was too.

OK, I confess. I didn’t break it, fry it, and eat it. It’s still in my fridge. However I did give it a name I called it Eli, Why? I don’t know.

I don’t even know if it is a male egg. If it’s a female she won’t like being called Eli. So what would I call her?

But then again, why bother to give it a name?

Sheila, that’s it. The name uses the three letter E L I but in a different order.

Does that make it OK? I don’t know! Do I care?

Is the egg, Eli or Sheila bothered?

Why did I bother to write this?

If the egg doesn’t care then that proves it doesn’t have feelings, but if it does car Whop Knows?

It doesn’t move or show and feeling on it’s eggsternal surface, maybe it has them on the inside?

Perhaps we’ll never know.

On the eggsternal thought, it’s surface is brown, not dark or light, so I’m wondering what colour hen laid it.

Did the hen have feelings? Does it miss the egg?

If you should see the hen please tell it, her, that her egg is fine<sup>3</sup>for the moment but it has an uncertain future.

When I have to give it back to it’s real owner, I suppose there is only one fate for it. Broken, fried, covered in Tommy sauce and devoured. Eggcellent.

6/12/2016

## Tomorrow Radio

OK folks, well I’m afraid that’s the last record I can play today as in just a few minutes the radio station will be closing down forever and this is the last time we will say goodbye, but before that a word from our director.

Thanks Jim.

Dear listeners, we’d like to thank you for being there over the last 20 years and the many phone calls and letters we’ve had but sadly they have now dwindled and we have run out of money and we have lost our sponsor. It

was great fun while it lasted but now the staff here will have to take a trip down to the job centre and this building is being demolished.

For us, today, is the day that the music died, which we feel is a terrible shame but we don't have any options left anymore.

So from Jim and me, it's time to say,

What's that Jim? A phone call?

Listeners? We now have a new sponsor.

## Water in a glass.

I once became very fond of a lady who was a good swimmer. I decided, even at my age, I was in my late thirties, I should learn to swim in the hope it would make her happy.

The local indoor pool gave me one to one lessons in there small starter pool, and after a few weeks the instructor, who must have had confidence where I didn't, said it was time try out in the big pool. It was an Olympic size pool.

I quickly turned my eyes to the door, but then he added, "We'll try a width and not a length for now."

My panic was only slightly eased.

There were a number of people already swimming there, and I was beginning to accept that I could not escape.

The strong smell of the chlorine seemed to penetrate every part of me. I began to shiver.

He said, "No, not at the shallow end, let's try it half way along."

Reluctantly, I slipped down into the water, wrongly hoping it would warm me. My head was just above the surface. Now was the time to control my bladder.

"Go on then." were his only words of encouragement. So I set off on the journey. It was all fine at first, until what seemed several hours into the crossing. Unaccountably, I suddenly lost my equilibrium and started somersaulting. No matter how I flapped, I could not stop my frame revolving and splashing.

I saw myself as a baby, then in short trousers, then long trousers. Just as my hair began growing down to my shoulders, I felt someone's hands grabbing me, somehow I stopped spinning and surfaced, and gasped desperately for breath. To my surprise and endless gratitude he had dived in fully clothed and slowly helped me to the edge. We found a store room where we stripped off and died ourselves.

Of course, I thanked him over and over and felt very stupid, and then quickly made my exit.

I never went back and to this day don't have any great desire for water other than in a glass.

When I recounted the story to the lady, she was sympathetic, and I'm pleased to say our friendship continued regardless for some time after.



## From a prompt

Dear Mary,

I have many things to thank you for. In the first place for writing the story that included me with words from your mind.

Words that I could never think of until you created me.

You gave me a body, a beating heart, and blood in my veins, and gave me life, beautiful life.

How well the story was received and it's amazing how many people have read your story about me.

I believe that some people dress up like me, and even more incredible that they have made your story into moving images on a large screen. Theatre companies' act out a play about me, how wonderful is that?

There is one thing you may have forgotten though;

I would have loved to have a companion, of the female type.

Perhaps, Mary, you might write a new story to follow the last one and include such a woman for me.

I really don't want to sound ungrateful. In fact I am so pleased that you gave me a life that has lasted for centuries.

Thank you,

Yours Sincerely,

Frank. N. Stein

The prompt was;-

You are Frankenstein; write a letter to Mary Shelley thanking her for making your story known.

20/1/2017

## Stories Time

"Time will swallow you up!" he said, and to me as a 7 year old, the school bully's words struck home and stayed with me forever.

What did he mean?

I sat looking at the clock for ages.

What time did he mean?

At 12 o'clock one hand disappears behind the other so does time stand still? And for how long?

It's the same at 6.30 but that doesn't give me the same fear. Again at 3.15 and 8.45 the same story, so what did he say that for?

But now in later life, time seems to have flown by. Family and friends have come and gone, and the world around me is continually changing. That only goes to prove that nothing stays the same.

I sat in the Guildhall Square watching the people as they passed by. All of them have their own stories of life, their families and friends and their time. People watching is really fun, exploring every face that goes by, and trying not to make it obvious.

How I would love to hear their stories, but in time their stories will be sadly, lost forever.

The sun made the day warm and I felt happy and relaxed.

Then, the Guildhall clock,

struck twelve.

18th March 2017

## Hunger Pains

It was the Bank Holiday and the city was throbbing with bodies and traffic. We looked for something to take our interest without luck. After sitting on the beach for a while the chill wind had penetrated to the bone and we decided to stop at a café on the way back and get a meal.

I remembered a restaurant that we had been to before, and with my persuasion, we drove there. Once inside, young kids were running around making lots of noise and we looked unsuccessfully for a quiet table.

It was one of the national chains of restaurants and the menu looked similar to most of the others places. My friend decided on the easy option of fish and chips, but I saw something called 'Beef Yorkie'. We ordered and paid and waited.

The overpowering air conditioning was blowing a force 9 down on to the top of my head.

We were both hungry now. Strangely there was no smell of cooking. The messy table was wiped and soon my plateful arrived.

The Beef Yorkie turned out to be strips of beef in a wrap of Yorkshire pudding flattened like a pancake and rolled like an omelette.

I cut it across the middle, but it took several attempts.

My knife was not having much effect. I tried again, several times and finally asked for a steak knife but its performance wasn't much better.

I struggled on and unwrapped the wrap and ate the beef which was tasty. I tried again on the wrap but my knife was having none of it.

I gave up and in disgust threw my knife and fork down onto the plate. At that moment the waiter reappeared and asked if our meal was OK?

My friend had eaten theirs, but I turned to the waiter and asked for the name of the cobbler who had rejected this creation on my plate, for repairing his customer's boots.

He was very apologetic and said he would complain to the supplier. Further words were exchanged but there was no hint of a replacement or a refund.

At first we were stunned not knowing whether to go or stay.

We ordered a sweet of apple crumble which somewhat redeemed the situation. It was sweet and crumbly but not crunchy.

We left deciding we would not go back there. I told my friend that I must get an account on Trip Advisor.

20/5/2017

## Brill Days

I have set the controls of my time machine to 1st January 1960 and a location destination of an avenue in New York City, where the Brill Building stands.

I would then be just in time for the start of and join the Pop Music Revolution.

Until that time popular music was ruled by singers like Bing Crosby, Al Martino and Frank Sinatra and the people who ran the music business were all in their 40's and 50's.

The 1960's were taken over by a younger generation. The Brill Building was full of a new breed of pop song writers. Each of them had their own small room and a piano and they turned out pop song hits by the hundreds.

Notable names included Carole King and Gerry Goffin, Neil Sedaka and Howard Greenfield plus Doc Pomus and Mort Shuman, and many more.

The daily routine was for them to start around 10am and by 5pm have at least one song, often more, completed and ready for making a demo recording of it.

The list of hit songs written there goes on forever.

I would love to have been there and like shaking the hand of a millionaire, would hope that some of their success would have rubbed off onto me, and I would have been famous after all.

2/6/2017

## The Doctor Freud Interview

Travelling back to a particular point in my life is something I have always wanted to do, I know exactly where I would stop.

However, on the way I would pass many milestones and millstones.

The first half-halt would be when I retired. A great relief after the pressures of self employment with its ups and downs, or so I thought.

A career in music and photography had its unforgettable moments for various reasons.

On leaving school there were several aimless shop jobs that were nothing but a waste of time, but these were my 'fresher' years at the University of Life.

Two of my schools were memorable. One was in a dusty church hall with nine wooden trestle tables with benches and about 90 boys sat listening to one teacher. The last one was a Secondary Modern school which did me some good.

Travelling on further back, one of my earliest memories was when aged about 4 years falling into the Canoe Lake at Southsea, which is the true baptism of a Portsmouthian.

Through the years there have been romances but most were blown away like butterflies in the breeze.

The date I am heading for is a graceful Tuesday in January 1944 when I took my 7<sup>th</sup> first breath.

Now that time is running out I would gladly stop there and live the whole of my life over again.

Would I change anything?

Who knows?

Would I make the same mistakes?

Probably.

Would I enjoy it more?

I would certainly make more of any effort next time!

Regrets?

No, No regrets.

I am just so glad I was born then and to have seen all the amazing changes in the world that I have seen in my lifetime.

2/6/2017

## The Traveller

They all told him it was impossible, but he was determined to prove them all wrong. He had toiled for years perfecting his new machine. His scientific brain had worked overtime to figure out the best way to construct the contraption. He was convinced he could find the answer and make it work despite their laughing at him.

Once it was finished he would climb into it and travel through time.

As soon as it was completed he decided that the only way to test it was to get in and use it. He boarded his new machine, settled himself in and then slowly pulled back a lever in front of him.

The house around him suddenly disappeared and he was in the countryside. Birds were singing and farmyard smells hit his nostrils. He looked down at the dial which said 1574. A loud noise made him jump and he saw that soldiers were setting fire to the farm house. He decided to leave this location quickly and pushed the lever forward. Everything around him changed time and again. He felt cold and then bitterly cold. Within second he was hot then very hot as the scenery around him changed rapidly. Time to halt here he thought and pulled the lever into a neutral position. As he did the lever came off into his hand but his machine with him inside it was still travelling forward, faster and faster. At first he couldn't think of what to do. He tried to force a screwdriver into the slot where the lever had been, but it was blocked. He travelled on and glanced down at the date which read 2519. He began to realise that if he couldn't stop the machine there was no way he could get back to his own time. Panic was beginning to fill his mind. There must be something he could do, but what?

Sometime later hunger pains began to rumble in his body as the machine's dial said 4971.  
Maybe they were right he mused as he realised that now he seemed destined to travel in time forever.  
16/6/2017

## The Dark Day

She laughed loudly and yelled, "You can look but you'd better not touch, I'm poison Ivy"  
That was it. I have had enough. Something inside me clicked, a voice said 'do it' and I lost it.  
I thrust the knife deep into her ribs. It went in easily and smoothly and instantly the emotional shell around me began to slip off.  
She slowly dropped to the floor and lay there looking up at me as life drained from her body. She tried to speak but now I knew she would speak no more.  
After all this time, and all the tensions and stresses she had put me through finally it was all over, or was it?  
I saw her eyes flicker and then there was nothing.  
I dropped the knife to the floor and realised I had her blood on my hand. I wiped it on my shirt and instantly knew that was a stupid thing to do. I didn't move, I just stood there frozen to the spot looking down at her motionless silent form. A strange elation seeped through my veins. For a moment I bubbled over with joy. The feeling did not last long. I began to feel weak and stretched my hand to the wall for support. Another strange sensation was engulfing me. What was it? Remorse? No I don't want remorse. She got what she deserved. The feeling, whatever it was, overwhelmed me. My eyes started hurting and a tear ran down my cheek. I must wash my hands, burn this shirt and dispose of the knife but what do I do with her body?  
You didn't think of that did you? "The height of stupidity!" I agreed with myself.  
My mind was awash with confusion, what now? Prison? Oh no I won't let that happen.  
But I've just changed the rest of my life with one foolish action.  
I could see no other way out of this. No doors were opening, all the doors were slamming shut. There was a way out, but it was the only way I could see.  
Again stupidity ruled and I picked the knife and slowly pushed it into my chest. I dropped to my knees and as I hit the floor, her head turned and looked up at me. She smiled and grabbed my arm as my eyes lost focus and darkness came.  
21/7/2017

## Holy Smoke

The Reverend Andrew Saunders walked through the ancient lych-gate and along the path towards the church door. He could see Tom Spencer and his trusty mower as he manoeuvring between the grave stones.  
Tom stopped and yelled, "Mornin' Vicar!"  
"Ah yes! Good morning Tom, another lovely day thanks be to God," he tried replying over the mower noise.  
"Have you settled into you new home yet Vicar?" questioned Tom.  
"Oh yes, just about sorted, thanks!"  
Tom eagerly added, "You're gonna have full house on Sunday Vicar.  
All the villagers will want to see the new man. Just to see if you're meek as a lamb looking for a flock or a man breathing fire and hell and damnation, beggin' yer pardon Vicar."  
Andrew chuckled to himself as Tom bowed his head and touched his forelock, by way of an apology for his words.  
"Tom?" said the Vicar.  
Tom looked up and then turned the mower off hoping the vicar wasn't about to give him a sermon.  
"Yes Vicar?" he answered as they came face to face.  
"Tom, er, there's a large box, a large wooden chest like box in the cupboard under the tower stairs. It's locked, have you any idea where the key is?"  
"Oh no Vicar you don't want to bother with that, noooo I shouldn't touch that if Ize were you!"



Tom hurriedly turned away before the Vicar could ask anymore and restarted his mower.

Andrew stroked his chin uncertain about Tom's words and then shouted "But why is that!" Tom turned, left the motor running and walked back to the Vicar "Well, yer see,...the old rev, a,... Reverend Toby, he said it was to be left there and never to be touched by anyone, man, woman, child or beast!."

Again he turned quickly and returned to his noisy mower.

"Oh! Ok Tom, thanks." Andrew walked on towards the church door, still unsure, and even more confused.

He did his usual checks around the church making sure everything was in order, and without any unwanted over night guests.

Andrew noticed that the ladies had done a fine job with the flowers and a floral aroma filled the church. He settled in the vestry planning to write something for the Sunday service.

His mind was wandering and he found it difficult to start.

Despite the warning, and being very curious, he pulled the chest out from the under stairs cupboard, and stared at it.

"Hmmm ? So why should it not be touched" he said aloud.

The dark wooden box had stained brass plating on each corner, he wiped off some cobwebs and said,

"Well, it looks harmless enough to me, why is there such a mystery?"

He noticed that the keyhole escutcheon was a silver colour and appeared to be glowing slightly in the dim vestry light.

He took a key ring from his pocket and tried several of his own keys but none seemed to fit. Finally a key did slip in but, would not turn. The escutcheon began to glow brighter and he heard a loud click.

"What was that?" He said, surprised to think that it might have unlocked itself, and disbelieving that it actually had."

He tried slowly lifting the lid, and to his surprise, it opened. As he did a whoosh of stale burnt air escaped and hit him full in the face.

"Oh" he shivered, "What was that?"

The box contained rolls of browned paper flaking with age at the edges.

He lifted the top one out and as he did a wisp of something smoke like rose out and circled around him. He watched as it moved and ascended the stairs that led to the bell tower rope room.

Andrew blinked his eyes several times, "Did that really happen, did I really see that?" he wondered. His hair had been blown around and he pushed a lock back from his eyes.

He unrolled the first paper. The writing on it was hard to read, faded in many places and mostly in Latin. Some of the old English words were clearer and he read the date "21st July 16- Sixteen something" he said as he tried to make out the almost obliterated year. Then a name Emma Wilson, and three more barely readable words, 'at the stake'

Gradually the story became clearer. There was also a bound book with the word Burial in gold inscribed on the front cover. He saw that most of the entries were regular burials but none later than the sixteen hundreds. Then he noticed that written up side down, inside the back cover, were five names, one of which was Emma Wilson.

"Ah, so maybe these would have buried in unconsecrated ground," he surmised, "Is that why they are written upside down? But where would that be?" he pondered.

Then he remembered that the road out of the village lead to rocky piece of land that was wildly overgrown and known to all the villagers as Aldwich Hill.

It wasn't difficult for him to figure out that it was probably a name that was corrupted over the years and perhaps it was originally and better known as old witch hill. It all seemed a little clearer.

"Perhaps that's where the remains were buried?" he guessed.

The wisp of smoke reappeared and moved slowly around the vestry and eventually stopped by him. To this day he swears that he then heard a voice say 'Thank you' but as clergymen don't usually swear, you may not want to believe him.

The smoke moved away and out of the vestry door into the church and then out into the open air.

For sometime Andrew was speechless, trying to rationalise and make sense of what had happened. Had it happened? Yes it had he was sure. Andrew took a deep breath, and felt contented and somehow fulfilled. He read the remaining paper rolls then placed them all back into the chest and gently closed the lid. "There must be a key somewhere, but where?" he thought.

He pushed the chest back as far as he could into the cupboard under the tower stairs. As he did, he heard a click and for a moment the escutcheon glowed and then faded to black.

He decided to go into the church, sit for a while, and try to collect his thoughts.

After more than an hour and few prayers he left the church. Tom had finished his mowing and gone. Andrew looked up at the blue sky, and felt the warmth of the sunny day. The smell of new mown grass was all around him. The snowdrops were fading but daffodils were in full bloom along the church wall.

"What a beautiful day!" he said aloud and then he returned to the vicarage for his lunch.

18-8-2017 written in Portchester Church Tea Room.



It's not you, it's me.

"It's not you, it's me," said the surgeon proudly as he looked in the mirror at Geppetto's new appearance . He had plastically rearranged Geppetto's face to look exactly like his own. "There you are! You are a doppelganger!"

"But, but," Geppetto protested, "It wasn't my nose I wanted changed it was Pinocchio's. It's his nose that is the problem, not mine!"

"Ah yes," said the surgeon, "But you told me his nose gets longer when he tells lies, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"And he's made of wood, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"Right then you don't need me, a plastic surgeon, you need a carpenter with a sharp saw!"

"Oh no!" Geppetto recoiled away. "That would be too severe, no he needs something more sympathetic, and not so drastic."

"You could always glue up his mouth?"

"No, no," replied Geppetto, "I really think I should be going now. But you've changed my face. Pinocchio will never recognize me now. He'll never believe me, and he's bound to think I'm telling lies."

29th September 2017

## Waiting for what?

Joan had always been a good neighbour so I felt somehow duty bound to visit her now and again in the care home. I pressed the outdoor button and entered into a reception area. After signing the visitor's book I pressed an intercom button. A tinny voice said "Hello."

Once I explained why I had called there was a click from another door which opened and allowed me into the inner sanctum.

A young female care worker suddenly appeared and said that Joan was unwell and in bed in her room. She had got a bug and a doctor was with her at the moment. She added that nasty bugs are always going around in care homes but it was nothing to worry about. She ushered me into their lounge saying, "If you wait here, we'll let you know when you can see her." I sat in a very comfortable chair and looked around at a number of very elderly residents. Some were dozing, some dribbling and one was smiling at me continuously, but I tried to ignore him.

Before very long cups of tea and coffee were handed around.

At first I refused, but then changed my mind realising I was gaining a thirst. The room temperature was high and I began to feel sleepy.

A new care worker came into the room and directly up to me.

"Oh hello!" she said loudly "It seems we have a new boy with us today."

She was bubbling over with personality and volume.

I tried to stop her and spilt tea into my lap. She was unstoppable. I noticed her name badge, "No! Sadie, I'm not,..." She ignored me and carried on even louder. "And what is your name young man?" she asked and without hesitation she added "Now come on everyone let's say a big loud 'hello' to our new man!" The residents all ignored her.

I suddenly felt very old. Why did she think I was a new customer?

Eventually I managed to get a word in and explain that I was waiting to see Joan. She laughed and giggled, "Oh silly me" she .

Another woman walked in and straight up to me, "Oh no not another one." I gasped.

"Are you waiting to see Joan?" she enquired.

"Yes I am." I repeated for about the third time.

"The doctor said that as the infection is so bad she should spend a few days in hospital," and added, "Joan has already been taken there."

"So then why am I waiting here amongst these sad old souls?" I wondered. Having been mistaken for one I was eager to get out as soon as possible.

I handed back my empty cup, got to my feet and hurriedly made my way back to the entrance. The outside fresh air was like an elixir. A free and wondrous medicine for all. I took a deep breath and suddenly felt released. The years seemed to drop off of me. Was that a lucky escape? But from what? Is somebody on high trying to tell me something? I don't feel bad. To be honest I feel good, very good. I smiled to myself and thought 'panic over'.

27th October 2017

## I can't think of everything

I had to call in to the hospital and visit the 'drop in unit' to have my hearing aids serviced which is not a problem. However getting into the car park is one challenge and then driving around and around until you find a space is now an Olympic gold medal winning event! It's always a good time to check my blood pressure after that!

On this day, the God's must have been smiling on me, as it all happened with surprising ease. At the reception desk, I took a numbered ticket from their machine and waited for the screen on the wall to show that number.

Mine was 47, but the screen said 31, so I knew I had some time to wait.

People watching was completed in just a few minutes. Everybody looked so ordinary, and as I knew what they were all there for, there was no fun in trying to guess what was wrong with them. An old newspaper on a pile of ragged magazines took my attention. It showed a very old date on it. It was such a great shame about the Titanic.

I now realised I should have brought a book to read. I always keep one in my car, but then pardoned myself by saying "Well you can't think of everything, can you?"

As long as I can remember why I'm there, when I go into my bathroom, that's really all that matter's to me. But if I could remember everything, I would be a different man.

Certainly not sat here wasting time, but in a palatial office somewhere running a successful international company creating lots of money for the shareholders and me enjoying a tasty exorbitant salary.

I might even be a politician telling them all how to run the country.

Now let's be honest, they are always fighting amongst themselves in parliament and they haven't a clue how to govern, well that's how it seems to me, no matter which party you support.

I could be an inventor, discovering some wonderful new contraption, like they did back in the Victorian industrial revolution days, saving hundreds of man hours in some colossus of an organisation, but then again, that would probably put a lot of people out of work. That wouldn't be good.

If I could remember everything, with a photographic memory, I could go on Mastermind, and win every time! Or University challenge, and on my own, beat all those clever know all four man and women teams without blinking an eyelid.

I'd be so clever that I could discover how to turn water into petrol. That would make me famous, probably even get knighted, and I'd be interviewed on all those snobby TV programmes.

Hold on a minute, then I would expect all the oil companies to put out a contract on me and find a Russian hit man to finish me off.

Wasn't there a song some years ago about feeding the world? I could discover a way to solve that problem and also have clean drinking water pouring from every tap on the earth. Find a cure for all the known deceases and ailments, and then every one would live better and longer lives.

But hang on a tick, then there would probably be too many people on the earth.

The planet would be vastly over populated, there would be shortages of food, and water, and people would fight each other to get it. Wars would break out with thousands upon thousands of people killing each other.

In the long distant past there have always been wars with people killing their neighbours and people in other countries, and also famines, earthquakes and all manner of catastrophes and calamities that kept the world population down, but now all because of me, there would be no more of those. Is that good?

No, maybe not. Many people would want to leave the earth to live on the moon and other planets. I might lose a few friends if that happened.

But wait a minute, I would know exactly what to do about that,

BECAUSE I COULD do that. The whole world would look to me to save the planet, save mankind, I wouldn't be hated at all. I would be adored and blessed by every human being and treated better than royalty.

Wells wrote a great story once called 'The man who could work miracles' and it was even turned into a film. Mind you it was black and white, so that shows you how long ago that was, and it was just something pulled out of HG's imagination wasn't it? It couldn't really happen, could it?

Then I suppose the newspapers would investigate me, looking for my weaknesses and may even make up fake news about me. Get females to say I had hugged them and that had abused them. I'd be thrown in jail without a trial. Probably the key would be thrown away and I would rot there and be forgotten until the end of time, and after.

Time? What is the time, that's half an hour now. 38 on the screen. Oh dear, will it never end?

I've read all the notices on the wall, picked at my finger nails, and now I am really bored.

There are more people here now, certainly more now than when I came in.

I wonder why there is a back log? But no one seems bothered, and no one is causing the staff any agro. Now that would liven things up a little wouldn't it?

A little fisticuffs, Marquis of Queensbury rules of course. No I don't think I'll start anything, I just haven't got the energy today. I'm feeling quite tired, but this chair is not letting me sleep. It's very warm in here.

No, on second thoughts perhaps it's best, after all, that I can't think of everything.

47! BINGO! Hey that's my number.

24th November 2017

## Rambles

Christmas again, and this year it's come round even quicker than ever before! That's the trouble with Christmas, there's too much religion! Or at least there used to be. More money, more worry, what to get for the family, eating too much and even drinking too much. But the January diet comes to the rescue. No, not me. This year I'm not doing Christmas. Don't want any snow or cold weather. I'm just longing for the sun and lighter and longer days. Seasons? Who needs them? Plants do I suppose and some people are seasonal workers. Work is one thing I don't have to worry about anymore. It's so good being retired. Everyday to myself. But you still can't get away from routine. I suppose getting out of bed and eating three meals before going back to bed is routine. Thank him or her that should be obeyed for that. Now I'm back to religion, no, let's not go there again.

24th November 2017

## Ted's Naked Conundrum

He slowly opened his eyes and was soon fully awake and ready to greet the new day.

Ted pulled back the bed covers and heaved his bulk out and into the bathroom. After a splash all over with cold water, he walked straight out onto his veranda, stretched his arms out and then, stark naked held them aloft as though reaching for the sun.

A couple were walking by and he yelled, "Good morning," and they smiled back in agreement.

Ted was the owner, manager and chairman of the Sunnyside Naturist Camp on a very secluded 3 acre site, miles from anywhere.

The residents and occasional members always had a busy time with all manner of social events in the club house,... that's when they weren't sunning themselves.

At a recent committee meeting, a social night was arranged and a band booked to provide the musical entertainment on the Saturday evening. The day had arrived and Ted eagerly looked forward to the festivities.

Later that same evening as he made ready, he rubbed some aftershave around his chin, and sprayed antiperspirant on other parts, which took a while.

Ruth White knocked on his door. She looked flustered.

"What's the matter Ruth? He asked.

"It's the band" she said with an out of breath voice, "They're here!"

"Oh! That's good, have you let them into the club?"

"Yes I have but there's a problem, they won't take their clothes off!"

"What? Oh! In that case I'll need to speak to them."

They both made their way to the club house.

“Err,... who’s the leader here?” Asked Ted. Someone stepped forward, and he continued,

“Hello, I’m Ted Watson, the manager here, what seems to be the problem?

What is your name?”

“My name’s Astral Oblivion,”

“What?” quizzed Ted, not quite believing his ears.

“Yea mate, well that’s me stage name but you can call me Joe. Now look,” said Joe. “We can’t take our clothes off cause that’s part of our act. For one hour during our show we are Ziggy Stardust and the Spider from Mars, for a David Bowie Tribute”

Ted turned quickly to Ruth, “What did he say?” She explained that Bowie used that name on one of his record albums.

“Oh did he? I see,” said Ted, “I remember the Laughing gnome and Space Oddity, but lost interest in him when his music got so weird!”

“We didn’t know this was a strip joint gig either, guv’nor,” said Joe, “and if you let us keep our clobber on, we promise not to play Moonie River, or Fly me to the moonie.” The guitarist overheard and added, “Don’t forget “Under the moonie of love!”

Or if it’s a cold day, “Blue Moonie!” There was sniggering and the bass player added, “What about “Dancing in the moonie light” Or “Bad moonie rising” and that Van Morrison song, Moonie Dance.”

Drummers always have the last word, and he voiced “Don’t forget the old songs, “By the light of the silvery moonie,” or “It’s only a paper moonie,” no let’s not go there.”

Very soon the whole band were laughing at their own jokes an giggling like an asylum of schoolgirls.

Ted was speechless and decided to regain control, by adding firmly.

“No, let me explain, we are sun lovers, sun worshipers, we enjoy being here and free from the restraints of the modern life and that including clothes, we are naturists, this is not a strip joint of any kind.”

“Oh Right! But we’re a tribute act, David Bowie tribute act and if we take our clothes off, we ain’t a tribute to anyone, are we mate? We all wear glittery costumes and paint our faces, just like Bowie, you know, with the lightning flash on our faces”

“Oh yes, I see what you mean.” Ted didn’t really understand and was quiet again, thinking.

“Hmmm, OK lads, you just carry on as normal, well not exactly normal for us but, no, you just carry on as you do, you know” Ted took a deep breath, turned and walked away with his head spinning and Ruth trailing behind him. How was he going to explain this to the club members, and what’s more to the committee? Some of the naked lady members were not happy with males wearing clothes looking at them, but there were some others that didn’t mind.

As he walked out of the club and back into the sunshine, he stopped suddenly.

“That’s it, that’s the answer.” He said aloud as he instantly saw his worries disappear. Ted rushed to his office to make up a new large poster.

“Now what was it he called them?” Ted struggled to remember the name and made a mental note that next time he goes to the health centre, to get new batteries for his hearing aides. He sat for some time trying to recall the name.

He pinned the new poster over the notice board poster advertising the evening social. It read, For one night only, it’s a tribute night to David Bowie by “Mickey Sawdust and the Spiders in Jars” and everyone is to wear clothes as outrageous as possible but only from 7pm to 12 midnight, and just like Bowie, paint your faces with the lightning strike, in pretty rainbow colours.

He was sure he’d cracked it.

The evening went well. The tills rang, people drank, danced and enjoyed themselves saying it was the most fun they had had for years with their clothes on.

In the early hours Ted slipped his naked weighty torso into bed knowing that it had been a job well done.

Several days later at the next committee meeting, Ruth asked for a vote of thanks. They all stood and gave Ted a round of applause for arranging such a successful night.

He smiled smugly and nodded his thanks to each of them in turn. It then seemed as though he heard another round of applause as they all sat down heavily on the cold plastic seats.

Everyone agreed it was a brilliant night and wanted to know when the next one would be.

“Yes,” said Ted, “I had already made some enquiries, I have had a couple of quotes from the agency, and they are offering,.... a punk rock group, called,....”

There were murmurings, uncertain that a punk rock group was what they really wanted. Ted continued, “They are called Phil Bailey and the Vomits, they are a tribute act to”

Before he could finish the loud disapproval from all made him stop and look up.

“No, No!” said one, “I don’t think that’s a good idea, Vomits, no that doesn’t sound right to me, it could all get very messy, especially as we are all only wearing our birthday suits.”

“Well, hold on a minute,” Ted tried to sooth the situation, “That same group also do a tribute show for Bill Haley, you know, him who had the Comets, They call themselves Will Bailey and the Rockets.” There was silence and then one said

“Oh yes,... that sounds better, much better.”

“A great idea Ted,” said Ruth,

“It wouldn’t be too difficult for the ladies to knock up some of those dresses with all the petticoats underneath and maybe even fashion some of those coats like Teddy Boy drape coats, just like the ones the rockers used to wear, but,”

she hesitated, “Most of the men here are quite old and most of them have bald heads, no hair at all. The only way they could have a flat top hairstyle like Elvis Presley and the rest, is to wallop each one on the head with wooden mallet.” Everybody laughed, all except Ted who added, “And I don’t suppose any of them would feel it.”

“Hey wait a minute, that’s not right!” said the bald headed man to his left.

Ted ignored him and continued, “But yes, I have that little item covered too.

My brother-in-law runs a company that sells wigs. He’s got all kinds of wigs, funny ones and proper ones too. He said he would do a very good deal to any man that wanted one, with a large discount.”

Everyone now seemed happier, the Rock’n’roll night was agreed and plans went ahead. After the meeting Ted went back onto his veranda and lay out on his recliner adding a few more rays to his already well tanned,..... ample frame.

2/9/2017

## The Witch who couldn’t spell

How does she do it/ I really wish I knew. Every blessed or un-blessed time she casts a spell it woks, perfectly!

And with me nothing works. I just can’t seem to get it together a t all. We both went to the same Witchcraft University, and I cast exactly the same spells, same incantation, same essences, same everything! So why?

I think it’s time I taught her a lesson not to be so cocksure of herself, put a large spoke in here wheel, and bring her back down to earth with a bang. That’ll take the conceited smile off her stupid face. But how am I going top do that if my spells don’t work? And her living right next door doesn’t help.

I’d best have a word with my other neighbour Zelda. She’s a good friend and is bound to know how to deal with my other neighbour Roxanna on the other side. I don’t mean that she’s on the other side so to speak, and then again she a bit of a devil witch so you never know.

Zelda said what I need is a ‘hit witch’. I didn’t know there was such a thing. She said she Googled one, I only hope it didn’t hurt

She said she made contact with a hit witch called Lucianna, who said there were many options. We could have a doll and stick pins in it and Lucianna would cast a spell on it.

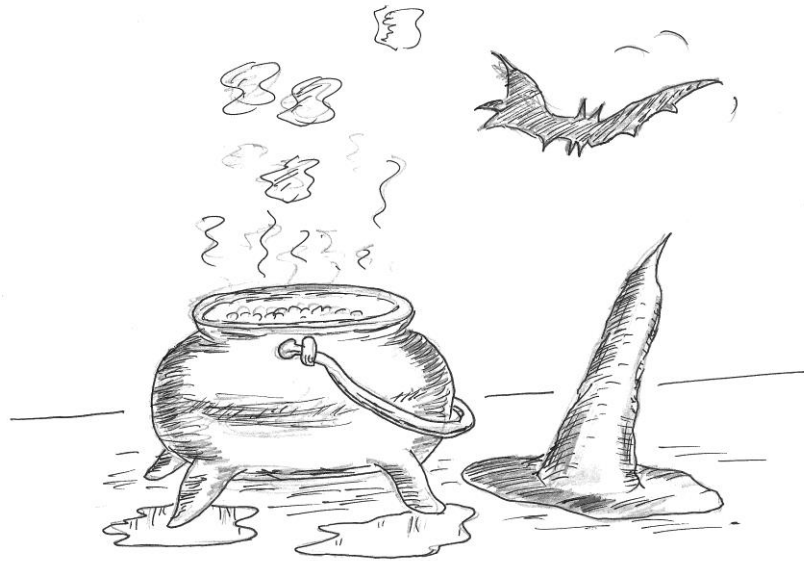
Another option was foe her to turn Roxanna into an inanimate object like stone or something that doesn’t move.

I thought the ideal thing would be a public convenience. We could always try the old fashioned true favourite, turn her into a frog. But then I thought a great idea would be to turn her into a handsome young prince. Then all of our problems would disappear. We'd never run out of money and our days better and nights heavenly! Zelda said I must be more sensible. Shame, I thought and her suggestion was to send her to the moon. And that was what we decided

That was all three weeks ago. Roxanna is long gone and my spell casting ability has returned. So has Zelda's and we now have a new neighbour.

. He said he's an Elf, and that his name is also Elf, and if I remember correctly he said his name was Elf Garnett! Happy days!

3/11/2017



## Jeremiah's Mystery

Most people believe that the British film industry started in the dim distant past at Shoreham in Sussex but sadly that didn't last very long. Today, we all know Hollywood in the USA is the Mecca for the money makers of the film world. Annual Oscar ceremonies bring to us smiling stars that most of us have never heard of before or since. However, my local newspaper ran a story that shook the international world of film.

Jeremiah Johnson died age 103 and lived most of his life in a sleepy little village near Portsmouth. It was believed that he never moved far from there and died a lonely man in a care home.

Only one of his distant descendants could be found and she lived in Australia.

Arrangements had to be made and his great great niece Alison travelled to England to sort out his estate.

Jeremiah did own his house but it had to be sold when he needed help and to be moved into the home 14 years before.

A young couple bought the house and decided to empty it completely and redesign it in their own modern style. In the process they found a number of wooden boxes in a deep corner of the attic. When each was opened they were surprised to find many small round metal cases, a stack of diaries tied with ribbon and a number of dusty scrapbooks, each with the logo on the front reading Lovedean International Films.

Alison realised that Jeremiah was the owner, director and producer of his own local film making company. The whole collection informed her that for over the years 1913 and 1914 Lovedean was the world centre for what we now know as 'The Movies'.

There were bundles of letters and many fading photographs. The entire contents were removed from the attic and Alison spent many hours reading every item to unfold Jeremiah's story.



She started by sorting through the photographs. Many were anonymous, but some had writing on the back giving names. With a little figuring out, she was able to pick out Jeremiah from most of them. Other names were mentioned but were unknown to her but one name, Molly was more prominent.

The earlier diaries had little detail. 1909 and 1910 were almost empty, 1911 mentioned that he had several jobs during these years but lost them all.

It seems he flitted from one to the next without any real idea of where he was heading. In the 1912 diary there were many mentions of flying and various attempts by British pilots to get airborne, and failing.

"I must try this flying game one day" he wrote on March 27th.

On April 15th she read several lines about his first flight, and successful landing.

Later the same year he joined the Royal Flying Corps. The entry for August 8th reads, "Damnation! I did it again, thankfully I walked away unscathed, but today I bent another Sopwith. Curses on that squadron leader, he's not perfect, anyone can make mistakes. I have had enough."

Jeremiah returned to Lovedean, but whilst in the RFC had found an interest in photography and had purchased a camera. Somehow his interest in a stills camera didn't last. November 21st entry read "Getting good results from the film camera. I have managed to capture many local people on film and local scenery. Might have a go at making a story film, but need a story and some actors.

She waded through to the end of the year but nothing more until the early days of 1914. "Have completed the second of our films, 'The Master's Voice'. Good actors from the local drama society and a charming story should make it more saleable. Have had talks with several local cinemas and they are keen to buy more of my films on lease. First film 'She was his woman' was well received by many full houses. I have met up again with Jock McKay from my RFC days and he is now head of my sales team"

Another page read, "Light not good today, need an all weather studio, could move to a beach like they have at Shoreham, but don't really want to move from here."

Alison turned to the scrapbooks and read many newspaper reports and reviews about Jeremiah's successes. It all looked as though he had finally found his vocation. On returning to the 1914 diary, she saw "Losing young actors who are volunteering for the army. A war approached should I join up?"

She looked at the labels on each of the 10 film cans, and noted the two she had already read about plus 'When day is done', 'Love conquers all' and also 'Jeremiah's mystery'. This title made her wonder, had he actually acted in one of his own films? She was curious about the contents in the can but remembered hearing somewhere that those old films burst into flames when exposed to the air, so she thought better of it.

Reading on through the diaries, it seems that film making became more difficult as only females were available as actors and the story ideas dried up. He began to lose interest and again considered joining the film makers in Sussex but discounted it. One name appeared a number times in that year and that was Molly Hayward, it seems he might have had a soft spot for her, thought Alison.

One of the photographs was a wedding group of ten people and on the back was written ten names. Molly was on his arm and wearing a wedding dress.

Alison was sure he was planning a move to join the Sussex film makers, until she saw the last entry.

"Two options, join up go to war and take a chance of getting killed, or move to the new world, America, the land of opportunity, Film making in style with D W Griffith and if Chaplin and Stan Laurel can make it there, surely I can."

So she wondered did he actually go to America? Did he make his fortune there?

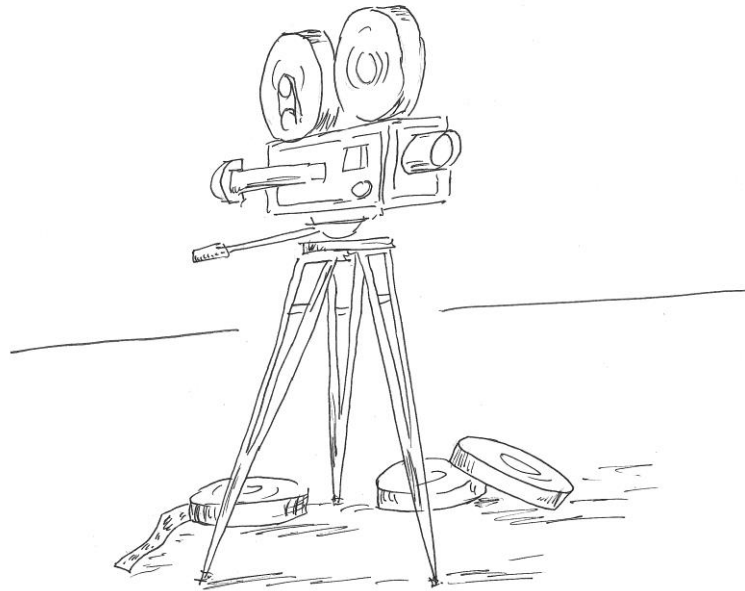
I suppose we would know more about him if he did. She packed away all of Jeremiah's collection and decided to contact the Hampshire Film Archive at Winchester and leave the film cans with them. The written mementoes and photographs were deposited at the local records office. Her short spell of time here in England was running out and she needed to book a return flight to Australia. Alison however, decided to check the passenger lists of ships sailing to the USA. In the library, and after some time, she found what she wanted. Mr & Mrs J. Johnson were booked on the United States Mail Steamer

"New York" from Southampton calling at Liverpool and then to Ellis Island on January 4th 1915.

A further search showed his name in a New York directory a year later but nothing after that. So what happened to them in those in between years? Did they return to England, as they must have done at some time later, or did they travel on to California and have success in Los Angeles and Hollywood?

Maybe we'll never know.

24/1/2018



Where can I buy me a Tardis?

I remember seeing an advertisement in the local paper last week, that said someone was wanting a companion to go time travelling with them.

Would you believe it? That's something I've always wanted to do.

Of course wanting is one thing but actually doing it, is another thing altogether.

Where would you get such a machine that can travel through time to where ever you want to go? Because I would really love to buy a time machine. I've seen the one they used on the documentary TV programme and it's where this a doctor goes everywhere. One thing that I have noticed is that he never seems to go back in time very often. But then again who would want to go back to diphtheria and Cholera. No water on tap and only outside toilets.

That's one of things they never tell you about the Tardis. They say it's much bigger inside so there must be room for a toilet but they never show you where it is. And then do they have a bath or a shower in there? I hope so! Surely it must be one or the other.

But if I did go back I could see all the great inventions as they happen and enjoy the emergence of the industrial revolution. Hold on though, they did have some terribly bloody wars years ago so maybe it wouldn't be such a good idea to go back after all.

Then again when the doctor goes on his travels he always seems to get into lots of sticky situation. There are all manner of aliens trying to kill him and as for those Daleks, well. Bring in some British snow or some leaves off the railway lines and that would bring their trouble making days to a halt. Between you and me I don't think they are real.

I do understand they have found a way to get up stairs but,....

they haven't said how they get down again, have they?

I really think the answer is to call in Captain Kirk or that Captain what's his name with the bald head. Surely they could sort the Daleks out between them?

I wonder who it was who put that ad in anyway. It doesn't say if they are male or female, and it would be terrible if it was someone you couldn't get on with. Locked up with them in a big machine for days wouldn't be much fun would it?

Well now I'll let you into a little secret,... it was me who did it! Little old me. I put the ad in.

You know ever since I read that story the Mr Wells wrote I've always wondered what it would be like and where would I go? Travelling into the distant future or maybe way back in time? It would be fun, I think.

Sad thing is I haven't had any replies to it. Yes I know it was done in a hurry, a mad moment of, what cha may call it.

And what would you eat on the Tardis? You never see them sitting down to a roast dinner now do you?

Followed by Apple crumble and custard. I wonder what they do eat in all those far off distant and mysterious galaxies.

I just might stick the ad in again but this time with a phone number

Of course then I might get all sorts of loonies phoning me at all times of the day and night.

So on second thoughts that wouldn't be such a good idea either.

Maybe time travelling is not all it's cracked up to be. It might be OK for them on the Enterprise. They seem to have it all under control and in less than an hour, too.

Another maybe is that I might end up on a planet of primates like Taylor did, and that would be terrible.

Perhaps that doc could get some help from 7 of 9, now that would be interesting, but, nooo now they have a woman doctor so perhaps that's not on. Although it is the twenty something century, so who knows?.

When all is said and done it's not a bad place here. Warm house, food in the fridge and so on. What could be wrong with staying in England?

Right where I am. Hmm?

Where did I put that newspaper phone number?

8/3/2018 for Christine

## The Paper Anniversary

The small scrap of paper was blown along the gutter, up and across the pavement into the front garden of the house.

Together with leaves and dust, it was blown around in a mini whirlwind eventually coming to rest in the metal grill of the down pipe drain.

Finally getting home after a long day, Eddie noticed the paper and decided to quickly clear the drain and slid the paper into his overcoat pocket.

"There's rain forecast," he said to himself "Better safe than sorry," he added.

He slipped his key into the lock and as he entered, he yelled, "I'm home".

He meant to drop the paper into the waste bin but Sheila was waiting in the hall for him and the idea went out of his mind.

"Where are we going tonight?" she asked excitedly.

"Don't worry, I have it all planned," he assured her. "I have booked a table for two at Sopranos, your favourite Italian restaurant, and I have a few surprises planned, which I am not telling you about." She kissed him and led him into the house.

They arrived at the restaurant just as rain began to fall, and Eddie held the door open and he followed her in.

The evening went well. She was surprised to see an Italian trio playing in the restaurant and after their meal and two bottles of wine; the violinist came to their table and serenaded her. Eddie became a little annoyed thinking the musician was getting a little too familiar as he moved around close to her playing his instrument. She smiled and grabbed Eddie's hand. Soon there were alone again and their eyes met.

"Did you know that this being our first year is a 'paper' anniversary" she asked.

"Oh yes I think I have heard that before somewhere," he tried to sound convincing but it was news to him.

From his inside pocket he pulled a small box and slid it across the table to her. Her eyes brightened and when

she opened it she saw two of the most beautiful ear-rings. The small stones on them glistened in the flickering candle light, and Sheila's eyes watered and she melted. The music in her heart climbed to a crescendo. She quickly removed those she wore and slipped on the new jewellery.

"Sheila scrambled to get a mirror from her bag and whilst admiring her view said, "They are wonderful, thank you darling so much, I do love you!"

After a few moments enjoying them she said. "They do look expensive, I hope you didn't spend too much?"

"Oh no, they came out of a Christmas cracker!" he said smiling"

She looked up at him quickly, and then saw he was joking.

Eddie again took her hand and said. "One whole year, and it was a wonderful year, almost as wonderful as you." She blushed a little and they sat just looking at each other, oblivious of all around them.

Moments later he glanced at his watch. "Oh, now look at the time, they'll soon be wanting to close up here, we'd better be going. He called for the bill and a waiter placed a small tray with the bill on it, on their table. As they readied to leave Eddie searched in his pocket for his wallet and was horrified to realise it was missing. He quickly searched all of his pockets as the blood slowly drained from his face. "What's wrong?" asked Sheila. "I haven't got my wallet," he replied.

They both began to stress frantically as he again searched every pocket in vain. There was nothing, he cursed himself saying "How stupid can you be?"

Sheila opened her purse, but there was no money. It was more of a sympathetic gesture of hope than expectation.

It then dawned on him. He had changed his trousers at home and forgot to transfer the wallet to the pants he was wearing.

They now fully expected to be led into the kitchen for washing up duties.

He checked his pockets for a third time, there was nothing except a screwed up piece of paper in his over coat pocket, "Nothing" he said angrily, "just this lousy bit of paper." He rubbed it with his fingers and realised and was thicker than he expected and felt textured. He unrolled it and examined it more closely.

To his utter amazement he realised it was a £50 note. "It's money," he said loudly drawing turned heads and looks from all those still present.

They joked about it as they drove home. Sheila said, "Well, we're never going to forget our paper anniversary are we? I wonder what the second anniversary will bring us?"

26-4-2018



## Food glorious food

The family left the Palladium afternoon performance still singing one of the songs. 'Food glorious food cold jelly and custard.'

Having sat through 2 hours of the musical 'Oliver' they were still unsure of the words. The early evening traffic was building up to the usual London rush hour congestion. As they happily walked along the street, Dad said "OK, so where are we going to eat?" There were no instant suggestions as they strolled occasionally gazing into shop windows at things they could never afford. They passed several fast food shops but none of the family was that keen on any of them, so they moved on. Further on down the street they came to a darkened shop front. The sign above the window read 'The Coven, A restaurant of the unknown. Find us on the Witch Report.' They were uncertain at first. "Come on, let's try this one, it looks a bit weird, but I'm game for it!" said Dad. Still in doubt they all looked at each other for someone to make the first move. "Oh Come on, I'm hungry," said Dad as he led the way in and slowly they all followed him in. They saw that the room was empty of other people. It was painted black and looked very drab. Mother noticed several cobwebs and shivered at the thought that there might be spiders. There was a log fire in the grate roaring away and a cauldron boiled on it. On the mantle above it was a row of china frogs and toads lined up. Some of the furniture looked very old.

They all sat at the nearest table to the door unsure about their surroundings. The kids started giggling as they spied a stuffed black cat in one corner. Mother turned to her husband and said "I don't like this place, it's giving me the creeps." He tried to calm her saying, "Oh don't be silly, it's all for show, It's meant to spook you. I'm really scared" he said as he smiled at her. He reassured her by saying it's probably one of those new types of themed restaurants and added "It all looks very good. Someone must have spent some time making it look this spooky!" "And they did a very good job too!" she added firmly. Dad looked around but still there was no staff making an appearance. He yelled "Waiter!"

A dull dressed elderly woman seemed to appear from nowhere. The children started giggling again when they saw her long nose, beady eyes and missing teeth. Quickly the kids stopped giggling, and took fright as she glared at them. Her eyes glistened and they felt very uncomfortable and wriggled in their seats. Dad asked "Could we have a menu, please?" The strains and lyrics of the Oliver songs were now long forgotten, but they could hear some very strange music. The woman handed them each a menu, said nothing and then disappeared as instantly as she had appeared. They were in disbelief as they read;- "Fried bats wigs, Toasted fox, Fricassee Hedge hog, and boiled squirrel." Dad suddenly felt a chill slide down his back and he looked sheepishly towards his wife. There was silence and one by one they looked up to each other. For a change the kids were as silent as the room now was. Call ESP if you like, but somehow they all knew what to do next. They quickly rose, and as silently as they could opened the door and tip toed out of the building, Taking a large gulp of fresh air as they escaped they laughed and giggled at what might have been a close shave with who know what. Hurrying down the street and rushed straight into McDonalds

20 May 2018

## Possessions

Just a few days ago I was chatting with a writing friend of mine about everything and nothing under the sun. We ping-ponged from one subject to another like a butterfly on heat! Then, out of the blue, she challenged me

saying, "If you want a prompt for writing, why not write a story about the your favourite and the most important thing in your life?"  
and I'm pleased to say she added "So far!"

I giggled at her suggestion saying, "No, I don't think so, that would mean me dragging up all manner of memories, and maybe not all of them nice ones. I don't think that would a good idea!"

To be honest I was scoffing under my breath at her suggestion, saying to myself, "No chance, How can I write a story about an old car or an old house, now long gone and forgotten?" I added a few pleasant words and somehow managed to change the subject.

Her idea was not mentioned again.

Several days later I was sat, bored out of my mind watching a pointless

0-0 draw on TV, when suddenly and for no obvious reason the sound seemed to drop, and I heard a voice from nowhere. Difficult to hear at first and then it became clearer,

"Your most precious possession????"

And it got me thinking.

I cast my mind back to my young days, and out of nowhere came the memory of a jeep pedal car I had and loved. I must have been about 4 at the time and I'm wondering who has that car now. Just a few years later, we acquired an old pram from I know not where. The top section was removed leaving a flat board on four wheels. I had great fun sitting on it and scooting up and down the street. Of course that was before there were many cars parked on roadsides.

My school years were not so memorable, but I did make a few friends then, that I still see from time to time.

Music began to seep into my teenage days and a different set of friends were made.

Over the years I have collected many vinyl records that I still have, but never play. Somehow, I managed to make a living playing music around the South and I still don't know how I got a way with it! Most musicians will tell you, when you go out to so many different venues, you have good nights and not so good nights. It's all part of life's rich tapestry they say.

A musician friend of mine once said, "You go, do the gig, get paid and then you go home. That's all you can expect.

If you get applause and people saying thank you afterwards, that's your bonus! Sadly, my gigging days ended a few years ago.

I have managed to travel to many parts of the world. There were visits to many places in Europe and several times over to the USA. I also recall one day back in February 1991, getting on to an aeroplane for the first time. I was 47 years old and five weeks later had made 9 take offs and nine landings staying for a month with relatives in Australia, and then a week in Nashville which included a visit to Gracelands and the Sun Studios, which is a must for any music lover. I kept a diary of the whole journey, which had many memorable days, and visits to interesting places and I met many people including a few celebrities. I took many slides that I now have stored away in a box. The box is never opened, but I don't want to throw them all away.

During the 1980's I was honoured enough to become a Godfather to three beautiful babies, who have now became wonderful and fine adults.

After many years earning a living, I am now in retirement. Still as active as I can be and fortunately, still have my marbles, well that's nearly all the last time I counted them. I am fortunate to live where I do. I have shops and supermarkets close by.

To the North a hill and then countryside. South, the beautiful island City.

To the East a fine hospital, and to the west the crematorium,  
what more could anyone ask or need?

I could go on, giving much more details but I expect I would have to wake you up, or maybe after a while I would be speaking to myself? So I must bring this to a conclusion. Unlike some, I have had a sweet life, I sometimes chuckle to myself thinking yep, I've had my moments!  
So having said all that, my mind brings me back to the question of my most precious possession, and I am still none the wiser.  
On the other hand, am I ---- none the wiser????  
No, I now think I have decided from all of those occasions, people I met and places I travelled to, and the many chapters of my life, which is my most precious and valuable possession.  
There is just one thing, and only one thing, I would hate to lose,  
and I know that I will have to one day.  
That most precious thing of all are the memories I have gathered through my life, and I'm happy to add,.....  
so far!  
I am pleased to say there is still life in me and still much more time to add many more memories.  
4th August 2018

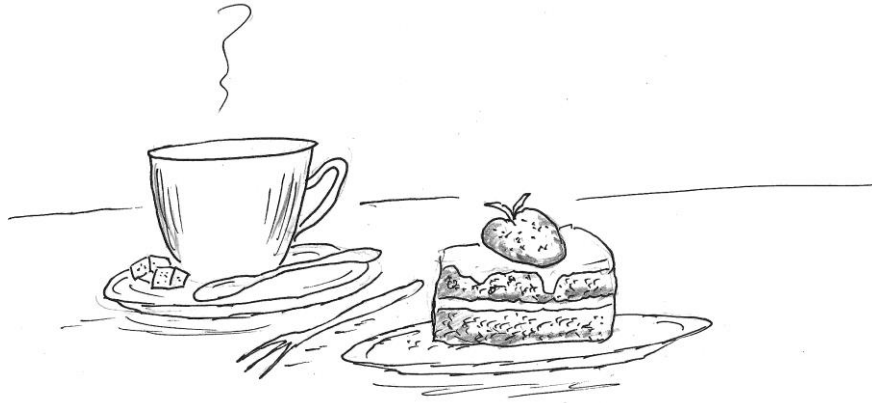
## The Art Class

The meeting ended promptly at 4pm as it did every time the Woman's Institute met.  
As usual Hilary helped with the tea. Jam and cream sponge was handed round to those who stayed, and most of them would not miss the jam and cream sponge.  
Once the hall was tidied and nearly empty she slipped on her coat and began to leave but stopped and glanced at the notice board in the hall entrance.  
There were Jumble sales, Dancing classes and a note asking for help to find a lost cat. There was little to interest her. Then her eye was drawn to another notice.  
At first she didn't believe what she was reading and so she read the notice again. "Can that be real?" she asked herself, "and in the church hall too."  
I wonder if the Vicar knows about that? Surely he wouldn't approve."  
The message on the notice board read 'Art Class here Thursday 7pm, Nude model wanted'  
"There's no way," she said to herself, "There's no chance that I would do that, not now, and not with my body. Maybe I would have considered it when I was a young girl, but not now."  
Then it occurred to her the model might be a young man, 'Hmmm ! Now that would be more interesting,' she decided as her cheeks reddened. Hilary walked away from the notice board and out into the open air still pondering the thought of joining. All the way home she was thinking about the class and wanting to join but she was uncomfortable with some aspects of the idea.  
As soon as she got back home, she made a phone call to the number she had seen on the Art Class notice. Hilary chatted happily with the artist who ran the class and was eventually persuaded to join. "He sounds like a nice man," she thought.  
The first week's two hour session went well. It was a chance for everyone to get to know each other. They did do a few introductory scribbles and pencil drawings just so that the artist could judge the standard of each person. He was full of compliments about one of Hilary's sketches.  
Eagerly she went to the following weeks and slowly her artwork improved.  
Several weeks later the artist announced that for the following week there would be a nude model for a figure drawing class. Hilary blushed at the thought of human nudity.  
A week later the class were sat at their easels and desks waiting for the start of the session.  
"Right, now then class," said the artist, "I shall bring in our model."  
He went to the door and ushered in an elderly gentleman walking slowly with the aid of a stick. The artist took his arm and helped him step up onto the small stage alongside the door.  
The old man sat down on a chair and slowly slipped off the dressing gown he was wearing.  
There was total silence for several minutes as the model made himself comfortable.  
Hilary had closed her eyes until now. Moments later she opened them and was horrified to see who it was.

She took a second and a third look to make sure. No, her eyes were not deceiving her. It was the old Vicar, Father John who had retired a year earlier. "OK class, just try to capture the outline of our model before going into any detail," said the artist. Hilary scrapped her pencil across the paper and managed to achieve a likeness. She looked up to the model and held up her thumb holding a pencil, endeavouring to get the scale correct. The model turned and saw Hilary and winked at her.

She began to feel warm, then hot and became flushed. Slowly and gracefully she slipped from her chair onto the floor and into unconsciousness. She was revived several minutes later by the artist with a nice cup of tea followed by a slice of left over jam and cream sponge.

2/9/2018



## The Cancellation

Albert was the treasurer of the club and he enjoyed the monthly meetings in the church hall.

He would always get there early, set out the tables and chairs, place agendas on each of them He'd fill the urn and set it to boil in time for a cuppa before they started and later for the mid meeting tea break.

He was that kind of man, having immense energy very little was too much for him.

One by one the rest of the committee would arrive take a mug from the cupboard, make their brew then sit chatting and waiting for the start or proceedings.

That of course was the usual routine but on this day Albert waited but no one turned up.

The meeting time was always 7pm but he sat and waiting often looking at his watch and wondering why he was still on his own.

"7.30," he said aloud "Where are they all?"

He decided to make a mug of tea for himself. He was shocked to see that his own mug was not in its place in the cupboard. He began to feel annoyed, and then realised that all the mugs were missing.

He returned to the hall and sat down heavily, totally confused not knowing quite what to do next.

Then he heard the door open. In walked Archie the hall caretaker.

"ello Albert what you doin' 'ere?" he asked.

"Well I thought we had a committee meeting tonight, but no one else has turned up," he said with some desperation.

Archie laughed aloud saying, "That's because the meeting was cancelled!" and he said and immediately turned and left the room.

Albert was beginning to feel annoyed. "Why didn't anyone tell me?" he said through gritted teeth, "I am the treasurer I should have been told!"

He could feel his blood beginning to warm and wondering who to blame.

The Chairman is who, he decided. He searched in his pocket for his mobile phone and then realised he had left it at home.

"Oh bloody hell! Opps sorry Lord!" he realised he had blasphemed in the church hall and felt very silly.



He heard a rumbling from the kitchen and saw steam bellowing into the hall. He dashed into the kitchen and turned off the urn.

“Why haven’t they told me?” he repeated aloud to no one. “I can’t do enough for this club and that’s the thanks I get. Why am I the last to know? And where are all the mugs?” For a moment he saw the funny side. It was the mugs who hadn’t turned up he agreed and chuckled to himself!

“This is not good enough” he mouthed quietly.

Albert turned to reach for his coat, intent on a quick walk to the chairman’s house. As he did the door that led into the church opened and the entire committee shuffled in and started singing ‘Happy Birthday’.

Albert was breathless for a spell and then slowly a broad smile spread across his face.

“Oh ! Thank you! One and all! I wondered where you all were.”

The last one into the hall was Irene carrying a large cake with a single candle on it. All the mugs surrounded the cake. “Have you warmed up the urn Albert?” asked the Chairman, “It must be time for a cuppa.”

29 September 2018,

## ***POETRY***

### **In Hope**

No more Play up Pompey,  
No more Pompey chimes,  
Fratton Park raised to the ground  
No one can hear the Fratton Sound  
We cannot let it happen,  
Or let our City lose it's soul,  
It's time to save our football club  
Ev'ry supporter's goal.

So every Fratton ender,  
No matter what your age  
Aim for the moon you'll reach the stars,  
Let's turn another page  
In every seat around the ground  
Your duty must be plain,  
Put your hand upon (your heart), (the crest?)  
And see Pompey rise again.

Remember Jimmy Dickinson,  
Len Phillips and George Ley.  
Fratton park filled to the brim  
To watch those legends play  
We love our Pompey heroes  
Full of Pompey pride  
We're calling true supporters  
Stand proud by Linvoy's side.  
12th February 2012

### **The Jazz Man**

He was a man who liked music and listening to jazz,  
He had hundreds of record on shelves of each wall,  
His HiFi was classy; the sound was the best,  
When he listened to Basie, Brubeck and Ball.

He must have spent hundreds on the old fashioned vinyls,  
A man of tradition, the old way was choice,  
The music of the century filtered out through his brickwork,  
But no one outside heard the sound of his voice.

But now that he's gone, the vinyls must go too,  
So who wants the sound of those dim distant days?  
They are totally worthless and all boot sale rejects,  
Now, in another place he listens, as the jazz music plays.  
8/8/2014

## **Red Guitar**

For sale, one fine big red guitar,  
He doesn't want it anymore,  
It's packed away, inside its case,  
As he left the building, he slammed to door.

He's had enough, that's what he said,  
Never again will he play a note,  
The time has come to call an end,  
He's drained his glass, and taken his coat.

Now he'll never strike another chord,  
Or sing another, rock'n'roll song,  
The friends around him, are feeling so sad,  
He won't change his mind, and they say he's wrong.

His heart and spirit are ever willing,  
But the flesh is tired and weak,  
All the late nights, have taken their toll,  
The music is dying, and lost its mystique.

He's failed to count the endless miles,  
Travelled in rusty old beat up vans,  
But a brand new direction, is calling him now,  
He's finally decided, and made other plans.

So this is where the era ends,  
One music history consigned to time,  
He made his mark on many other histories,  
I cannot deny, how much of a mark, he made on mine.

I remember once, in those distant days,  
When there was a dream of being a star,  
Those times are gone, so tell me now,  
Does anybody want to buy, a big unwanted,  
Red guitar.

18/1/2015



## **Hope**

Names on a stone for those who gave,  
Now lost in time but the heroes remembered,  
The horror of those times now gone forever,  
We hope.

After war days the nation progresses  
New fangled ideas surely invented  
Lives renewed as confidence returns,  
In hope.

The music of the day brings people to life  
Fine days ahead and new found needs,  
A house and a car and into the thirties,  
Modern ideas, what could go wrong?  
18/4/2015

## **The wonky Easter bunny**

That's not funny,  
I'm not a bunny  
I'm a mad March hare,  
Don't be a mug,  
Give me a hug,  
And show me how much you care,

With a hare's foot,  
There always twice the luck,  
So rub it – while you can,  
And if you've believed what I say,  
They'll lock you away,  
I'm not a bunny or a hare – I'm a man.  
19 March 2016

## **The one thing I hate**

The one thing I hate is poetry,  
It's all alien to my ears,  
Well! To say I hate it is a bit strong.  
So perhaps "don't care for it" is better.  
This modern stuff doesn't rhyme and it never sounds right to me.  
Some of the older stuff is good,  
And some of the Longworth and Wordsfellow poems are quite memorable.  
There's one about daffodil ghosts and another about the over charges of the lighting companies.  
17/6/2016

### **Autumns here**

It's come round again,  
The same time every year,  
Some people love it,  
But others dread and fear.

Add to that the cost,  
So glad I don't have to pay,  
Step forward mum and dad,  
And I'll just enjoy the day.

Wizz, bang, zip, whoosh,  
Rockets light up the sky,  
Light the fuse and stand well back,  
Wiz bang, lets light the guy.

He burns much too quickly,  
Oh isn't that a shame,  
Light another banger and,  
Throw it, I won't take the blame.

Under the fires embers,  
Baked potatoes ready to eat,  
The perfect end to the perfect day,  
Still feel the bonfire's heat.

And now it's time for bed,  
And my tummy is very full,  
The nights become so chilly now,  
Oh no, tomorrow, school.  
21/10/2016

### **Boxes**

Box, Penalty box, Christmas box,  
Biscuit box, chocolate box, cricketer's box,  
Outside the box, toy box, Telephone box,  
Black box, box file, boxer, horse box,  
Drop box, jack in the box, empty box,  
HMS Boxer, box car, Box Car Willie,  
Boxer dog, box your ears, little boxes all made of ticky tacky,

Open the box, gear box, boxed in,  
Box hedge, box jacket, box office,  
Post office box, tick all the boxes, witness box,  
Boxing ring, money box, card board box,  
Coffin  
12/8/2016

### **The Poet**

To rhyme or not to rhyme,  
Now can that be such a crime?  
I often wonder why people blunder,  
Not to rhyme and waste their time.

Why is blank verse such a curse?  
Just carry it away in a hearse,  
It's all second hand, and should be banned,  
Without rhyme there is nothing worse.

But then again, rhyme or not, what the hell?  
Write what you like, but write it well,  
Be it moon and June, or runcible spoon,  
Whatever your write, let it sell.  
8/1/2017

### **John's untidy fairy**

My friend John knows an untidy fairy,  
That roams his house at night,  
She reshuffles all of his important papers,  
And it gives poor John, such a fright.

Then, there's his dirty laundry fairy,  
Who leaves him all the clothes that smell,  
But John knows exactly how to deal with her,  
Fairy powder in his Hotpoint does so well.

And the dust fairy calls every night and day.  
Just to leave her dirty calling card,  
But his machine for that, is, broken,  
So now all the dust mites and bugs are barred.

The bad breath fairy never bothers John,  
'Cause he gargles in the Premiere League,  
They say he gargled for England once,  
And I don't find that so hard to believe.

The mucky boots fairy is a winter foe,  
Only bothers him when it's cats and dogs,  
But he never gives that, a second thought,  
Lest it be raining, toads and frogs.

So if you are nasty unkind fairy,  
Don't think to bother John, or waste your time,  
He's ready and willing to quickly write you down,  
Then delete you, in a rhyme.

But the poetry fairy lives at John's house,  
She is always a welcome guest,  
The two of them are bosom buddies forever,  
He loves the poetry fairy, 'cause she's the best!

4/2/2017 for John Palmer



### **The new hill**

I once had a beautiful view,  
I could see all across the city,  
The steeples, the towers and the vista was amazing,  
And the city lights at dusk were so pretty.

Then one day a hill appeared,  
To spoil my beautiful view,  
It was big and ugly and blocked out the light,  
And where it came from? I hadn't a clue.

So I decided I should move it,  
Push it to the side, let it sink into the sea,  
I asked all my friends for assistance,  
And they all fell about laughing at me.

So now even more determined,

I decided to climb this monstrous unwanted beast,  
But there was a curious smell of, who knows what?  
The smell of something recently deceased.

I could take no more, so I climbed down the hill,  
It was a place I could no longer stay,  
Then I wandered back home, to find while I was gone,  
My family had all moved away.

### **Lucky guy**

I was walking along and then  
A pigeon dropped his message in my eye  
At first I was mad, but then again I'm so glad  
That elephants never learned how to fly.

It's not mucky, they say it's lucky  
Walking out breathing the air that's free  
So if it's lucky and not mucky  
That pigeon can always aim is messages at me.

My girl friend's got a lucky black cat  
It had the strangest look in it's eye  
I reached out to pat her pussy cat  
Then it sunk it's teeth into my thigh.

Now that's unlucky, and I feel yucky  
As my blood started running down my knee  
I never bothered to walk under ladders  
Until the day on fell on my head  
How unlucky can this lucky guy be?  
11 March 2017,

### **What can I write?**

Another day, another dawn  
Another competition is looming,  
I should have put, my pen to paper  
But I haven't, and they'll all be fuming.

So what can I write? It's yet another task that I fight  
And I still haven't got a clue  
Just look around, at this beautiful day,  
At the sun and the skies so blue.

And so here I sit, you can call me a twit,  
How I wish that I hadn't started  
They all are waiting, An-tic-i-pa-ting,  
Now they'll all be broken hearted.

Seven days more, And just like before,  
My brain needs intellectual feeding



The challenge was set, here I sit and regret  
I have little or nothing for reading.

But try as I might, I struggle to write  
And hope you don't think that I'm shirking.  
But the week after this, is one I won't miss  
I'll be happier when the week is for working.

Now wait just a mo, I feel an urge, Oooh, and a flo  
Words all stumbling into my head  
I'll write it down when I eventually find a working pen  
Then exhausted I'll fall into my bed

But hey stop! Not so fast, that isn't the last  
I'll waste more time, and write a short story  
Be acclaimed by the crowd, all cheering out loud  
And I'll be happy to wallow in the glory.

But(haste ye not!) one swallow is no summer  
If I think that I'm dummer  
Than a black pudding, and tripe on a plate.  
I must do it again, come shine or come rain  
And that way I might graduate.  
16th February 2018

### **The Dulcimer Master**

The sounds, the tunes,  
Burrowed down deep inside,  
Around and around they circled,  
There was nowhere to hide,

The smiles on our faces,  
Was a joy to behold,  
The dulcimer stories,  
So sweetly re-told,

Grand pictures were painted,  
With each hammer blow,  
The centuries of music  
Played out pianissimo

He stood and we waited  
Some even prayed,  
The master was amongst us,  
And his songs finely played  
3rd July 2018 For Bruce

### **The key**

It's the key to open my new front door that is never locked.  
Never locked but the inner door is.

Why? Because anyone on the outside won't be heard knocking,  
By me three doors and a loud television inside.  
It's my key, to my door, and no one else has access to it.  
The other key is to open the lid to my piano  
Inside of which are 88 keys.  
A key to me door, a key to my diary,  
A key to your heart, a key to life.  
A key to play in, a key to sing in,  
The answer is always the key.  
5/7/2019

### **Playlet 1**

Sally Hello Jim, How are you?  
Jim Oh not so good  
Sally Why? What's wrong?  
Jim I won the lottery last week and it's driving me mad.  
Sally Oh dear! I expect you have a lot more friends now.  
Jim ... and all those strangers knocking my door asking for money.  
Sally How much did you win?  
Jim £84 million.  
Sally Wow! That's amazing. Why don't you give it away to a charity or something?  
Jim Yes I could do.  
Sally To a church or an animal charity?  
Jim Yes that's a good option, or I could buy a football club?  
Sally Oh no! that would be a waste.  
Jim Maybe,... but I've just got to get rid of it all before my ex wife finds out !

20/9/2019

### **The bug**

I'm normally such a lazy pig  
As anyone one can tell  
Maybe I'll move myself  
But I'd rather go to hell.

I got the beer and the TV's on and  
And a ready meal is in the oven  
Now all I need is Raquel Welch  
And then we'll have a love in.

They tell me there's a bug about  
But it's not bothering me  
I'm staying safe and staying home  
And sleep comes naturally.

Maybe I'll wash or maybe I won't  
Or I'll wait till Christmas day.  
Then I'll wash, even if I don't need it  
To keep that bug away.

And when the nasty bug has gone  
Will I change my ways  
No I'll stay exactly the same.  
Roll on happy days!  
14/3/2020

### **Give it up for the heroes**

Give it up for the heroes For those who are saving our lives  
Caring for our children And our husbands and wives

They tirelessly fight Their own exhaustion  
Who give up their time For our misfortune

Hospitals, supermarkets Schools and the rest  
Ambulance and police, They are the best

They are all heroes Who came to our aide  
From gold and silver and Strength they are made.

Give it up for those people Heroes one and all  
And the half million Who answered the call

Before you sleep each night Applaud and shout, scream and yell  
So that your grandchildren and theirs too, Will have a story to tell.  
27th March 2020

### **Different Worlds**

The planets all circle the sun  
On a never ending track  
It's been that way for millenniums  
Always forward and never going back.

They always slip by each other  
Without a glance or a smile  
Some are hot and others so cold  
For every universal mile

They may want to be together  
But they'll never be side by side  
It would be a sure end the universe  
If two of those worlds should collide.

But oh to be a planet  
Inside your universe  
At opposite ends. We circle the sun  
You forward and me in reverse.  
20/8/2020

### **Chalk**

I am chalk, over a million years old  
My mission was always to be available  
Plain and white, very dry and cold  
Habitually there, and so predictable

I have no agenda, for I am dumb  
My only wish was just to please  
I may rest here awhile and suck my thumb  
But chalk is alone and lost without cheese

I have no wish to seek reward  
Take me and scrape down your board  
Whatever the need one thing is true  
Sometime the old is better than the new  
3/8/2020

### **When the love has gone.**

The desert is a home from home  
The Antarctic a paradise  
So are the mountain topped with ice  
When the love has gone.

The outback calls for me all night  
The depths of the ocean my friend  
The jungle is where I feel I'm penned  
When the love has gone.

Life is now a lonely island  
No habitation or friendly face  
Better to live in hyperspace  
When the love has gone.

But sometimes in the back of my mind  
Was it love for love I surmise?  
Was it real love before my eyes,  
But no matter now love has gone  
25/8/2020

### **Life is so sweet.**

I await the call  
To warm my heart  
As the winter ends  
Another year will start.

The expectations of life  
Rebirth of the soul  
Brings the world together  
To make the world whole.

The circle goes on

Gliding through the year  
Say goodbye to some,  
But for new faces we cheer.

The days roll by  
Ever thankful we stand  
When the snow starts to fall  
On green and pleasant land.

Carol singers rejoice  
As they sing in the street  
With food on our table.  
Life is so sweet.  
3/12/2020 for Sue

### **The Remedy**

The troubles of the world,  
Can sometimes get us down,  
But we have to carry on,  
No matter what.  
We try to find a way,  
To get us through the year,  
But the answer is already here,  
The only remedy is love.

Let's all ignore the woes,  
Life dares to throw at us,  
We have the spirit and,  
We know a way.  
No need for worried brows  
There's a perfect place to start,  
Deep down inside your heart,  
The only remedy is love.  
9/12/2020

### **Cupboard in the sky,**

High in the heavens the gods look down,  
Stroking their beard of stars,  
With beards so long grown over many years,  
Wrapped around Jupiter and Mars,  
The starry sky is alight with love,  
Some cold and some love very hot,  
Every day is a day full of fun,  
When the cupboard is full if pot.  
29/1/2021

### **To the South**

Days have been good and some have been bad  
I stayed in the kitchen, took the heat

Now my sex drive is all up in my head  
I just need it lowered about three feet

I had a memory for a million facts  
But now life is not the same  
I have to look in the back of my collar,  
When ever I forget my name.

Where is the hair that once was mine?  
And teeth that were in my mouth  
The biceps and the six beer can belly  
It seems it has all gone south

### **Valentine 1**

If you had been my Valentine  
Life would not have been the same,  
In a parallel world way beyond time  
Life would have been a different game.

Your memory still invades my dreams,  
Now so many years have past,  
You may not have been my first love,  
But I admit you were my last.  
12/2/2021

### **Valentine 2**

To the ladies who never got a Valentine  
I bring you hugs and kisses today  
I send you flowers and a bottle of wine  
To sooth all your troubles away.

Let me take you out for a slap up meal  
Any place you want, you say!  
Then arm in arm until the dawn  
We can stroll along a moonlit bay

Then I'll hold you close and whisper  
Sweet words from a Shakespeare play  
I'll look in your eyes and wonder  
Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

So hold me close and listen  
To every word I have to say  
But just one thing, I'm out of cash  
So you're gonna have to pay!

From the amazing pen of Monsieur Geig O. Lowe  
14/2/2021

### **Prinsted Bay**

We sat on the bench and looked out across Prinsted Bay,  
The sun was warm as we enjoyed our ice creams,  
Shouting joyously, children rushed by us and along the path as,  
Canoes were launched into the shallows before us,  
Trees stood statuesque behind us,  
The sun became warmer. The day was perfect and the company too,  
I was relaxed and at peace with the world.

I was within myself and happy without any thoughts of time to come,  
The soft breeze caressed us gently,  
And passed by gracefully and away into the void,  
Waves lapped perpetually against the shoreline,  
With a soothing resonance, as they always have done,  
The smell of the salty air from the sea,  
Twanged into my nostrils and I breathed in a lung full fix of it.

I could hear the sweet trickling sounds of the salty water,  
As it slowly fell back over the stones and into the sea,  
I lost track of time that afternoon,  
We both sat almost asleep without a care,  
I felt an impossible desire to stay forever in this place,  
Until the world was right again,  
Until all time had passed me by.

Before we knew it the skies had began to darken,  
And the beautiful sun had slipped almost down to the horizon,  
The cool breeze became cooler and,  
Slowly and gently shook us back to reality,  
Time was once again on our minds, jogged by the chill,  
There was a need to get to our feet and stretch,  
Knowing that we should find our way home,  
But sometime soon, there will be another time,  
And we will return again, to Prinsted Bay.  
13/3/2021

### **When luck ran out**

It was the day of the big race  
The horses were getting lined up and ready  
The starter shouted get yourselves in line.  
Are you ready are you steady?  
But he didn't shout the word go!  
So they all just stood and chewed some grass  
The ladder the starter was stood on  
Collapsed and he fell down on his bottom.  
16/4/2021

### **Different Directions**

If I sent you a letter,  
Maybe that would be cruel.  
Knowing as I do we could never be again,

That would make me the fool  
But everyday you are on my mind  
And I want you in my arms again  
But I know it will never happen  
So I have to live with the pain.

I often wonder how you are getting by  
But really I should turn away,  
We have both moved on  
So there's no more to say  
But life doesn't let go  
And my heart is broken  
Harsh words were said  
Word I wish I'd never spoken.

I still have a longing  
A pointless feeling I know  
But I can't help it  
Why did we go  
In different directions?  
9/5/2021

---

## SONG LYRICS

(To quote a 10cc lyric  
I'm not in love, it's just a silly phase I'm going through.)

### **Jerry**

Such a wise old head, on a young pair of shoulders  
Every note she sang, dripped like honey off her tongue  
With the big wide world, waiting for her next note  
And the understanding words, of one so young.

The stories she told with her fingers on the fret board,  
Rang true to life, for everybody here  
Her tales of love, and desires, and maybes  
Brought happiness, and hopes and a tear

Step out little lady, and conquer this old world  
You will win the fame, that I always desired  
You have the sparkle, and, the irresistible charm  
And by the millions you will be admired.

Now you're standing on the threshold where I once stood  
Hope and dreams fill your heart, horizons just ahead,



They say it's 90% luck, but lady luck can be found,  
And she will fall in love with your beautiful sound.  
8/2/2014

**Lincolnshire Lou and Jenny from Fife,**  
Lincolnshire Lou and Jenny from Fife,  
Went out on a summers days  
They walked through the town and then by the sea  
Looking for a place to play  
Cream cakes and ice creams were ordered and then  
It slowly started to rain  
So Lincolnshire Lou and Jenny from Fife  
Rushed all the way home again  
30/4/2016

**The only one I need**  
Locked away in my keepers tower,  
Cold and dark, wishing I was home,  
I just need a chance, some kind of special power,  
To break my way through these walls of stone.

It seems that I've been here a lifetime,  
Special angels wanted urgently,  
Set me free, take me back to my world  
Unlock the doors to my captivity

All you need is a magic key  
Please give my sweet life back to me.

I I I I just wanna go home  
To the people I love and the friends that I knew  
So Please E E E please open the door  
But the only one I need in my world is you.  
8/5/2016

### **Short stories**

I can't stop reading your short stories, every one I read is ace,  
They take me places that I've never been, even into outer space.  
Don't stop me reading your short stories, It's a drug that I can't fight,  
They make me laugh, they make me cry, I'll read everyone that you write.

Write me another, write me another, you can use my pens,  
I'll read your books from cover to cover, your short stories are my best friends.

I think I'll try to write some short stories, if you can do it, so can I,  
I've already written down the title for it, now my mind is stone dry.  
Can't get enough of your short stories, send some to the BBC  
I know you'll soon be famous baby, won't cha write one more, just for me.

Don't write me any sad stories, only tales all full of laughter,  
Make them fun, no man, no gun baby, ending happily ever after.

### **Little Silver Street**

Now it all seems too long ago  
The things that we did, ----- When I was a kid  
Such a shame we all had to grow  
All my buddies at school, ----- Where we broke every rule  
So where are they now, I wanna see them again  
I remember their names, and I remember when.....

I'm gonna search every street in town  
I just gotta know ----- Where did they all go?  
Gotta find out where they're livin' now,  
Search down every road, ----- Look in every abode  
Let me turn back the clock, I want yesterday again,  
I remember their names, and I remember when...

Chorus Life was so sweet back on  
Little Silver Street. That's where I wanna go  
Life was complete then on  
Little Silver Street. I wanna go back -----  
And put up a plaque  
To all the friends I had At Little Silver Street

m8 Don't tell me it can't be done, I won't believe,  
I wanna relive the fun that we had, we were happy, and we were  
mad. Down on/at Little Silver Street

### **Boogie woogie Louise.**

Any day she could be there,  
Beautiful face and pretty hair,  
A smile so sweet it puts my world at ease,  
The day goes better whenever I see -  
Boogie woogie Louise.

In blue or green or red or white,  
Whatever she wears it looks so right,  
And we can all see, she's got two knees,  
How I regret I've never met -  
Boogie woogie Louise.

Chorus/m8

Boogie - woogie - Boogie woogie Louise.  
She's the girl, - for a giggle a day.  
Boogie - woogie - Boogie woogie Louise.  
I wanna know, just what she's got to say

11 March 2017

### **So glad we're friends**

It seems a lifetime, since I met you,  
And if I'm truthful, I'm so glad we met  
I've known you were there, when ever I needed you  
How could I sometimes, ever forget? - then  
You went your way, I went mine, I should have made amends,  
Our lives took different turns, but I'm so very glad,  
That you and I were friends.

The miles between us, hurt me too much  
And time can play tricks, if we let it try  
A telephone call or a letter would always  
Make me feel better, how I tried not to cry - when  
You went your way, I went mine, I should have made amends,  
Our lives took different turns, but I'm so very glad,  
That you and I were friends.

I need you now more than you'll ever know,  
But I won't tell you so  
My heart goes with your every footstep  
Every place you go.

So maybe one day, the gods will smile  
And we'll be together, like I want it to be  
Then I can slip my arms around you  
And this time I'd never, ever set you free - but  
You went your way, I went mine, I should have made amends,  
Our lives took different turns, but I'm so very glad,  
That you and I were friends.

So glad So glad So glad we're friends,  
What else can I say,  
So glad So glad that we are friends,  
Some day I hope you'll stay.  
13th July 2018

### **The Lady wants a little lovin'**

She works all day selling people what they're wantin'  
Then on her way home she does the weekly shopping,  
Then she rushes in, starts cooking for the hungry ones,  
But when the moon is out, and the night time comes,....

In the Lady's mind there's just one thing that she's wanting,  
And her mind is set, now as day is ending,  
Its that special time, when the world outside is on the run,  
But when the moon is out, and the night time comes,....

### Chorus

The lady wants a little lovin' tender kisses through the night,  
Tell her just how much you love her, love the lady, make it right.  
Hug her oh so very gently, passions in the midnight heat,  
When the lady wants some lovin' make the Lady's day complete.

### M8

Whisper softly words of love, tell her sweetly she's the one,  
Cuddle up a little closer now, the lovin's just begun.  
23<sup>rd</sup> July 2018 MC

### **Almost**

It's been the same for many years  
A few were lucky the rest shed tears,  
But they tried again regardless of pain  
In their search for fame.

They played their songs And took the pay  
Most lived to play another day  
To make their name it's a tough old game  
In their search for fame.

But they're the ones who almost made it  
Took a chance the way they played it  
They tried their best, only some were blessed  
And as for the rest, they were the almost  
Those who almost made it.  
So here's to those who almost made it.  
(So raise a cheer for those who almost made it.)

They banged their heads on venue walls  
They sang their songs took muffled applause  
Through sun and wind and driving rain  
In their search for fortune and fame.

But they're the ones who almost made it  
Took a chance the way they played it

They tried their best, only some were blessed  
And as for the rest, they were the almost  
Those who almost made it.  
So here's to those who almost made it.  
(So raise a cheer for those who almost made it.)

3/12/2019

### **The Further adventures of Tillie the Twirler**

Now I hope you may recall, the tale of Tillie the twirler,  
A story that I told in song, just a little earl'yer,  
Well she went on and bought the Bijou and every night the place was packed,

Then she had so much money but we all knew she was stacked.

So Tillie went to Vegas, and soon the banks were dry,  
You really must believe me, I would not tell a lie,  
She went and bought a hotel and every heart was warmed,  
Tillie tasselled and twirled the house down every night that she performed.

Tillie made more money, than any girl could make,  
She was a happy twirler, so went and bought Swan Lake,  
And as she pirouetted and danced so happily,  
I persuaded her to doh-see-doh! And she agreed to marry me.

But Tillie was not satisfied, and decided over night,  
The answer plain and simple, was to paint her hotel white,  
She called it The White House that's where her money went,  
Then Tillie had a brainwave and said she'll stand for President.

Is that really what she meant?  
Which party would she represent?  
Is she red or is she blue  
But whichever she'll know what to do  
Twirl those tassels round the congress  
And after that they'll pray for a recess.

18-5-2020 Written as an answer song to Neil Sedaka's fabulous song Tillie the Twirler!

### **Mister Music**

They call him  
Mister Music, he plays the music of our days  
Mister Music we all know every song he plays  
And with each tune we hear, you just have to Sing a long  
Everyone knows every word of every song.

Mister Music he's our master of the keys  
Mister Music brings us happiness with ease  
And with every melody, that he plays so cleverly  
It brings a smile of hope to every memory

He always plays his piano, like the music legends did  
He's a legend in our time, every note and every rhyme

Mister Music, he plays the music of our days  
Mister Music we all know every song he plays  
And with each tune we hear, you just have to Sing a long  
Everyone knows every word of every song.

He'll sing for just a dollar but his bonus is applause,  
Between Chopin, you and me, I know he'll sing his songs for free.

Call him  
Mister Music for he's our King of melodies

Every note he plays, is guaranteed to please  
He'll always be happy, to play each song, again and again  
Long may Mister Music, the King of Music reign.  
19/6/2020

### **Another Newquay Summer**

When the work is hard, and the day so long  
And the world so mean, you just got to be strong,  
So when the day is done, and you're lying in you bed  
There's an answer to it all, and it must be said.

So when the morning comes, and the day so new  
Pack a travelling bag, and join the queue  
'Cause everybody will say, tell everyone you know  
Cornwall's a heaven on earth, and I just gotta go

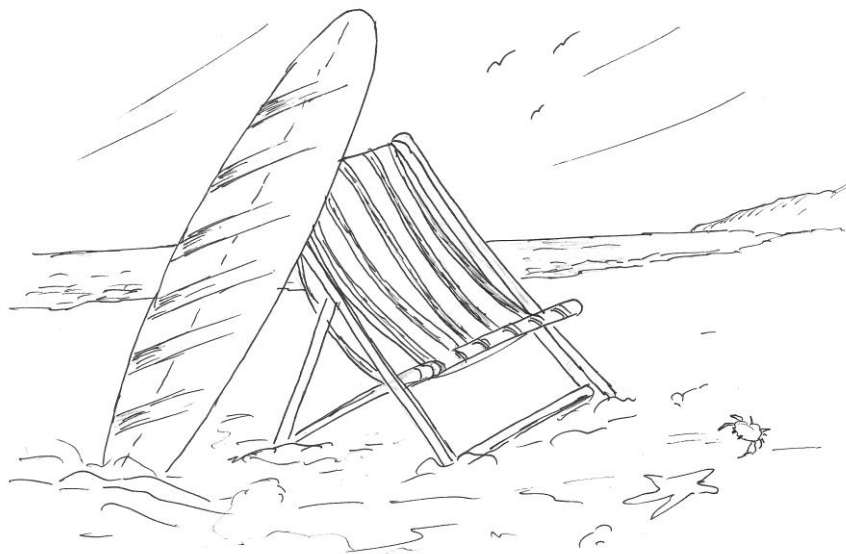
#### Chorus

It's time for another Newquay summer,  
Where the sea's so blue and the sun always shines.  
The surfing's great, and so are the wines  
There's a perfect world, for you to discover  
When you need a break, you need another Newquay summer.

You got your swimmers on, and a long cool drink  
There's a pretty girl, and you give her a wink,  
And a smile or two, she finds it hard to resist  
You know that deep in your heart, she's got to be kissed.

#### Play out

Everybody loves Newquay Newquay Newquay  
Everybody wants Newquay Newquay Newquay  
Everybody needs Newquay Newquay Newquay  
Everybody deserves another Newquay summer.  
25/6/2020



## **So much for love**

So we had our fun, some memorable days  
The nights were sweet, in so many ways,  
Now those days are gone, but the memory stays  
So all I can say is, so much for love

I never thought, that this would be, my Achilles heel  
You may sympathise, but never know, just how bad I feel

The days are cold, without you my friend  
There's always a hope that a little time will mend  
I hurt so much but, when our friendship ends  
Now all I can say is, So much for love

I never thought, we'd come to this, and I would feel such pain.  
How I long for happy days, but here we are, once again

It's such a deep wound, like never before,  
Hurting so much and I want no more  
And my mind is begging, make it go away  
And all I can say is, so much for love  
27/6/2020

## **St Pauls Grove.**

I've been here, for most on my days  
And I don't want, to move  
I'm happiest when, I'm looking out  
On a street there's no need to improve

It's my neighbourhood, of choice  
And the people make it so  
Don't ever ask me, to leave this land  
For I never want to go.

It's the place I love  
My own beautiful  
Treasure trove  
And I believe it's the time,  
Time to re-name it  
St Paulsgrove.

So many joyous, happy days  
Every day, a day to please  
Let the warm sun, settle down on me  
And my wonderful memories

The road to a friend is not long.  
There is always, a friend to call  
Their home is always your home too

And the clean air is free for all.

It's the place I love  
My own beautiful  
Treasure trove  
And I believe it's the time,  
Time to re-name it  
St Paulsgrove.  
23/7/2020

### **The Sixties**

Now I have had enough of century 21 And the year 2020 is now truly done  
So now I've made up my mind, I'm leaving it all behind And going back to the nineteen sixties

Start with 1960 and 61 The years we all started having fun  
Then into 1962 and 63 The music was sweet in any key  
And on into 1964 We always wanted a little more  
And by 1965 The whole world had come alive

Now I have had enough of century 21 and the year 2020 is now truly done  
So now I've made up my mind, I'm leaving it all behind and going back to the nineteen sixties

When we got to 1966 everyone was getting their kicks  
Very soon it was 1967 and 68 Two years guaranteed to fascinate  
And then came 1969 Time to grow up and toe the line  
But 1970 is such a pain so I'm goin' back to the sixties again

Now I have had enough of century 21 and the year 2020 is now truly done  
So now I've made up my mind, I'm leaving it all behind and going back to the nineteen sixties  
12/8/2020 for Neil

### **Don't get angry**

She stood there smiling, on my door step today  
By her side there stood a younger man  
It was a whole lifetime, since I saw her last  
Seeing her again was never part of my plan

I've got a surprise that I need to tell you  
She said and told me what I never knew  
He looked familiar but then again he didn't  
How could I believe that her words were true?

We had our days and nights of passion  
But the memory fades in my aging head  
She asked me did I still live alone  
And smiling still this is what she said

Now don't get angry and don't get mad  
He's the son you never knew you had



Look into his eyes and you'll see your reflection  
He's your son, and you're his dad.

I felt the earth fall from beneath my feet  
I sailed through the air, wondering how could this be?  
Why did she wait till now to tell me?  
This man was our child, the child in me.

We had our days and nights of passion  
But the memory fades in my aging head  
She asked me did I still live alone  
And smiling still this is what she said

Now don't get angry and don't get mad  
He's the son you never knew you had  
Look into his eyes and you'll see your reflection  
He's your son, and you're his dad.  
9/9/2020 For Liz.

### **Never again**

Colla voce

Life is never easy, but we always try to make it simple.  
Don't they always say that life is what you make it.  
Every life must have it's up and downs, so handle each with care.  
It's the hardest call trying not to break it  
Love the ones who love you, and treasure every smile  
And tell them you love them every single day  
But here's a thought to leave you with. And I have a thought to spare  
Please remember every single word I say.....

verse1

It always hurts to say goodbye, I know it hurts you too.  
Happy the days, those wonderful days. That you and I once knew.

Verse2

Promises made to write a line, Kisses that linger still.  
Memories never to fade away, Will I write? Yes, I will.

Bridge

Thought our love will last, I was so sure.  
Thought our love, would last, for evermore.

Chorus

Never again, never again, do I feel I want to cry.  
Never again no never again, will I ever say goodbye.  
8/10/2020

### **Another time another place**

It seems to me I've known you all my life  
And if I think about it, I know it's true

From time to time our worlds collided  
And if truth were told, I'm so glad it was you

But life has a way of loading a dice  
And when it does you'll never know  
You could be lucky and find a true love  
Or a mug like me who just let you go.

In Another time or a another place  
Maybe we could have made it happen.  
But sad to say life didn't want to play  
And so we both simply drifted away.  
But if I should ever get the chance again  
If ever again we come face to face  
I would grasp the chance, and start the dance  
In Another time or another place

But I'll travel on in my own sweet way  
Just wandering on like I've always done  
Fond memories will always live deep in my heart  
As my journey takes me to the setting sun.

In Another time or a another place  
Maybe we could have made it happen.  
But sad to say life didn't want to play  
And so we both simply drifted away.  
But if I should ever get the chance again  
If ever again we come face to face  
I would grasp the chance, and start the dance  
In Another time or another place  
13/1/2021 Ann

## **A place in my heart**

It could have been good, it would have been fine,  
If I was yours, and you were mine,  
But I'm a dreamer, and often a fool,  
Sometimes in your life, Life can be cruel.

But there's one thing I know, and it will never change,  
You will always always have, a place in my heart.

You were the one, but I didn't know it,  
I had love for you, so why didn't I show it,  
Don't ask me why, must have out of my mind,  
I feel I could cry now, It's all lost in time.

But there's one thing I know, and it will never change,  
You will always always have, a place in my heart.  
23/2/2021

## **Most of all**

I'm not unhappy when the sun isn't shining,  
And I don't feel sad when the sky isn't blue,  
I don't miss a thing,  
When the birds don't want to sing,  
But I do know most of all, I miss you.

The days are longer than I want them,  
And nights are so tough to get through,  
But I really miss,  
Your hugging and your kiss,  
But I do know most of all, I miss you.

I want to turn back, the hands of the clock,  
To the day before yesterday,  
To the day before I met you,  
Because now I can't forget you,  
I can live without so much,  
But I still need your tender touch,  
And I do know most of all, I miss you.

Your loving smile always made me happy,  
And your voice so sweet to listen too,  
I don't know why,  
We every said goodbye,  
But I do know most of all, I miss you.

6/4/2021

## More STORIES

### The late Mrs Priscilla Dixon

She died of a heart attack, they were told. Everyone one was amazed as she was always very active, energetic, and constantly on the go.

Priscilla, an ample lady, was well known in many of the local organisations. She was Chairwoman of the Women's Institute, President of the local Hospital League of Friends, and Chair of the school governors, as well as Brown Owl at the guides and a regular helper at the Hospice.

Her husband Arnold, a man of slight stature, would spend evenings at home warming ready meals in the micro wave, watching TV, reading Conan Doyle, and gazing at the stamps in his album. He was curious about the wondrous places the stamps came from. Many of them places across the world he could never hope to visit. They had been married for 47 years and like most marriages there had been bumpy moments and the occasional day when the air was a little electric. It was more a marriage of acceptance on his part.

He was still in some shock several days later when the funeral director called at the house to make the necessary arrangements. A young neighbour sat with Arnold to given him some support and make sure he got the service he wanted.

All decisions were made, a funeral date agreed and a price finalised.

"Oh, there was just one other thing, what music should we have on the day?"

"It's usually something that the deceased would have liked?" queried the director.

"Yes, of course," said Arnold. He thought for a few minutes and then he knew exactly what to choose. "There is one song she really loved. It was in the film, The Wizard of Oz. She thought Judy Garland was a great singer. Her favourite song from the film was 'Some where over the rainbow.' We must have that!"

"Fine" said the director, "That's a lovely song and just the right sentiment for the day. Do you have a recording of the song that you could bring along on the day and give it to the Celebrant," he said as he made a note of the title.

"OK, Yes, I'll bring a CD with me." Arnold promised.

The night before was full of a dark heavy storm and strong winds.

The following morning was full of lightning and loud crashes of thunder.

It continued until just before the start of the 12 noon funeral. Many dignitaries, friends and a few relatives were gathered. Their only son was in Australia and unable to make the journey.

The hearse arrived and the coffin was slowly carried in to the crematorium.

The Celebrant made himself known to Arnold and was handed the CD.

"Its track 7" said Arnold.

All those gathered shuffled into the building and Arnold was ushered to the front row. He was flanked by his helpful neighbour, on one side and the Lord Mayor on the other. The air was full of dampness, the smell of perfumes and body odour.

Arnold turned to observe a sea of faces behind him, but only some he recognized.

"Good Morning all," said the celebrant, "My name is Simon and we are here today to remember the life of Priscilla Dixon. I never knew her myself,

but everyone tells me she was so well known and a lady so full of life, and always ready to help anyone."

A solemn poem and a prayer were said and then Simon read out Priscilla's eulogy.

"Arnold will now say a few words," said Simon twenty minutes later.

Arnold got to his feet and walked towards the coffin. He placed his hand on the top and a cold shiver filtered its way down his body. He shuddered and quickly moved to stand behind the lectern.

"Oh Prissy, I shall miss you, I shall miss you." As he uttered the words his eyes watered and his voice broke.

At that very instant the whole of the chapel fell into complete darkness. Arnold lifted his head and raised his eyes heavenward in the gloom. There were screams, howls and loud crying. Sounds of complete terror filled the air. "Opps Sorry" said a male voice loudly from the back of the chapel, "Sorry I leant in the switches by mistake, I'll move away from them." Quickly the lights came back on again. The neighbour rushed to Arnold and helped him back to his seat and gradually calm was regained. An air of relief fell and soon everyone was settled. The remainder of the funeral continued without any further hitch. "Before we finish," said Simon, "We shall end with the one song that Priscilla loved, and it's from a very famous film." There was silence as an expectant hush fell on the whole chapel. No one had the slightest clue what Priscilla's favourite song was or her taste in music. Simon fumbled nervously and pressed track 7 on his console, and after a short pause, there was music. Gradually, surprise, shock then horror spread like wildfire across the faces of the congregation. Instead of hearing the song 'Somewhere over the rainbow,' the whole assembly were hearing at full volume, 'Ding doing the witch is dead.'

The Lord Mayor looked up and saw a sly grin slip across Arnold's face. This threw Simon into full speed ahead panic. For a split second, that seemed to last a lifetime, he was clueless what to do next. Soon he regained some idea, and jabbed his fingers at the console and turned off the CD player dead.

"Oh I am so sorry" he said loudly, almost in tears and full of apology, "I did press track 7, I am sure!"

The silence was broken when a young voice said "I like that song" and people started giggling and then much laughter followed.

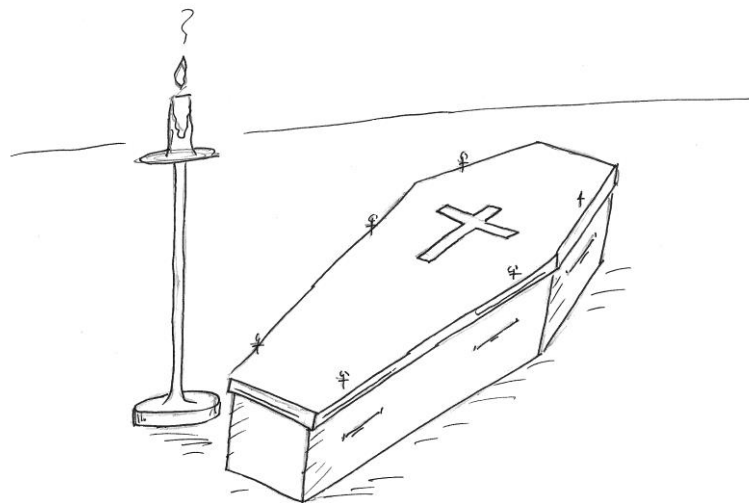
Arnold was helped to his feet. Again Simon made his apologies direct, "I did press 7!" he tried to assure Arnold.

"Yes, I know," said Arnold trying to soothed Simon's stress, "It's OK, Really! I burnt that CD myself, every track on it is the same. I play it every day, all day but I won't be playing anymore as tomorrow morning I shall be on the coach to Heathrow"

He turned and made his way to the door and out into what had become a beautiful day.

"I am looking forward to the food at the wake," he said to the Lord Mayor as they walked to the car.

19-10-2018



Oh Geoffrey !

Geoffrey was unhappy. He didn't like his legs. "They are too long and too thin and a little too hairy," he said to himself. In fact it was something that was constantly on his mind. Also he often said his neck was too long. He stood up to his full height and hit his head on the over hanging branch of a tree. He exhaled a sharp out take of breath and was deciding which swear words to use when his deliberations were interrupted.

"Hello" said Zelda, "You don't look very happy today, why's that? What's wrong?" He told her of his problem. "Oh Geoffrey" she exclaimed loudly "All giraffes have long legs and long necks, It's a fact of life. How would you eat if you didn't have a long neck. You wouldn't be able to reach up to the food in the trees. And I don't think your neck would reach down to the ground would it? It's certainly not long enough for that!"

"No I suppose you're right,"! He began to see her point of view.

"And what's more" she continued "If you couldn't reach the trees and eat the food that you get there, you'd get very hungry and you'd soon be joining you forbears on the plain beyond the mountains, wouldn't you?"

"Hmmm ! " Geoffrey acknowledged her with a grunt.

As they walked on together down the track, Zelda whinnied on, "You should worry! I have black and white stripes all over me. All Zebras are like that, we can't hide anywhere. Everyone who passes by thinks they can take a bite whenever they like! It's lucky for me that I have my legs so that I can run away like an Olympic athlete! Or even faster." He gave her a quizzical look.

As they walked on together, keeping their eyes wide open for danger and for food, they came upon a watery hollow.

They could just about make out the large shimmering lump that was Harry wallowing up to his armpits in mud. He was groaning very loudly. Zelda summed up the situation very quickly.

"Oh dear, He's not a happy hippo, what's wrong with Harry?" she questioned.

"Will it never end," groaned Harry, "Why can't they stop it? They go on and on and on. I have had enough. Everyone must have had enough by now! Surely someone can sort it out? Please Please Please" As he pleaded he submerged deep into the thick brown aromatic sea around him. Moments later he surfaced again and shook his head violently.

Zelda quickly moved out of the way of the flying mud droplets, but Geoffrey was just a little too slow.

"Oh Geoffrey!" exclaimed Zelda, "You look as though you have got a very nasty case of something not very nice!" Geoffrey tried wiping the mud from his fur.

Zelda and Geoffrey both turned to Harry "What are you talking about Harry?" they said in unison.

Harry looked up, as he opened his mouth to speak he blew out a few mud bubbles that floated away in the air, and then he said the word "Brexit!"

Zelda couldn't help but to burst into laughter, trying to stifle her disbelief.

She quickly pulled Geoffrey away "Come on Geffers!" she said, "Let's get out of her quick, follow me."

As they walked back down the track they had travelled earlier, Geoffrey asked

"What was wrong with him?"

"Oh Geoffrey!" She said, "He is crackers, he is totally cream crackers!"

They walked further on and then Zelda could see a puzzled look on Geoffrey's face.

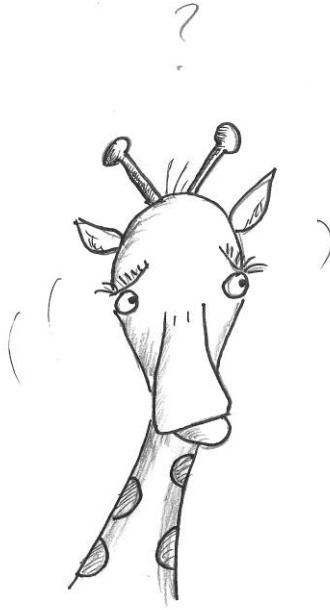
She stopped walking and soon Geoffrey stopped and turned back to look at her.

"OK Geoffrey, what on earth troubling you now?" she said with some inpatients.

"What? What? What are cream crackers?" he asked.

"Oh Geoffrey!" exclaimed Zelda and she pushed past him and walked on down the track alone.

29/3/2019



## Granny Ice Cream

It was a monthly get together that now, after three years, had become a habit.

Every other month she would drive from Chichester and we'd meet at the Red Lion near me. Then on the alternate months I would drive to the outskirts of Chichester and we'd meet at a small wayside inn we both liked.

We had firstly met many years earlier when we both worked in the railway offices at Waterloo Station, but she and I moved away in different directions and to different jobs. Exactly why we had kept in touch still makes me wonder.

She was a lady in her early sixties, now a widow with three grown children. Being a good thirty years younger than her, I was sure she had motherly tendencies towards me rather than anything more emotional.

The main reason why I had always shuddered when the meeting date neared was that she loved to talk. She could talk for England and I could never get a word in.

Despite that she was a very likeable and in her way a sweet lady. I knew that her birthday was in October and my minimal knowledge of astrology told me that was an air sign, and she had plenty of air.

The lady had mastered the art of eating and speaking at the same time without spraying particles of food into the air or on to any unsuspecting and innocent bystander, or me.

I got into the habit of 'turning off' for a few moments now and then but still looking at her, nodding and giving the occasional grunt or 'yes'.

Sometimes she would catch me out and repeat a comment that needed more than a grunt from me, but I somehow managed to bluff my way out of a tricky situation..

It was always difficult trying to stifle a yawn and sometimes when my eyelids started to sag I excused myself and went to the men's room for a splash of cold water on my face to wake me.

I knew all about her family and one fact that sticks in my mind was that when her grand kids visited her they would always run straight to the fridge for ice creams. She was always known as 'Granny Ice Cream' to them.

A quick glance at my watch gives me some hope and I eventually manage to get a few words in 'Must go soon'. I look for the waitress and stand to pay the bill and in my mind I am determined not to sit down again. After a few cheerio's and kisses on cheeks. I walk out back to a normal life.

I often think about her between visits wondering how she is and hoping she is managing to fill her days with happiness and someone else to talk to. I am very wary about using the phone to call her and often curse the man who invented texting.

7/6/2019 for Joan

A hell of a vicar.

Several months had passed since Andrew Saunders had moved into the parish and become incumbent of St Mary's.

The congregation in the hamlet of Wensford had increased as the locals were curious about their new vicar. He was enjoying what he thought was probably his last move before retiring. However there was one thing bugging him and he had decided something must be done about it.

The village church hall was old, uncared for and unloved. There were cobwebs and dust everywhere. Paint was peeling from the walls. The corrugated tin roof was rusty and leaked in a number of places. Every time the stage curtains were drawn a huge cloud of dust took ages to settle. The chairs and tables were uncomfortable and stacked crudely in a corner. The floor boards were worn and suspect.

The land for the hall had been a gift by the lord of the manor several centuries earlier.

Andrew had spent most of his adult life in the church. He had ministered abroad and in two English parishes. Church life and routine was in his blood and he had settled into the parish easily. The one annoying thing on his mind was the condition of the hall which was situated alongside the church.

It was rarely used and if brought back into regular use, would provide a little income for the church coffers.

He had decided that something must be done to bring the hall back into use, and had arranged for members of the parish to spruce it up with a spring clean and a new coat of paint. A local retired builder and parishioner had volunteered to manage the work. Andrew was not happy, as this man was a pain in his cassock, but, he had to turn a blind eye to free help. The builder had offered to repair the roof and seemed to enjoy being up there for some time. The churchyard mower man Tom had been roped in and the lady who organised the church flowers, Mrs Jenkins had offered to help with refreshments for the workers.

The villagers had been asked to donate paint and any other material that might be useful.

"First thing we must do," said Andrew clasping his hands, "Is to make tea and coffee before we start to get everyone in a good mood."

After a mouthful or two, their beverages were discarded. "That tastes awful! Said Tom. "It's fresh milk!" protested Mrs Jenkins. They all agreed and decided that as all of the groceries were brought in, it must be the foul water in those old pipes. Another thing to add to Andrew's list of jobs to be done.

They quickly moved onto the work in hand. Brooms, brushes, buckets of soapy water and all manner of cleaning tools were handed out and the work began. Floors were swept, walls washed down, windows and toilets thoroughly cleaned.

After a while Andrew realised there was a cupboard door down in front of the hall stage. He tried to open it but it was securely locked.

With a little brute force it was opened and eight card board boxes were pulled out into the light.

Andrew wondered how long they had been stored there and that they must be someone's jumble sale leftovers. They contained books, and various objet d'art and bric a brack items and a number contained old clothes.

Andrew stroked his chin and wondered, "Now what can we do with these, perhaps a bonfire for the lot would be best?" he surmised. Then he wondered if any of it was re-usable. "Could it be washed and recycled?" He moved to pick up the first item of clothing and it suddenly moved. Andrew stepped back. Just for a moment he went cold and hairs on the back of his neck stood up.



Perhaps there was something nesting in there? A rat? Or mouse or who knows what? He stood and thought, motionless for a moment. Others stopped what they were doing and gathered around him, several of them giggling at his fright.

He smiled at them and again attempted to hold up the top item of clothing. A strong and very unpleasant putrid smell hit his nostrils as he lifted out what looked like an army great coat. The coat suddenly pulled out of his grasp and lifted into a human shape without any logical reason. "How on earth can that be?" said Andrew aloud. A hat eased out of the box and appeared to hover above the coat. The faint image of a face appeared and a voice said, "The church may be your domain, but this is mine!"

Andrew quickly reached into his pocket searching for his crucifix, but before he could move any further the coat shape grabbed him and pulled him into the cardboard box. He tried grasping at something, anything, but there was nothing. He was being dragged in and down, and down, and down. He could see faces but he kept falling and was getting warm, then even warmer. He could feel sweat trickling down his face as he got hotter and hotter. Eventually he seemed to hit the ground, or whatever it was beneath him.

A voice from behind said "And now I have you at last!"

Andrew turned to see an old adversary. (Be-el-ze-bub) "Beelzebub!" he yelled.

"Yes that's right, now I have you back here, you will not get away this time!"

Andrew had to think quickly and pulled the crucifix from his pocket and held it out in front of him.

"No take that away, that's not wanted here" screamed Beelzebub as he hurriedly turned away from the unwanted image, pushing out as he did.

Andrew felt Beelzebub's hand push him backwards and he began to fall and then rise into the air. Slowly at first and then faster and faster still grasping the crucifix, he zoomed upward.

He opened his eyes to see Mrs Jenkins and Tom leaning over him. Andrew shook his head, "What happened?" he asked.

"You fell backwards and banged yer 'ed on the floor when you fell! Quick Mrs Jenkins get 'im some tea, is there any left?" said Tom. Then Andrew remembered the tea he had tasted last, and this brought him rapidly back into the real world.

He got to his feet and then sat on a chair.

"Oh dear" he said, "Perhaps after all, it's time to call it a day?" They left the hall, locked up and all went to their homes. Unfortunately, no one remembered to tell the builder. He's probably still up there on the roof.

11th October 2019



## The Oriental Lamp

“Come and sit down for a minute” he said.

“Oh Dad,” was Simon’s reply, “I’ve had a bad day at work, I just need some food then I’m off to bed!”

“OK, just a quick word, I have something for you.”

Simon reluctantly sat and listened and watched as his father opened a cardboard box on the floor and pulled out a very old and rusty looking lamp and handed it to Simon.

He held it out at a distance at first, then opened the lid, then looked at the bottom. He half expected to see an M&S sign but there was nothing.

“What’s this Dad?” He asked.

“It’s a family Eire loom. My father gave it to me and his grandfather passed it down to him.

Simon was unimpressed that it had any history. It looked like the lamp that Aladdin would have rubbed to death a few centuries earlier. It had a flowing shape and looked as though it might have started life in the Orient. For a moment he wondered if that was Leyton Orient.

“Is it worth anything? What’s it made of?” asked Simon.

“Oh no!” said his father in an admonishing tone, “Oh no, it’s not the value of what it’s made of, it’s the years of survival being handed down over all the generations. There’s no knowing how old it really is. It’s beyond value. No, don’t think pounds shilling and pence, think antiquity. If only it could speak just think what wondrous tales it would tell!”

“It’s ages old.” Said Dad, I want you to have it and pass it on to your kids when you have some.”

Simon tried rubbing the lamp vigorously but nothing happened.

He took the lamp to his bedroom and found the perfect place for it on a shelf.

He laid in bed reading and occasionally looking up at the lamp curious about its history.

The following day at work Simon struggled to keep awake and was glad to get out into the fresh air at 5pm.

He called into the library to return books and as he walked back to his car he passed a charity shop.

His eye caught sight of the numerous books they had for sale. So in he went drawn by the thought of finding a rare 1st edition of something very valuable.

There was little of interest. Then looking around he spied a cream and red vase which he picked up. As soon as he saw the price he hastily put it down again.

Gazing around he was suddenly horrified to see a whole shelf full of lamps. They were all identical to the lamp his father had so lovingly cared for and presented to him the day before.

A smile slowly slipped across his face and then became a wide grin. He suddenly burst out into loud laughter.

The sales ladies looked at him in disbelief.

Instantly he started chanting, “New lamps for old ! New lamps for old !”

Then he quickly turned and left the shop

3-3-2020

## The search for Sherringham Teddy

Most of my tales are fantasy but this is a very true story.

Some years ago, I was at home, having done all the necessary chores I had to do, got fed up watching television and read all the books I wanted to. A brain wave suddenly hit me. “What you need is a few days away from home,” I said to myself. However, the question was where to go? The thought of me sat on a beach with a cold drink, in the warm sun, listening to the waves lapping on the shoreline and watching all the pretty girls go by was a wonderful image, but only in my head.

The latter of those is a required occupation for us 'way past it' old fellows. Not abroad was my first decision, and as I had seen many places in the UK I had to discount many possible options. The south coast was a no no as I had been to most of them and Scotland would be too far.

I had seen much of the west coast and Wales so I decided on somewhere along the east would be a good idea. Years ago I had been up as far as Clacton, and looking at a map, the name Great Yarmouth, a little further up from there, sounded interesting.

It was decided and I booked a three day coach trip. Of course had this been the end of July everything would have been fine, but it was in fact the end of January. That no doubt was why the coach trip price was so reasonable.

I got the coach at 9am the advised time and sat next to an older man. All the way to Great Yarmouth, we never spoke, not a word, other than for me to stand up and let him into his window seat every time we stopped for a comfort break. There may have been an occasional nod or a smile in acknowledgement, but nothing was actually said. The coach headed east. First stop Chichester, then Worthing, then Brighton, then Eastbourne. By now I was beginning to wonder if I was on the correct coach. The other factor was that now we were two hours into the journey. I wondered how long I would have to be encased in this vehicle.

Shortly after this the coach turned north. We eventually entered a tunnel with the river Thames above us. Fortunately I had brought food and drink and we drove on and on and on. It was beginning to get dark, but I suddenly relaxed as the coach passed name signs for our destination. We stopped in front of a building called St Georges Hotel. I thought 'Yes a good old English name', let's hope they have comfortable beds.

It so happened that the hotel was run by a gent and his two sons who were from Turkey. My spirits sank a little, wondering what the food would be like.

As I got out of the coach looking for the hotel door rain drops hit my head.

That evening, after a 9 hour journey, which a direct road from home to here would have only been about 4 or 5 hours, I was a little surprised to find that the food was quite acceptable, but plain.

The following morning after breakfast I decided to get the bus along the sea front which was empty, and have a stroll around the shops.

I wondered up the precinct, it was still dribbling with rain. Every shop appeared to be closed, except one selling rock and a news agent. There were few people venturing out on this dismal day.

I must have found somewhere to sit for an hour or more to waste away some time and then a café for a sandwich and coffee. I was damp, deflated and beginning to wonder at my decision to leave my TV and warm lounge and my comfortable arm chair. The evening meal was OK and once I had dried out I slept well that night.

Day two and a coach excursion was advertised and I decided to buy a ticket. We headed north to a place called Sherringham on the coast of the Wash. Normally I am sure it's a very nice little town, but grey skies and wet pavements didn't look inviting. We were all off loaded in the rain and I walked along a row of shops which to my delight were mostly opened. I found an antique shop.

I browsed for a while but bought nothing. It was still raining, but it seemed to be getting heavier. My mind was whirling. Why did I leave my little warm house on the south coast for this? I wondered.

I decided to play a game with my self. The name of the town was the same as a Pompey FC player Teddy Sherringham, who was brought from Tottenham by Harry Redknapp, a few years before.

I would search around and find a gift shop and feeling a little juvenile buy a teddy bear. It would be my own Teddy from Sherringham. Moments later, there before my eyes, I saw a gift shop and the name above it was Coopers. This is fate I said to myself and hurriedly I walked straight in. I said hello to the woman behind the counter and added that my name is the same as her shop, and asked her if it was her name. She said no, and added they were fans of Alice Cooper and decided to name it after him. Oh well, It didn't really matter, I agreed with myself.



I should have mentioned to her that my grandmother was an Alice Wilkins and she married a James Cooper, so she became Alice Cooper! But it somehow that didn't occur to me at the time.

A broad smile spread across my face when I found a soft toy bear with the name Teddy on it and was pleased to part with the required amount.

On all three of those days it rained non stop. It was somewhat of a relief to get on the coach and move south again. On the way home the old chap and I got to talk. It seemed he was a regular at the Gosport Jazz Club, and knew most of the music people that I knew. We became friends once we were home again, but sadly, he has left us now. When I got home I managed to dry out after what must have been three days of continuous rain.

I still have my Sherringham Teddy. However, since getting home I have noticed he has a cap on his head and is wearing a number 5 striped shirt with the word Teddy sown to the front, and no pants. The attached card label says 'Bob the baseball player, made in China'. Bob, or Teddy as I prefer to call him and I still live happily together to this day. No doubt that's how it will be until the end of my days. He just sits there and stares at me with his baseball bat in his hand. It was one of the holidays that will stick in my memory banks forever, but not really to be spoken of, so perhaps I won't mention it.

30/1/2021

## **ARNIE'S GYM**

The gym was full of customers all day. There were some on running machines, others on exercise bikes. Several groups were weight-lifting and there were two men shadow boxing in a ring in the far corner just as the day was ending. The smell of body odour was strong as all were working hard at their pieces of equipment. Michelle was busy at the reception desk tidying up and had just put her mobile phone down. Her husband Harry was wiping the counter top behind the small bar in another corner. Arnie Sutton, the gym owner, who was in the office to one side of the gym busily sorting through cash and till receipts and counting money from the day's takings, oblivious of the emptying gym.

Harry walked over to Michelle and gave her a peck kiss on her cheek, "I'm gonna tell Arnie!" he said.

"What? Tell him what?" she asked.

"About us," said Harry.

"No you mustn't, if we get caught we'll both end up in prison."

“No it’s alright, we can trust Arnie. He won’t let us down.” He said, and hurried back to his bar before she could speak again.

Arnie looked up and noticed a woman walk into the gym. She seemed a little lost at first, then walked over to the reception desk and began speaking to Michelle. “Hello, I’d like to join the gym, I need to tone up a little” she said.

Michelle smiled and said, “But of course, I’ll need you to fill in this form. Just your name, address, phone and email address and so on, you’ll see.” The woman took the form and a pen from Michelle and started writing. Arnie left his office and walked across to them and introduced himself to the new member. “Hello I’m Sophie,” she added.

“Ah good, once the form is completed the fee is payable in advance. Price info is on the back of the form, see,” Arnie said and points to the back of the form.

“We’ve recently had to put up our prices I’m afraid, inflation catches up with all of us in the end. Just haven’t had a chance to fix all the ads yet,” he said apologetically. Sophie smiled at him and continued writing. “So what do you do for a living?” he asks.

“Well at the moment I’m between jobs,” She had to think quickly, “I used to be a dancer and singer. I did a couple of shows on the West End, just in the chorus. I was never good enough to be out front on a stage. I still do a little when I can but to pay the rent I do just a few hours each week in a call centre. Coming here will help keep me supple, I’m hoping.”

Arnie smiles at her, and says “Ok if you need any help ask me or Harry over there.” He turns and walks to the bar and whispers to Harry, “Wheelin’ and dealin’ but never stealing!” and Harry replies “Yea! And kidding yourself ain’t good for your health!” Arnie chuckles loudly and says “Just tryin’ to make a buck, I like to call it a well earned service charge, so I can add to the coffers so to speak.”

A moment passes and Harry says “Arnie, I need to have a word with you later, privately, can we meet up just before we close?”

“Yea, sure, is everything alright?” asked Arnie.

“Not really, but I’ll give you the lowdown later, is that OK?”

“Yea OK, catch me at nine o’clock in my office. It will be much quieter then.”

“Great.” Says Harry.

Arnie turns to look back at the reception and waves to the woman as she leaves, “See you in the morning?,” he shouts, but she just smiles and walks out of the door.

As the last customer leaves, two male cleaners walked in carrying mops and buckets and other cleaning items. They busy themselves with vacuums. Cleaning, spraying and wiping sweat from the apparatus. Soon the room is full of the smell of disinfectant and the cleaners leave. Arnie looked up and sees that the gym is now empty. Harry walked into his office.

“Thanks for this, Arnie.”

“So, what is the problem Harry? It’s late, so make it quick if you can”

“I think you’re being watched.” Said Harry

“What do you mean, watched?”

“I’ve got a feeling that certain people are watching you,” replied Harry.

“Watching me? Who?” asks Arnie.

“I don’t know, but I wanted to warn you to be careful. Thing is, I think they maybe watching me as well.”

“You’ve got a wild imagination, you or me? Which is it? Why would they be watching you?”

“I have a secret and I think I’ve been found out, but I can’t tell you.” He hesitated and it was obvious that he really did want to tell Arnie. Suddenly his mouth opened and words burst out. “Michelle is my wife, but,…” He hesitated again, “I was already married.”

“What!” says Arnie and starts laughing, “You dirty old man, how did you manage that, and does Michelle know?”

“Oh yes, but that means,” He looked around to see if anyone else was listening, and then continued. “I’m a bigamist, I could get locked up, you won’t tell anyone, will you?”

Again Arnie laughs and says “OK, OK you can trust me, it’s our little secret, I won’t tell a soul.”

“Thanks Arnie, fine! Michelle and I will push off home now, see you in the morning.”

“Cheers Harry,” says Arnie. Once Harry had gone he said to himself “Well who would have believed that? Not me, it’s a funny old world.”

The gym was now very quiet and Arnie began to lock up and leave. “Ah well, that’s another day over, and what a day it was, I never saw that coming!”

The following day was busy from the morning opening at eight o’clock until just before closing. Arnie was again sorting out money and dealing with a little paperwork. The gym door opened and in walked two men. Arnie looked up and suddenly froze to the spot. He seemed to recognise one of them. He got to his feet, left the office and approached them. “Can I help you gentlemen?” he said.

They were both very well built and as he got closer he saw that one had a large scar down his cheek and the other was wearing a white fedora hat and looking over to Michelle. He was just about to start chatting her up, but then he turned back.

“Hello Arnie, you are Arnie aren’t you? It’s more a question of can we help you. You see it’s like this, we are here to check the place out, before the boss arrives,” said the man with the scar.

“What do you mean, are you not wanting to join the gym then?” asked Arnie.

The two men laughed at him. “No, I told you,” said the scarred heavy getting annoyed, “The boss is on his way here to see you. Wants to have a quiet little word in your shell like, and you better listen very carefully.”

Both of the heavies started chuckling. At that moment the door opens again and in walks a very well dress dark skinned tall man.

At first Arnie didn’t realise what was going on. Then the smart mans face finally registered on Arnie.

He stiffened and a cold shiver shot down his back and around his body several times. He now recognised this man.

Arnie gasped and took a sharp intake of breath. “Oh it’s you, Leonardo!” said Arnie.

“Hello Arnie, yes it’s me, your old pal Leo! So glad you remember me, and you remember my boys? Jimmy and Scar face too?” said the smart man pointing to his heavies, “It’s good to see you again. Arnie? Now that’s an interesting name, Arnie’s Gym, isn’t that what you call this place? And who is Arnie anyway? You know, I always knew you as Cyril!”

Harry and Michelle pushed by them on their way to the door and home. “Is everything OK Arnie?” asked Harry.

“Yes everything’s fine, you get off home now and I’ll see you in the morning OK, take care, on your way now!”

They left and the three men moved closer to Arnie.

“I’m Arnie now, Arnie Sutton, OK?” he said.

“Oh but Arnie, I mean Cyril, weren’t you once called Cyril Sidebottom in your younger days?” said Leo.

“No it’s Arnie now. That was a long time ago, in a previous life! Arnie Sutton now” he said strongly.

Leo smiled at him and started circling Arnie.

“Now there’s a stupid name, Sidebottom. What woman would want to go to bed with a man called Sidebottom?” he sniggered.

Arnie cast his eyes down to the floor, he suddenly felt very small.

“So tell me, why did you choose the name Arnie, and why the name Sutton? Do tell,” said Leo.

Arnie looked up, very wistful and reluctant to answer at first.

“I always admired Arnold Schwarzenegger, came from Austria, went to the States and then he got himself a great body, won Mr Universe way back, then he became a film star. He must have made his money there and then did politics. You’ve just got to admire a man like that.” he said. “Someone who goes from one lifestyle to something completely different. That’s very praiseworthy. Knowing I was moving into the fitness business, which was a bit by accident, it seemed the obvious choice.”

“Yes, that sounds a bit like you. Why did you get this place? And where did the Sutton name come from?”

“I did manage to get some money together and bought this place from a guy who was emigrating to Australia, Don’t ask me why, It wasn’t a plan, I just needed to get a legit life for a change.” He thought for a moment, looked at all three of them and continued.

“Oh, and as for a last name, we just stuck a pin in a page of the phone book. Sutton sounded OK, so Sutton it is,” said Arnie.

So you did have a previous life didn’t you? What was it now? Drug running and supplying, and then stealing a few cars, than you even tried to knock over an all night laundromat. How stupid was that? How long were you in the Scrubs? Three years wasn’t it?” said Leo with a sickly grin on his face.

“That’s all in the past now, I try to forget it, I’ve moved on.”

“You mean that no one here knows of your youthful misdemeanours? Wouldn’t that be a shame if they found out? Hmmm?”

“OK! OK! So what do you want from me?” questioned Arnie getting more irritated as they spoke.

“Well it’s a more a case of what you want to give me. You have a nice little earner here don’t you? That’s a very regular income from your clientele. I’m always happy to see someone getting on so well, and making a good living. Wouldn’t you like to share some of all that money you’re making?”

“Oh, its protection money that you want is it?”

“No, No,” replied Leo, “Let’s call it insurance. Everybody needs insurance don’t they? And you wouldn’t want any pins stuck in you, would you, especially any very large pins. That would be terribly painful, molto doloroso, capire? That’s very unpleasant.”

Arnie’s head was spinning. He was desperately wondering how he was going to get out of yet another tight corner. Something he had not had to do for many years.

Scar face took a knife from inside his coat and started pretending to clean under his fingernails with the tip of it, looking menacingly at Arnie as he did.

“OK,” said Arnie finally deciding to take the bait, so tell me what you want, what’s on your mind? How much do you want?”

“That’s a good boy Arnie, Che bravo ragazzo, now you are seeing sense, a little two way co-operation and it will all be over quite painlessly, for you.”

“So come on, name your game, what’s your price.”

“Now that’s an interesting thought, name my game. Or better still, you name your game Arnie,” said Leo.

“What? What are you on about?” Arnie was now getting flustered and feeling very surrounded.

“Remind me if you will, didn’t you have another profession, a few years back? Didn’t you do a drag act?”

“Oh that was way back, I packed that in yonks ago,” Arnie stated firmly.

“Yes, now what was it you were called? Lucy, that’s what it was, wasn’t it? Lucy Lastic, what a silly name.” Leo turned to his heavies and they all laughed.

“So how did you get into the drag scene?” Leo asked.

“Oh that’s a long story,” said Arnie, “It all happened when I was in stir. When you’re locked up you meet some very nasty types. Several want to be the boss, and the rest do as they are told, if they know what’s good for them. Me, I didn’t want any of that. Luckily, our vicar in the slammer wanted us to do a pantomime as it was near to Christmas. Of course, we needed some men to play women. Cinderella was renamed SInDerella and needed two ugly sisters and that’s where I stepped in. I wrote a few lewd and suggestive parodies to some pop songs and the cons loved it. Songs like, ‘Secret Love’ changed to ‘Once I had a secret shove!’ And ‘Step inside love’ to ‘Get inside love,’ and so on. I always had great fun singing My Ding a Ling!”

“So you wasn’t a pretty boy then was you?” added Leo with a laugh.

“No, that’s not a good thing when you’re inside. The pretty ones have a hard, I mean, a very difficult time. Somehow I easily slipped into the part, and I thought if Johnny Cash can do it at San Quinton then why not me at the Scrubs? I couldn’t do anything wrong after that and life in the Scrubs was sweet from then on. I got respect. When I first got out, I needed money and that seemed the best and easiest way to get some.”

“You know I never did see your drag act, that’s such a shame. I always thought that drag acts were a bit weird, but I have heard you were good at it!”

“No, I packed all that in and I said I wouldn’t do it ever again. Where did you find all this out anyway?”

“Oh I have my contacts and that’s a shame, why did you stop, when you had such a good reputation”

“That was the trouble, I was getting a reputation, at some of those clubs and pubs you were lucky to get out with your clothes on!”

“So you did the circuit, did you? Did you ever perform at the Vauxhall Tavern?”

“Oh yea, several times, that’s the one place I liked and I went down well. They were good old days and bad old days too.”

I went there a few times but never saw you,” said Leo.

“Oh really?” said a surprised Arnie, “Did you like to watch drag acts?”

“I thought they were strange, but at the same time very clever. I think you should start again, there was good money in it wasn’t there?” persuaded Leo.

“No, I said I would never do it again, and I am not going to!”

Leo started stroking his chin in thought. “I’d like to see your act, will you do a show for me? And my boys?” he points to the heavies.

“No way, all my dresses were dumped and I have forgotten most of the music and songs I did.”

Leo was still in thought, and then said, “I’ve got it. We came here tonight to offer you some help, you know, make sure no harm came to your business. It would be a great shame if this place suddenly and mysteriously caught fire during the night. A heavy JCB digger just might accidentally drive into the side of the building and cause so much damage that your poor gym club business would come to such a sudden and bitter end. Now that would be terrible, wouldn’t it?”

Arnie felt as though he had been backed into a corner. His brain was racing, trying to figure out how he was going to deal with this, with or without his clothes on.

“If you were to reignite your old career, you know Lucy lives again, dig her up from her grave as it were. I just might leave you be.”

“You what?” asked Arnie.

“Yes, treat me nice, and I’ll be nice to you.”

“But it just wouldn’t be possible, no dresses, make up, and I have forgotten all the old routines and songs. I just couldn’t do it,” he said in desperation. “And I’m not as trim as I used to be. I was 11 stone at most in those days. I’m 14 or 15 stone now. I’d never get into a dress of any kind.” Despite his words, he could see that Leo was not backing down.

“You could do it here, move some of this equipment and these machines out of the way and there would be plenty of room.”

Arnie was slightly amused at the thought of doing his old show here in his gym. “No, not a chance.” He chuckled aloud, but it was a hollow chuckle.

“No!” he repeated. “And what’s more we’d need lights, and microphones, amplifiers and some kind of decent staging.”

“That can all be arranged,” said Leo confidently.

Arnie could see he was losing the argument.

For a moment nothing was said as Arnie thought over the suggestion and dragging up for one more time.

“OK Arnie, I still can’t get used to calling you that, but OK, here’s a little idea of mine, think over my suggestion, give it some serious thought, a great deal of very serious thought, and we’ll be back in a few days just to check you’re still in good health, know what I mean? Ciao for now Arnie” said Leo. He nodded to his heavies and they turned and tramped out of the gym and Leo followed them.

This left Arnie silent and glued to the spot with his head still spinning.

The two cleaners walked in and started work. In a short while the odour of sweat and assorted bodies was replaced by the sweet smell of disinfectant and cleanliness.

Slowly he regained his senses, did a final check all round, then locked up and left the building.



It was a little after 8am the next morning and Arnie was already in his office trying to get his head round some outstanding paperwork. Several people were in for an early work out. Both Harry and Michele were busy at their work. Harry was restocking shelves and Michelle was working on her computer.

Arnie looked up as Sophie walked into the gym and waved to him. She went straight into the changing room and soon stepped out suitably dressed for a work out. She did some gentle stretching and moving exercises and then stepped on a running machine and did a slow jog. Arnie emerged from his office to check on her, "All OK?" he questioned.

"Yep, fine with me," replied Sophie with a smile without stopping her jog.

Arnie turned and walked over to some other people.

There was a buzzing sound. Arnie looked round to Sophie. She took an item from her belt, and turned to Arnie. "Phone call" she said and turned off her machine. Arnie nodded and turned away. "Yes, I'm in," she said into her phone. "All OK here at the moment, in fact maybe a little too quiet. He's been and gone, but he's coming back again, so stand by Chief. I'll brief Arnie shortly." She slipped her phone back into her belt.

Sophie made her way to his office door. "Can I have a word?" she asked.

"Yea, sure come on in and sit yourself down." He looked at her closely for a time. In her forties he decided, and noticed no ring on her wedding finger.

"You've had a visitor lately haven't you?" she said

"Oh yes we get lots of people in here business is good at this time."

"No, I mean a particular visitor?"

Arnie was confused briefly, "What do you mean? Are you looking for someone?"

"No, it's more about someone looking for you, by the name of Dagastino."

The mention of his name sent a cold icicle down Arnie's back. He tried to sound un-moved but Sophie saw an immediate flushing in his face.

She continued, "Yes I can see you know that name. Has he been in here recently?" she questioned.

It seemed to him that he'd been backed into this same corner just a short while ago. He had to admit it. "Yes, he was here last night."

"Yes we do know that."

We? Whos 'we'?"

She pulled a mobile phone from her belt. Inside the cover was her warrant card and she showed it to Arnie.

"I'm DS Sophie McAllister, We've been watching Daggers for days."

"Who?" Arnie interrupts.

"Dagastino, oh that's what we call him. He's wrapped up in so many bent dealings we have to take him out!"

"Take him out? You mean kill him?" asked Arnie in disbelief!

"Oh no, I mean take him off the scene, lock him up for a very long time."

"Oh I see," he said, but he was still unsure of what was happening.

"DS, that's Detective Sergeant isn't it? So it must be serious!"

"Yes, he has some nasty habits and we need to put him away."

"So what's that got to do with me?" asked Arnie.

"What was he here for? Did he want money? Or offer protection? Did he have his muscle boys with him?" she quizzed.

"Yes those gorillas were with him. At first he wanted money but then changed his mind." Arnie told her what had been said and the ultimatum he'd been given."

Sophie was silent for a few minutes. "We need to grab him when he's a not expecting it, when he's off guard. If he was here we would have the building surrounded and we'll have some of our guys in the audience too. At a given time, others will swoop in and take him out. If some of his other low life friends were here, we'd grab them too, that would be the perfect arrangement and a very big bonus."

Arnie interrupted her, "No, I said I wouldn't do it. He tried to persuade me but I said no."

"Oh that's a shame. That would be a very nice big worm on a hook to get him here. Are you sure you won't do it?"

Again Arnie was deflated. "If truth were told," he began, "I quite fancy the idea, but I got rid of all my clobber and everything I would need, so, no it's not on,"

"We can see to that," she added.

"Oh, really?" Arnie sat there in thought. "It would be fun to dig her up again."

"What?" asked Sophie, "Dig up who?"

"No," Arnie laughed, "No, I mean dig up the old character I used to be, she was called Lucy."

"Lucy?"

"Yea, Lucy Lastic."

They both giggled at the name.

"Of course, we know about your past including the problems you had, its all well documented. That was when you were much younger, but that's all history now, this is something we need to deal with now, and you are our best hope." He looked at her and smiled.

"OK, you mull it over," she said, "And let me know, I'll be here most days early for some loosening up, In fact I'm looking forward to it. Do remember if we can put him away, that will take him off your back!"

Arnie nodded in agreement, and somehow felt slightly relieved that his problem was being overseen by the Special Branch.

Several days later Sophie made her way from the changing room into the gym. She started her normal stretching exercises and looked over to the office expecting to see Arnie. He was a not there. She walked to the office door and then noticed Arnie lying forward on his desk. Was he asleep or was it more serious?

"Arnie!" she grabbed his shoulder and he moved and groaned, and gradually woke up.

"Oh, sorry about that, I must have just nodded off. I'll be OK in a minute, must get some coffee."

"Having some late nights?" she asked.

"Well to be honest I haven't been sleeping too well. I've had lots on my mind." He stood up and they both walked back into the gym.

"Have you had anymore thoughts about my suggestion?" she asked.

"Yes that's why I have been up most of the night. I can't get this whole business off my mind. I expect Leo will be back here again any day now, twisting my arm. I think I'm going to have to do as he asks."

"Good," she said, "Keep me informed of what he says and we'll back you up, no problem! OK?"

Arnie looked doubtful, "Yes, I suppose so."

It was three weeks later that Leo and his heavies re-emerged into the gym. They stood inside the door looking very menacing. Everyone in the gym stopped what exercise they were doing and looked round at them in silence. Arnie emerged from his office and went to them saying, "It's OK everyone. Just carry on with your training, there's no problem here."

"So then, tell me Arnie, have you given my idea any thought, come to any kind of decision yet?" asks Leo.

"Yes, OK I'll do it." Says Arnie reluctantly.

"Oh good, now that's the sensible answer isn't it lads?" he turned to his heavies for agreement. They all smiled and chuckled to themselves in return.

"So this is what we will do," says Leo, "I will arrange all the technical side, you know lights, a public address system and some kind of staging. I have a few contacts and I'm sure that won't be any problem, and then, I'll send you the bill for it all."

"What?" shouts Arnie.

Leo ignores him and continues, "What you will have to do is get your act together and just be ready on the night. OK mio amico, my friend?"

"Oh no, you are certainly not my friend!" states Arnie. Leo smiles at him and adds,

"Tell all your customers to spread the word amongst their friends and family. I will bring in a few coach loads of willing punters along to fill the place. We will charge them all £25 each!"

"What? No you can't do that, that's ridiculous," says Arnie.

"We can say the money is needed for work on this building, your refurbishment and modernisation."

“Oh, really? OK that doesn’t sound too bad.” Says Arnie

“But all that money comes to me at the end of the night, yes? You know, call it insurance! It won’t be a big sum but it will buy me a few tasty dinners at the Ritz. So now all we have to do is pick a date.”

“I’m going to need time to get back into that old persona, the old routine. Where did I put my cassettes? Now that’s another thing. Cassettes, that’s old technology. Assuming I can find them, where can you get a cassette player these days?”

“You give me the cassettes and I’ll get them transferred into a modern system, you’ll have no worries, and the date?” asks Leo.

“How about February the 31<sup>st</sup>?” said Arnie.

Leo thought for a moment, “February was last month. Oh now I see, did you hear that lads? Arnie’s having a little joke with us. Now that’s not very funny is it? So I suggest,..” he pauses and then adds, “ the 1<sup>st</sup> of next month.”

“But that’s only three weeks away. Some hopes,” says Arnie.

Leo gives Arnie a sickly smile and says, “Ciao for now Arnie.” He and his heavies turn and leave the gym. Sophie had overheard all that was said. “Right, that’s it all lined up then. So it’s April the 1<sup>st</sup>! The perfect date for the set up.”

“Let’s hope we’re not all April fools then!” adds Arnie.

The following morning Sophie was in the gym early and half way through her now daily routine. She had warmed up, after a stretching session she did a spell on the tread mill machine and was just about to move to the multi gym work station, when Arnie rushed up to her, He was bubbling with excitement. “I have found them,” he said loudly to her.

She looked up “What? What have you found?” she asked.

“I have found all my old scores and tapes and everything. I was sure they were all thrown away, but they were here all the time in a filing cabinet in my office. I would never have thought of looking there. I had my flat upside down several times looking for the damn things. They were here all the time.”

He showed her a cardboard box which contained a stack of papers and half a dozen cassettes in plastic cases.

“Now where can I get a cassette player?” He wondered aloud.

A voice from behind him said ‘I’ve got one of those, I think it still works,’ Arnie turned around to see Michelle looking at him.

“I could pop home now and get it if you want?” she said.

“Yes please, that would be great, go now and do hurry back, it’s urgent.” Arnie was now even more hyper.

Sophie smiled to herself and said “You’re acting as though all your Christmases have come at once.”

Arnie stayed late in the gym. The cassette player did work and he was happy playing through the old songs and remembering some fantastic nights from almost 25 years earlier. It was beginning to feel like he now wanted to do the show that Leo had demanded, but at the same time he was remembering that not all those old days and nights were good and worth remembering.

It was almost midnight when Arnie did eventually lock up and make his way home. It was another night when he found it difficult to sleep, as his mind was bubbling with the whole process of remembering and performing again.

In the following days, word had spread of his proposed performance night. Michelle said she could supply him with some make-up. Arnie had made some phone calls and found a company in London where he could hire dresses and high heels for the night. All was going to plan until the day Leo returned to the gym.

“It’s all organised,” said Leo, “The equipment will arrive on the morning of your show and be set up for you, and then you have the afternoon to rehearse and the show will start about 9pm.”

“Oh,” said Arnie, “You seem to have it all sorted out?”

“Yes, well it’s not rocket science, it’s just a question of getting things organised. Of course, you’ll have to close the gym down on that day.”

“Yes, I had thought about that. Did you manage to get those cassettes transferred to digital?”

“Yes, that’s all sorted and I have a sound man coming in on the day just to make sure things go smoothly.”

Arnie was speechless for a while. "Right then." added Leo, "See you on the night. You'd better be on form. Mess up and it could get very uncomfortable for you." Leo grinned and nodded at Arnie, "Ciao for now Arnie" he said and then left the gym.

Sophie saw him leave and quickly followed Arnie into his office. "Is it all OK with him?" she asked, "Oh yes, he's got it all organised." He hesitated and then asked, "I was wondering if I could ask a favour? My old act would last about 30 minutes, not sure if I can last that long these days. Could you help out? It would be great if you would be able to sing a couple of songs before me on the night, as a warm up sort of thing." He begged.

"I suppose I could, yes I think I could manage that." She replied.

"What we have in mind," she continued, "is that when you have finished your last number, we will rush him and his heavies before he can realise what's happening and have them away very quickly."

"That sounds good, hopefully no one will get hurt?" he sounded unsure.

"This is what is going to happen. The moment you finish your last song, there will be whistles, sirens, squads of police will swarm in, some with dogs and grab a handful of villains but in particular Leo Dagastino. He is the one we want. It will all go like clockwork, believe me, you can trust the Special Branch." She sounded very convincing. "You've no need to worry, we've got it all under control" she tried to reassure him and then went back to her training.

Arnie sat alone for a while and the day passed quickly and just as he was tidying up and about to leave, Sophie returned to the gym.

"Oh hello," said Arnie, "This is a bit late for you, isn't it?"

"Yes, I was just a bit concerned about you. This whole thing seems to be getting to you, are you going to be able to cope with it?"

"Yea I'm fine really, although I'll be glad when it's all over!" he said

"I'll tell you what, I'm just going for a meal, care to join me?" she asked.

"Well yes, I am a bit hungry," He thought for a few seconds, "Yea, why not, and we'll have a drink and get plastered too. You are off duty aren't you?"

"Oh yes," she replied and Arnie finally turned the key in the gym door lock and they found the nearest curry house. It was early morning when Arnie eventually got back to his flat.

The show day came very quickly. By late morning all the equipment had arrived and was tested and working well. During the afternoon, Arnie went through his routine a couple of times. He missed a couple of cues but in the end was sure he could get through his set without any major mistakes. He had decided that if there were any accidents, being the old pro that he was, he could bluff his way through with ad-libs and a few comic remarks to cover up any boops." Then he suddenly remembered, "Boops, yes I must get a pair of charlies sorted out before the day. I can't work without charlies, I'm a professional," he said with pride, and then added, "Well, I used to be." Instantly he felt deflated and frightened, walked back into his office, that was now his dressing room, and sat in silence for a while. He began to feel hungry, but couldn't bring himself to eat anything. The afternoon slipped by and the skies outside grew darker. After a while he was sat in semi-darkness. "Oh hell, why on earth did I agree to this? If I've said it once, I've said it a million times. I said I wasn't going to do this anymore, but here I am, two hours from curtain call and I really don't want to do it." Tears began to stream from his eyes, but then something clicked. It was as though someone had whispered in his ear, "You'll be fine." Arnie looked up, and he heard that same voice repeat the same words. "You'll be fine, they will love you." He quickly regained his senses and dried his eyes. He switched the desk lamp light on and saw spread around him make up and an assortment of under garments. Several dresses were on hangers over the office door. On the desk in front of him were three wigs together with a pair of knee length silver sparkling high heel boots. He had already decided on the blond wig. He looked around but there was no one, he was alone. "I can do it." He said, and then he said it again much louder, "I can do it. Time to drag you out and tart you up once again Lucy, here goes." Arnie set to work reincarnating Lucy, just one more time. He had covered his face with foundation and then started dressing until he was almost done. He was pleased that the girdle that came with the dresses fitted and seemed to take pounds off of his spreading waist line. Next, he slowly started applying facial make up, blusher, eyeliner and

then lipstick. All of which were just a little over the top and unreal. He removed two of the largest pair of eye lashes from a shrink wrapped pack, and carefully glued them in place. He stood and slipped into the bright blue sequined dress with ease.

“And finally,” he said reaching for two large pieces of hard foam rubber. “Mustn’t forget my charlies,” and he slipped them down inside his bra. With the palms of his hands he adjusted them in the front of the dress. He positioned the blond wig on his head and smiled to himself. He felt complete again, just like the old days. Arnie gazed into a full length mirror. In a deep south of American accent and trying to sound like Clarke Gable in ‘Gone With the Wind,’ he said, “Well bless my soul, Miss Lucy, you are a fine lookin’ woman. I could almost fancy you myself.”

The gym had been cleared of all of the apparatus and chairs and tables filled the spaces. By 8pm there were already many people sat at tables and stood at the bar. Some complained that there was no alcohol, and were told the gym only had a soft drink bar. Harry had to step in to cool things down when several of Leo’s gang started grappling briefly, but a calm order was regained.

There was a hum of excitement in the crowd as they waited for the start of the show. Suddenly, the gym door opened and in walked Scarface and Jimmy, Leo’s two henchmen. They looked around, checking, and decided all was good. Scarface opened the door again and in walked Leo who stood there looking at the crowd staring back at him in silence. They walked slowly and majestically to the front of the stage and pushed people out of seats, and then made themselves comfortable. Slowly the hum became louder again.

Unexpectedly, Harry walked into the office, “Opps! Sorry miss I didn’t think there was.....” and then he realised “Arnie? Is that you?” Arnie smiled at him, “Yes it’s me, although really it’s Lucy right now.”

“Wow you do look good, I mean, you do look the part,” he struggled to find the right words, “You look very err..... female, that’s it, yes female, excellent. We’re just about to start the show. Sophie is ready in the changing room so if you’re up for it?”

“Is Leo here yet?” asked Arnie.

“Oh yes,” confirmed Harry, “He very definitely is here with a whole load of his family and friends and a few enemies I’m sure. They all look as though they are ready for a fight. Rough looking lot they are too!”

“OK thanks. I’m ready now,” said Arnie, “Sophie’s doing three songs and then I’m on!”

“Yes that’s it, fine,” said Harry feeling very awkward and he left and walked straight up onto the stage. He grabbed the microphone. “Ladies and Gentlemen, please take your seats and make yourselves very comfortable. It’s now time to start our show. Please give a big round of applause for one of our club members. So-phie Mc-Al-is-ter.”

Sophie took the stage and started with a song called ‘On a wonderful day like today’ Arnie looked up, listened and then said “Let’s hope it is.” She got just a warm reception at first, but gradually, the audience seemed to enjoy her performance. By the time she had sung her last song, she had won the crowd over and got a good loud round of applause as she left the stage.

She was singing her last song. Arnie stood quietly ready for his entrance and said to himself. “OK, one more time to resurrect Lucy, but this time definitely for the very last time. Are you ready Lucy?” He heard no voices, “Right then, here we go,” he said aloud.

The applause for Sophie’s performance eventually died down and Harry once again took the stage.

And now Ladies and Gentlemen, the star of our show this evening, and the star you are all here to see, please put your hands together and welcome onto this excuse for a stage, The lovely, the delicious, the very sexy Lucy Las-tic” The music started and applause and cheers filled the room. “OK folks,” said Arnie to his office walls “It’s Showtime, just let me get at ‘em.” He emerged from the office and majestically climbed up onto the stage. His body was full of butterflies. He went straight into his opening number and the butterflies disappeared. Being already very expectant the crowd loved every minute. Each song, parody, and very near the knuckle gag went down with a remembered skill that had simply fitted back into his frame with ease. Arnie did his full 30 minute routine, just like the old days, and went down a storm. They laughed and cheered and shouted and

enjoyed it all. Everything went well or as near as how Arnie had remembered. There was just one sticky moment when Lucy's high heel got stuck in the gap between the segments that made up the stage. Arnie, being an old trouper, made fun of it but in truth he nearly fell from the stage. He was struggling for breath as he took his final bow several times. People shouted for an encore, but that was one thing he hadn't bargained for. He had nothing prepared. He just stood there centre stage and bowed, then bowed again, but the applause didn't stop.

He was expecting to hear whistles and sirens and everything that he had been promised, but there was nothing. He looked all around and waited as the applause continued. There was still nothing, so he held up his hands and then grabbed the microphone. "Ladies and Gentlemen, Thank you," He said.

Just as he uttered the last word, the noise was unbearable, people rushed in and there was uproar. Females screamed. Whistles blew and dogs barked. Men started getting to their feet only to be knocked down again and hand-cuffed. "Sophie joined Arnie on stage, and took the microphone.

"Everyone sit down just where you are, and stay calm," she instructed a number of times. Two uniformed policeman had hand-cuffed Leo and as they were taking him out he turned to Arnie and said, "Ciao for now Arnie," and then added in a gravel voice "I'll be back!" Order was eventually restored and more people were escorted by plain clothed and uniformed police out of the gym. Gradually, the audience got to their feet and slowly left the building.

Unnoticed during the melee and total uproar, Arnie had managed to get back into his dressing room office. Quickly and happily he wiped most of the make-up from his face, slipped off his dress and put on a dressing gown. He then re-emerged into the gym. There were still a few scuffles and officers led others away. Harry turned to Arnie, "That was amazing, well done boss." Michelle nodded in agreement. "Yes, and well done from me too, it all worked perfectly," said Sophie. Arnie sat on a chair, breathing deeply and trying to grasp the whole situation. Leo had been taken away and was now being locked up. Tomorrow, the gym would soon be back in business as usual. He was beginning to see that life would soon be returning to normal, whatever that was. "I think you deserve a big drink," said Sophie, "And so do you," said Arnie. "Your songs were brilliant, so well done to you and all your Special Branch guys."

At that moment, the two cleaners re-emerged into the room to start their work, "Hi you guys, not tonight, leave it until tomorrow, OK?" said Arnie. The cleaners looked at each other, shrugged their shoulders, turned and left. Arnie and Sophie hugged and Harry hugged and kissed Michelle, and then all four had a group hug. "I think its time to boogie the night away," said Arnie and he kissed Sophie. "Come on then, let's go and get a drink, it's my round," he said.

20/9/2020

## *Life with Lucille*

### *Here's Lucille*

---

The telephone rang and slowly he stirred from his slumber. He shook his head then rubbed his eyes. The phone kept on ringing.

Eventually he had returned from the land of nod and rose from his chair. He picked up the receiver in the hall.

"Hello, Granddad?" said a female voice in a mid-Atlantic accent.

"Hello, who's that?" he was still groggy.

"It's me Granddad, Lucille, your granddaughter."

Oh, Lucille my sweet, how are you?"

"I'm fine, and Mum and Dad are fine too and send their love."

"Oh good. Where are you? Aren't you in America?" he asked.

“Oh yes I’m still in America, but I’m coming back for a year at Uni over there, my last year before my degree.”

“Oh that’s nice.” He said with uncertainty trying to sound as though he knew what she meant and added

“Which one?”

“It’s very near where you are, in Southampton. Can I stay with you for a few days? Please?” she begged. “Just until I can arrange something more permanent.”

“No Lucille, I’ve got no room,” he said firmly.

But Granddad you’re on your own in a three bedroom house!”

“No, there’s no room,” he repeated. There was silence for some moments.

“But Pops, you sleep in one, your den hobby room is in the big one and you have one to spare, don’t you?”

“Oh no, it’s full of my junk, I mean, all the things I’ve collected.”

“And things you ought to throw out?” she suggested.

“No, certainly not.” He felt protective towards his precious belongings.

“Ohhhh Popsy....” She whimpered.

He held his voice for a time and then broke the silence, “My neighbour might have a room to spare, I’ll see if she will help.”

“No, Granddad, I want to stay with you, not someone I don’t know.”

He began to panic realising he wasn’t winning the argument.

“But you are only a slip of a girl and I’m an old man. Just imagine what all my neighbours will say.”

“Slip of a girl?” she shrieked, “I’m 22 next year, My teenage years are way behind me now Pops. And Granddad, I’m your granddaughter not your fancy bit of stuff.”

“No I can’t, I’ll have to move lots of my things. It’s too much...” she interrupted him.

“Don’t you mean junk, and am I really too much trouble? And it would be really nice to spend some time with you, really.” She pleaded.

“You always have been my favourite granddaughter, you know that don’t you?” he wanted to try and regain some ground.

“Granddad, I’m your only granddaughter!”

Again there was silence.

“Did you say just a few days?” He began to melt.

“Yes, just until I can get some permanent rooms, maybe at the Uni or nearer to it.”

“Well it would be nice to see you again, it’s been so long since...”

“Oh Granddad, thank you. I won’t be any trouble. You won’t even know I’m there. I leave LA at 2300 this evening and get to you midday your time tomorrow. Can you pick me up from the station? I’ll let you know what time I’ll get there when I’m on the train, I’ll text you.”

The conversation went on for a further 12 minutes. He then reset the receiver and sat back in his favourite armchair, wondering just why he had said yes.

13/12/13

## *At the station*

---

He got out and slammed the car door. As he did the edge of the door grazed his forehead, throwing him backward and he yelled loudly. "You stupid old man!"

he cursed himself. He had just placed the car parking ticket inside, after paying a highway robbers amount. "Six bloody pounds to park for four hours, but I only wanted half an hour. Day light robbery, that's what it is!" He turned and stumbled away looking at his watch and walked towards the station. There was still ten minutes before the train was due. He only hoped it wouldn't be late. Then he re-assured himself that he'd bought the whole car park anyway, so it didn't really matter. The platform was empty and he found the nearest seat. After a short while he began to calm down, and the early evening aromas began to circulate and he felt the chill. His thoughts turned to Lucille. He hadn't seen her for ages. Not a teenager anymore, she's a woman now. Would he recognize her? Yes of course he would, wouldn't he?

He could still see her as the five year old and then ten year old, but now she was no longer a child. His feelings were mixed, and thoughts confused since agreeing to let her stay with him for a few days. It all meant a complete upheaval of his normal routine daily life. How on earth would he handle the situation and this woman living in his house after being on his own for so long. On the other hand, she was his granddaughter, his own flesh and blood.

He was jogged back into the real world as the carriage doors opened and slammed. In the distance, he could see her struggling to drag suitcases from the train. He rushed towards her. She looked up and saw him. They hugged. "Howdy Pops, it's great to be home! How are you?"

"Oh I'm fine, what about you? How was your trip? You must be whacked. Let me look at you."

He stood back and gazed at her, remembering the trips to the beach, the theme park and the fun fair. There was more than the hint of a teardrop in his eye. Now he saw a tall slim gorgeous lady with bumps in all the right places. He acknowledged to himself, yes! she's beautiful.

"Hey Pops what's that?" she asked, pointing to his forehead. He wiped away a small globule of blood, "Oh, it's nothing, but I think I'm dying!"

He chuckled to himself and she ignored him.

"Yes it's been a long day," said Lucille, "I just wanna get some food, a shower and then some shut eye. Is there a McDonald's on our way back?" It was almost five years since her mother and family had moved to the States, so inevitably she would pick up an American twang in her voice, her very grown up voice. To Granddad, she was still a true English rosebud.

He took in a sharp mouthful of breath. He hadn't been in, or wanted to be anywhere near, a McDonalds since his grand children were at school.

Certainly, it was the last place he wanted to eat in now, particularly at this time of night.

"Oh no, I have some food ready to warm up when we get home." His back complained as he tried to pick up a case. "Blimey, what have you got in here?"

The dark blanket of night was creeping up around them as they both grappled with the cases and dragged them to his car. It had started to rain again, and as he tried to get a key into the boot lock, the whole bundle dropped into a puddle. "Oh Bugger it!" he said.

"Granddad!" she exclaimed!

"Oh sorry dear, I forgot you were here for a moment. This car has been fighting me all day. It will not win. If it still keeps giving me grief I shall get a branch off a tree and beat this car senseless until it apologises!" He began to smile and turned to look at her, and they both started laughing. "You've been watching too much TV Popsy!" She put her arms around him and kissed his bald head. Eventually, after lots of case shuffling, all the cases seemed to fit. Then they realised that there in the darkness was one large case still not loaded. Granddad decided to use his factory foremen's head and said "I know." He opened a door and lifted it onto the back seat. "Simple." He said.

"Right then, are we ready now?" she questioned as the rain got heavier and trickled down her face.

"Yep! I think we are. OK, jump aboard."

They took a few moments to settle themselves inside, and he very carefully inserted the key into the ignition and started the engine. They drove away slowly, but once on the open road Granddad put his foot down.

Gradually, the leaves that had fallen on the screen while he waited for her blew away behind them. There was still one leaf that wouldn't budge.

Granddad was getting annoyed at this leaf and then realised he was driving much too fast. He slowed and Lucille gave him a strange look and said, "Ah that's better, let's get back to the homestead in one piece, ah Popsy?"

He still couldn't get his eye off of that leaf. The headlights of on-coming cars made it difficult for him to focus. Then, suddenly, he realised what it was. He instantly brought the car to a halt on the side of the road, and started swearing and cursing more savagely than a battalion of soldiers.

Lucille was shocked!



“What’s up Granddad? Why have you stopped? You must calm down, before you get a heart attack! What’s wrong?”

He said nothing and got out of the car, slamming the door, but making sure his head was nowhere near it as the noise echoed around the street.

He wrenched the plastic bag from under the wiper and got back in the car. Granddad started taking slow continues deep breaths, trying to settle his blood pressure. He handed her the plastic bag. “Oh Granddad, it’s a ticket! You’ve got a parking ticket!”

“I know Lucille, I have got eyes! I paid for a car parking ticket at the station, so why have they done this? I put it up here above the dashboard. Oh it’s gone.” He hurriedly looked around and then down. On the floor was the car park ticket. “What the bloody hell is it doing down there? I didn’t put it there, on top!” He picked it up and sat quietly for a few moments. Lucille said nothing, but reached across and squeezed his hand.

He was almost in tears not understanding why the whole world seemed to be against him, or if not the whole world, then just his car.

“Never mind granddad,” she patted the back of his hand in annoying way.

Then it dawned on him. He decided it must have happened when he slammed the door as he got out. The inside wind pressure must have dislodged the small ticket, and it fell out of view onto the floor.

“Oh Bloody Hell, Bloody Hell, Bloody Hell!” he remonstrated and thumped the steering wheel with both fists.

There was more deep breathing and then Lucille broke the silence.

“There, are you better now? now that you’ve got that out of your system?”

Anyway, I hope so. I don’t want you driving me back to your place, if you’re still in that silly baby mood.” She said in a mocking voice. They looked at each other and found it difficult not to laugh.

He started the engine, and they continued the journey in a very steady manner.

Granddad spoke, “In the morning, I shall go into my garden and cut down a very large tree branch.”

12/8/2014

## *Getting home*

---

The journey continued and the rain started to fall again. A swishing noise could be heard as the car tyres found their way home.

“Oh I forgot to ask,” said Granddad, “How are your Mum and Dad, I mean, Step dad?”

“Yes, they are fine,” she replied with a smile. “They send their love. At the moment they are always in the studio so I don’t get much time to see them. There is so much talent around in LA and they are recording anyone who asks them, just in case they stumble on a superstar!”

“Ah, so it’s a bit like America’s got talent.” He mused.

“Well, yes, I suppose it is, but in a very small way.”

Granddad smiled to himself pleased that who knew something about America.

“So, what are the arrangements going to be?” she asked.

“Hmm? What? Oh yes you are sleeping in my bed.”

For a second she was speechless, and then slowly thought the worst, “Granddad? GRANDDAD!” she said in desperation.

“What, oh no no! You sleep in my bed, and I sleep downstairs in my arm chair.”

“Oh.” She hesitated, “No you can’t do that, that would be so uncomfortable for you, you won’t get any sleep.”

“Yes I will, I have a stool, I can put my feet up and lay out almost flat. I’ve got some blankets to keep me warm. It’ll be fine. I always fall asleep watching the TV anyway, so it won’t be any different. There’s no point in getting another bed, there’s really no room for it, and it’s only for a few days, isn’t it?”

She did not reply. He turned and looked at her and almost hit the curb.

As they drove into a familiar road she saw the house in the shadows of the street lighting. The rain had ceased and the sky had cleared. The roof and chimney stack was silhouetted in the moonlight.

She had been here many times in her younger days and the memory of those fun times brought moisture to her eyes.

“Probably best if you leave most of the cases in the car, just take in the one you will need until the morning. I’ll fetch them all in tomorrow.” He said, as they pulled to a halt by the gate.

Again, she remembered so many wonderful times here as they walked in and through to the kitchen.

“I’ll get the food ready, is a pie chips and beans OK for you?” She smiled and nodded.

“I’ll take my case up, and I need the John, err, toilet, I’ll be right back.”

She left him and he set the oven warming the food.

The bathroom was as she remembered. It was dinghy and grubby and in need of a good clean and redecoration. She didn’t stay there long and took her case into Granddad’s bedroom. She had never been in here before but could have described it without the need.

The bed was small and simple with sheets and blankets. She hadn’t seen sheets and blankets on a bed since she was very young. There was a bedside cabinet with an old brown Bakelite radio on top, next to a lamp. Beside that was a large old brown wardrobe. Everywhere there was a thin layer of dust. She looked around and was deflated at the thought that she would be sleeping here.

Granddad was serving up the food as she returned to the kitchen.

“Sorry about the mess up there.”

“Oh, that’s OK. I’ll have to give you a hand tidying up in the morning.” Knowing that she never did that at home, so the same here, it was extremely unlikely.

“That’s the trouble with cleaning and washing and making beds,” he said, “You do it once and then six months later it all needs doing again, shouldn’t be allowed should it?”

At first she was unsure, but then she noticed him smiling at her.

“Oh Granddad!” she realised he was joking and started laughing.

He tucked into his meal and soon his plate was empty. Lucille, despite her earlier need for nourishment, picked her food and ate very little.

She felt the need to make an excuse. “Oh dear, it’s been such a long day, with all that travelling, I think I’m more tired than hungry after all. I tell you what, tomorrow, I’ll take you out and buy you a meal. It was agreed, and she stood, gave him a peck on his forehead.

“Love you Gramps, Good night sleep tight” she said.

“There ain’t no bed bugs to bite in my old arm chair, that I do know.” They both chuckled and Lucille made her way to the stairs.

Turning back she asked, “Are you sure you are going to be alright sleeping there? I do feel very guilty about that.”

“I’ll be fine, don’t worry, you go to bed!” he winked at her.

She took a gulp and reluctantly ascended the stairs.

Lucille pulled the bed sheets back and then glanced around the room. How she longed for her own room back in America. It was a vast room and decorated to her 21<sup>st</sup> century taste. The weather there meant that only a lightweight duvet was needed in the winter months. Suddenly, she shivered when she noticed cobwebs across the top of the wardrobe. The thought there might be spiders around her suddenly made her feel nauseous. She glanced up at the walls and ceiling and saw no unwanted guests, but was still feeling claustrophobic and unsettled.

This was becoming a nightmare. What next she wondered. Oh my God no, not dirty magazines under the bed, surely? She knelt down and slipped her hand along under the bed, and quickly withdrew it. There was certainly nothing under there except dust. She brushed her hands together and a small cloud of it soon vanished.

“Oh why did I have to bother Gramps?” she wondered but she knew there was no alternative. There was no chance she could ever go home again. Reluctantly, Lucille slipped off her clothes and into a flimsy negligee.

Very soon little bumps started rising on her arms. Once in bed, an unknown aroma from within weaved its way into her nostrils. She pulled the bed clothes up around her and closed her eyes, hopelessly hoping the morning would find her back in her own bed.

11/9/2014

## *The first morning*

---

Lucille woke feeling warm and comfortable and surprisingly to her, she had slept well. She opened her eyes and realised where she was with a jolt. Remembering her panic about spiders the previous evening, she quickly scanned the ceiling and walls around her before moving. All seemed fine, and carefully and slowly she pulled back the heavy bed clothes and slid out to sit on the edge of the bed. A thin shaft of sunlight was seeping through the curtains and she looked at her watch. Lucille was annoyed with herself that she hadn't changed the time when she landed. What time was it? She had no idea, but did it really matter anyway? Soon the chill air began to settle on her skin.

At home in LA she would now be eating freshly cut grapefruit and granola for breakfast and then taking a dip in the pool in the warm California sunshine. The morning would be spent on a cruising drive around Santa Monica and Grand Avenue, but here at Granddad's in England, there were no such luxuries.

She stood and made her way to the bathroom. As she turned the landing corner she saw Granddad sat on the toilet, wearing a string vest and with his underpants around his ankles. He was reading a newspaper.

"Oh Granddad," she gasped loudly, and he looked up.

"Morning Lucille, How are you today? Hope you had a good night."

By then she had stepped back onto the landing and out of his sight.

"What's wrong Lucille?" he asked.

"Granddad you must close the door!" she instructed.

"But I never close it." was his repost.

"You must close it and lock it!" she said firmly.

"But I never close it or lock it. I've no need to."

She thought for a moment and realised, but of course, when he's here on his own, it's true, he has no need to close it or to lock it.

"Hmmm ! OK!" another pause, then she continued. "OK well close it, at least, just while I'm here. That's only right isn't it?"

Reluctantly he agreed, "Yes, I suppose so, I never gave it a thought really, but, yes you're right."

"Thank you Granddad." she replied.

"Lucille." he said,

"Yes Granddad"

"Are you wearing any clothes?"

"Me? Why yes I'm wearing my neg,"

She hesitated and wondered how to answer and then said, "My PJ's!"

"PJ's?" he queried, "Oh you mean pyjamas. Well my pyjamas never looked anything like that whatever it is you're wearing. That looks more like fishing net, and the kind of net that you couldn't even catch dolphins in! It's completely transparent!"

She was beginning to realise he was sometimes prone to exaggeration.

"No Granddad, It's fashion and it's sexy, and what everybody's wearing in LA."

"Really? What even the men? That wouldn't surprise me" he said, "well you don't need sexy here, and very few Brits go quite that far, certainly not in our weather."

Goose bumps were creeping out onto her skin. She looked down and saw two erect nipples needing to be warmed.

"And if you walk about here like that, and any of my neighbours see you as they pass by the window, they'll think I'm running a knocking shop! So you best cover up quick. I'll get you a dressing gown down at the charity shop later."

"Charity shop," she shrieked aloud, "Is that the same as a Thrift store? We have loads of them in the States. But I'm certainly not wearing anything that someone else has worn.

Don't you have any good shops around here? Like Lorenzos or Savannah?"

Granddad smiled, he had the answer, “Yes, there’s a Pound Shop down the road a little way, or a Primark in town, I’m sure you could get some decent togs there! But make sure you get something warm, something to keep the cold out. Something to cover that chest up!” he sniggered to himself.

Her heart sank as she turned back into the bedroom.

She was now desperate for the loo, then she remembered Granddad had an outside toilet, something he called a WC. After dressing quickly, she went down and out into the garden. Then the spider question rose again in her mind. In her youth she had used it often, but never stayed in there very long. But this time, strangely, there was no need to hurry. She re-emerged, relieved and thankful, but now she needed a wash, or a shower, or better still a long soak in the hot bath. Then something large and black caught in the corner of her eye. There was an enormous shed at the far end of the yard. She remembered he had a green house in the past but this giant structure was something new and gaining her curiosity. The door was strongly padlocked and the side window was blacked out. She walked around it to the rear and saw it was so well built to appear almost impregnable. She listened at the door, but there was silence.

Then a naughty thought crossed her mind and Lucille started sniffing the air near the door but there was nothing unusual. What on earth would he want or keep in a shed that size. It’s colossal, almost menacing. To Lucille it looked like a crouching monster waiting to pounce. She wandered back into the kitchen just as Granddad came down stairs. He rushed in looking very flustered and upset, and burst into speech, “How is it you Americans can put a man on the moon in five days, but you can’t invent a non-stick toilet bowl? Now tell me that!”

She looked at him in amazement, “But Granddad, I’m not American, I’m English, this is where I come from!” Realising his silly mistake, he coughed and spluttered and tried to regain his composure then added, “Did you aaaaa, want to use the bathroom Lucille?” She suddenly felt affection for the old man, and then he continued, “Well I wouldn’t go up there for at least ten minutes if I were you!”

16-10-2014

## 5 Breakfast

---

Ten minutes passed, and he said “I expect it’ll be OK to use the bathroom now.”

“No It’s OK gramps, I used your outside John.”

“Did you? Oh dear!” he said with a tone of disbelief and horror.

She looked up and saw him smiling at her.

She was beginning to know when Granddad was joking.

“I’ll have a shower later. Is that rubber tube over the bath your shower?” she enquired nervously.

“That’s it,” he said, “It doesn’t look much but I have adjusted it. You will find it’s like standing under a waterfall.”

She smiled at him, thinking it was another of his jokes.

“So, do you want some breakfast?” he asked.

“Yes please, I am feeling very hungry, what is there?”

“Well, I’ve got some pie, beans and chips left over from last night.”

“No Granddad,” she laughed, “I don’t want last night’s left overs.”

“No, you are right, it wouldn’t be very tasty cold would it?

How about some toast? With or without marmalade. Cornflakes with fresh milk, well it was fresh when it was delivered.”

“Granddad?” She queried.

“It was delivered yesterday, so it’s well within date, don’t worry.”

“Corn flakes, I haven’t had them for years, OK I’ll have corn flakes, but I need a coffee first, just to wake me up.” She yawned.

“Yes, OK, the kettle is filled up, if you just flick the switch, it’ll only take ten seconds.”

She looked at him thinking it would be more like five minutes.

Ten seconds later it boiled. “How can that be, boiling so quickly?” she puzzled.

“Oh yes, I have fine-tuned the kettle so that it boils much quicker and only uses a fraction of the power, saves money,”

“That’s very clever granddad.” She began to see him in a new light.

He made her coffee and then she started on her corn flakes.

Moments later, the cuckoo burst out of the wall clock and a human voice said ‘It’s 9 am GMT’ and then jumped back inside.

Lucille burst into laughter spraying a mouthful of flakes and droplets of milk through the air. “Granddad, Your cuckoo spoke, and it was your voice” she looked at him in amazement.

“Yes, that’s another one of my little tinkered items. I just installed a voice box with my voice recorded with the time and it’s wired to the solar panel on the roof. So it works for free! Just like the heating in the house”

“Oh, you are so clever Granddad.”

She was in thought for a time, and then spoke “Granddad.”

He looked up curious at the tone of her voice. “What have you got in your shed?”

“My shed? Oh, what shed is that?” he was being awkward as he moved to the sink.

“Granddad, you only have one shed in your garden, and it’s a very big unmissable shed. What on earth do you keep in a shed that size?”

He felt a pain in his back. That armchair was not a good substitute for his own soft bed. He dropped a cup into the sink and it broke. “Oh bugger it, now look what you’ve made me do!” he fussed with collecting up the pieces and threw them into the bin, and then sat down to face her trying to find the right words to start.

He took a deep breath and said “Well,…” but before he could add another word the phone rang. He quickly stood up and rushed out into the hall to answer it. She heard as he spoke,

“Oh Angela, what a wonderful surprise. You haven’t phoned for so long I was beginning to forget what your voice sounded like. Yes, she’s here, arrived yesterday.” He pushed the connecting door back with his foot and she couldn’t hear anymore. The last person she wanted to speak to was her mother. How on earth did she know where her daughter was?

After a few thoughts, she realised, of course, this is bound to be the first place her mother would check. Minutes later Granddad reappeared in the doorway. “Your mother wants to speak to you!” Lucille didn’t move at first, then slowly got to her feet and went to the phone. She closed the door behind her so that Granddad couldn’t hear anything.

Ten minutes later she walked back into the kitchen and sat down in silent deep thought. Lucille suddenly burst into tears and he quickly put his arm around her shoulder. “Oh hush now, there’s no need for that!” he tried desperately to reassure her. “Oh yes there is Granddad, she wants me to go back there, back to the States, and there’s no way I am going.” She sobbed into her fingers and he hugged her.

The cuckoo proclaimed another hour. “Well how is your mother these days?” his small talk was ignored. She stood and said, “I’ll go a get a shower, and dress then I have to go into the Uni to register and check things there, and of course, try to organise myself somewhere to stay. And don’t forget Granddad, I’m treating you to dinner tonight.”

“Oh tonight?” he queried.

“Yea, I’ll be home about six-ish.” She said.

“Oh I don’t really like to eat quite so late, it always comes back at me during the night!” he looked worried.

“You’ll be OK, and don’t forget, I’m paying.” She added and ran upstairs.

He heard the shower running, as he washed the breakfast things and looked out of the kitchen window.

“Oh dear.” He thought, “It was always very quiet here until yesterday, until Lucille arrived, and now, I’m all fingers and thumbs.”

He made himself a coffee, and sat in the living room on his makeshift bed, that was usually an armchair. Slowly he began to settle. All was quiet until Lucille reappeared and so did his tensions.

“OK, Granddad, I should be back about six, I’ll ring you on my mobile on my way home, make sure you’ve got an appetite by then.”

She hugged him and kissed his forehead and then she was gone.  
Nothing more was said about the large structure in the garden, for the time being.  
16/1/2015

## 6 Alone

---

All of a sudden there was silence. The whirlwind of the last 12 hours that was Lucille, had gone, and left him alone again. It was as though she had never arrived, stillness and peace.

He sat down at the kitchen table and drained the last drop of his third cup of coffee. His mind was stretching back over the years watching Lucille having to deal with what life threw at her, just as we all have to.

She seemed to cope well with her parent's marriage breakup and seemed to like the new man in her mother's life in America.

Lucille had a strange hairstyle like many youngsters, and he had noticed piecings or tattoos which saddened him.

He walked into the living room. His eye was drawn, like many times before, to the mantel piece and a framed photo of Lucille as a 7 year old. Looking at it, made him feel instantly younger, as he remembered the actual day it was taken. She looked sweet in her school uniform, on that day she played the recorder in the school orchestra. He picked up the frame, kissed the glass. He cursed because the glass was keeping them apart. He suddenly felt empty and tearful.

The photo next to it showed the family on holiday at Butlins with an older Lucille in a swim suit. A twang of chlorine hit his nostrils from nowhere.

He sat in his armchair makeshift bed, gazing at other photos around the room. Each one showed the whole family at various ages over the last 20 or 30 years. As he viewed his picture gallery, he smiled remembering where and when most of them were taken. Wonderful times he said to himself, where did all those years go? Now all he could do was sit here alone.

He began to feel unhappy with tears easing into the corners of his eyes, trying to find the light of day.

He hadn't realised until now that his bladder was jumping about between his hips and bringing him quickly back to reality and today. He stood and made his way up to the bathroom.

As he walked he tried to pull his emotions together deciding to look forward and the thought of their evening meal began to fill his mind.

He walked into the bathroom and suddenly he was gasping for breath at what he saw.

Strewn around on every conceivable possible place were pieces of female underwear. Panties, bras and tights and a few things he didn't recognise. He picked up one, but couldn't figure out exactly what it was. After dealing with the urgent matter he had come here for he decided to ignore the amazing display of feminine unmentionables and turned towards his bedroom. Momentarily, he had forgotten that it was temporarily Lucille's bedroom. Once again he was astonished at what he saw. His precious vintage radio was on the floor and the chest of drawers was covered in all manner of bottles, jars, tubs, sachets and small boxes. He picked up a small bottle, it read Moisturising crème. Then he saw the price label still stuck to it. Even though it was in dollars, he could see that three figures made it very expensive. He took in a large lungful of breath and sighed, and in confusion turned and went back down stairs.

After reading the paper for the second time, he decided to spend some time in his shed. His mind was not on anything he tried to do.

Each wall of his precious den was lined with brackets holding all manner of assorted tools and well stocked shelves filled with boxes containing screws, bolts, nuts, washers, nails and any other possible thing he might need. On the floor were several large items covered with blankets. The mixed smell of oil and petrol dominated and swirled invisibly around him. He picked up part of a vacuum cleaner he had been repairing, examined it from different angles and placed it back on the bench almost without any reaction. He felt lifeless, and numb and lost. He returned to the kitchen and flicked the kettle switch on. He could feel the start of hunger pains,



checked his watch and was surprised it was close to one o'clock. This was his usual time for food, but as they were planning an evening meal, and not wanting to spoil his appetite, he searched in his fridge for a gap filler. Having fed lightly and drunk, he sat not knowing quite what to do with the afternoon.

He woke up several hours later sat in his chair, with the TV on and someone trying to show him how to cook. This quickly reminded him of his evening plans. His watch told him that Lucille's phone call was not far away. He began to perk up and decided he needed a wash and clean-up and then to pick out a change of clothes which didn't take long.

Again he found himself sitting and waiting. Eventually the call came.

"Is that you Lucille?" he asked

"Yes granddad, now listen to me, I can't get back home tonight, I'm sorry, but I've got lots of things still to do."

"Does that mean we're not going out for dinner?" he really didn't want to sound so mercenary and thoughtless, but he did.

"Oh Granddad, drive down to McDonald's and get a burger, we'll have our dinner out tomorrow."

"Are you not coming home then?" he begged.

"No Granddad, I'll ring you in the morning and let you know what I'm doing."

"Tell me now, what are you doing?"

"I can't tell you now, I'll tell you tomorrow, must go now, bye Granddad, love you."

She kissed her phone and was gone.

"Lucille, Lucille,...!" he called but the line was dead.

So what now of Lucille, What was she doing? She only went to Southampton to arrange the rest of her college days. What was the delay? So many questions were flashing through his head.

Suddenly, the thought that she might be in some kind of trouble worried him. What made him think so? Was it the tone of her voice? Or the secrecy of her call? Maybe it was a blood thing? Could it be a kind of family ESP?  
26/8/2015

## *7 Waiting for Lucille*

---

Granddad had spent the night back in his own bed, and was feeling very refreshed. After an hour or two dozing in front of his TV the night before, he woke and realised as he would be on his own in the house, he would sleep in comfort in his own bed. As he slid in between the sheets, a fragrant whiff of Lucille's perfume caressed his nostrils and just for a moment his was transported back over the years to the good old days.

He unbolted the bathroom door and made his way downstairs, wondering why he had bothered to bolt it in the first place.

The phone started ringing, and he almost slipped down the last few steps in his haste to answer it.

Picking up the receiver, he almost sung the words "Lucille, Lucille, Lucille!"

"No it's not Lucille," said a stern voice at the other end, "This is your daughter Angela! Lucille's mother!"

"Oh sorry dear," he said, "Angie, I was expecting her to call, but of course she wouldn't phone me this early, not my Lucille. What time is it with you?"

"LA time is 1am, and where is she? Is she with you?" she raised her volume level in anger.

"Yes she has been here, didn't you know? I don't know where she is right now," he said. "She left here yesterday, saying she'd be back last evening, but then phoned to say she wasn't coming home until today!"

"LA is her home now, so where has she gone."

"No, this is her home," now his voice was beginning to get louder.

And he added "She said she was sorting out her final year at the university."

"Uni, what rubbish! She hasn't been near school or university for at least five years, she's having you on!"

"No she wouldn't do that, not my Lucille", he said trying to sound positive. "She wouldn't, would she?"

"She dropped out of school in tenth grade when she was 16," said Angela, "She has done nothing to support herself, wasted her time waitressing and working in bars for just a few bucks, and getting nowhere! The only

good thing she did was to help out in the studio sometimes, when we needed backing singers. She's got a pretty good voice, but she's a time waster." She said firmly.

"Oh come on now you are being too hard on the girl!"

"She's not a girl anymore, she's a woman now, and has to do something with her life. OK, when she returns tell her she has to phone me whatever the time, day or night, do you hear me?"

"Yes dear," he said in compliance.

"I'll phone you again later!" she threatened

"What time will that be dear?"

"Oh god, why do you have this fixation with time? Later means later, OK, in the morning here, about teatime with you, got it, dear daddy."

"Yes dear daughter of mine!" he replied.

"Fine! Wonderful, OK I'll catch you later, Love you daddy." And the line went dead and granddad stood motionless for a few moments before replacing the receiver and slowly walking into the living room.

The morning quickly slipped by, but there was still no call from Lucille. He had warmed up some frozen food and just sat down to eat when the phone rang. This time, he was careful, and simply said "Hello?"

A voice at the other end said, "Luchiana."

"What?" said Granddad

"Luchiana, she there?"

"What do you want mate, look my dinners getting cold"

"Is Luchi there?"

"Luchi" repeated granddad, "Oh do you mean Lucille?"

"Yes, Luchi" said the accented voice.

"No she's not, and what's it to you mate, why do you want to know, who are you anyway?"

"Want Luchi" repeated the caller.

"She's not here mate!" he shouted.

The caller rang off without a further word.

Somewhat amused and confused he made his way back to his now tepid meal.

As he washed his plate and cutlery, the front door bell rang. He wiped his hands and as he walked to the door, and could see a large shape outside through the door's misted glass. Slowly, he opened the door and a huge well-tanned man with a big moustache said, "Luchiana"

"Oh, was that you on my phone an hour ago? Well now, listen to me. Her name is Lucille, and she's not here. So now you tell me why do you want her?"

"I want Luchi" demanded the big man.

Granddad then noticed two other men standing by the gate speaking to each other in a foreign tongue. Was it Spanish, he wondered? One was equally as large as the first man but the other, was smaller, dressed smarter, wearing a white panama hat, smoking a large cigar and was equally well-tanned. Granddad looked back to the big man in front of him who grabbed granddad's arm and began to get aggressive pushing him back against the door. The thought that he was about to get roughed up by this ugly lump that looked like a giant American wrestler and probably was, frightened him.

The little man stepped forward and pushed the big man out of the way and asked, "Where is Lucille?"

"Ah that's it, you got it right, now tell that big lump of flabby mussel it's Lucille not Luchi or whatever he said. No mate, she's not here, as I keep telling you!"

"I am Carlos, she is my woman, tell her I will return!"

Carlos thumped the big man and the walked away down the path, and all three stood outside looking back.

Moments later they climbed into a people carrier and drove away.

Granddad was trying to understand what exactly was going on. All manner of people wanting Lucille, but she was nowhere to be found.



A sudden shiver made him breathe deeply. The thought that Lucille might be in some kind of trouble filled his mind and he was suddenly feeling scared for her. "Right Carlos" he said aloud, "If you and your thikko minders do come back, I will be ready for you, believe me."

15/10/2015

## *8 Lucille Returns*

---

The day was dimming slowly and surely as Granddad watched his TV.

He wasn't really taking much notice as his mind was still on the events of the day. He had waited for a call from Lucille, but it never came. What can that girl be up to he wondered? He decided that he should have expected a call from his daughter in search of Lucille. However, the call, and then appearance of Carlos and his minders was a surprise and not something wanted. One thing he was sure of, is that if they showed up again, he would be ready for them.

His tummy started rumbling, and his thoughts then tuned to an evening meal. He started mulling over some of the freezer contents in his mind, when the doorbell rang. Instantly the hairs on the back of his neck stood erect. He quickly got to his feet, saying to him-self, 'If this is Carlos and his heavies again, they will be sorry.' From a cupboard underneath the stairs he grabbed a wooden chair leg that he had stored there, ready for any night time intruder and this was a good reason to make use of it. Should he open the door quickly and wide and rush out waving his chair leg, knocking down everything in reach or should he open it slowly and cautiously? How he wished he had fixed a security chain to the door before, but now it was too late. He opened the door slowly.

"Thanks Granddad!" said Lucille as she pushed past him into the house.

"I thought you were going to phone me," he said as he followed her into the kitchen.

"Yes, I did mean to but when I got to the station, I decided it would be much quicker just to grab a cab back here, I've had a busy day, how about you?" she asked.

"Well" he gasped, "Were should I start?"

She gave him a curious look but didn't think he was serious. He was about to recount the events of the day, but she continued.

"Ok pops, let me get a shower and change of clothes and then, as I promised, we'll go out and get a meal, is that OK? You haven't eaten yet have you?" she asked.

"No, I was just about...."

She interrupted his words and dashed passed him.

"OK, give me 15 minutes and I'll be ready, well, maybe 30 minutes." she said as she ran upstairs.

He eased his slippers off and slid into his shoes, and sat waiting for her to reappear.

As they drove into town, she asked, "How long have you had this car granddad? It must be years!"

"Yes, I bought my old Anglia from new, I wanted to call my daughter Anglia, but her mother wouldn't hear of it, so we called her Angela, Oh, by the way, she phoned this morning, looking for you!"

"Yes, I thought she would, I suppose this is the first place she'd look.

I'll phone her later" said Lucille.

"Then I had a very strange call and then a visit from someone called Carlos."

"Oh God No!" she shouted, making him jump, "Not Carlos, here!

Why would he come here, how would he know you, that's ridiculous!

Oh granddad, what happened? Stop, stop, pull over and stop!"

He did as she demanded.

"Did he hurt you?" she asked.

"Well, it almost came to blows, them on me!" he joked.

"But then I gave them what for." He said proudly, trying to bluff his way through the story, "Yep! Don't forget, I'm an old soldier! And once an old soldier, always an old soldier. In the end, they were sorry they bothered me! Very Sorry."

“No!” She gasped aloud. “Are you OK? Tell me, did they hurt you?”

“No, No, I’m alright, but they wanted you, who are they? And who’s Carlos?” he questioned.

“Right! Yes! OK, I’ll have to tell you about Carlos and his wretched empire. He owns property and several bars along the San Diego coast, in Tijuana and Mexicali and Escondido, and thinks he owns everything.” The strange names meant very little to granddad, and she continued “He’s into lots of illegal things, drugs, guns, prostitution and anything else he can make money on.

I worked at one of his clubs as a waitress and then got to sing with the band. Carlos got too friendly. I had a few meals with him but he thought he owned me. We never had sex.”

“Pleased to hear it,” confirmed granddad.

“No, certainly not, but he seemed to claim me, thought I was his property, and I’m certainly not his property! It all got too much after a time and I had to get away, just had too.” She reassured him.

“But I enjoyed the singing, didn’t ever think I could do that, or would.

So I thought about coming back to the UK. I made contact with some musos over here on the internet, and finally decided to do it.”

“What about the University?” he asked.

“Oh Granddad, I’m sorry about that, that was a lie.” She gave him a hug.

“A porky pie, huh” he smiled and looked at her through his raised eye brows.

“So, OK, what are your plans now then?” he wondered as his tummy rumbled and he re-started the engine.

“Sounds like you’re hungry,” she said, “and me too. Where do you want to eat?”

“I haven’t had fish and chips for ages, you know, done properly, real chippy chips and crispy battered cod and a good helping of mushy peas covered with tommy sauce and vinegar.”

“OK OK, Stop you’re making me hungry now. Let’s just drive into town and see where there’s a sit down chippy or restaurant.” He agreed and smiled in anticipation.

After a few moments she spoke. “The guys I made contact with here have been playing the Uni circuit, and have lots of work lined up. They want me to sing with them. We did some recording yesterday, just privately in a London studio.”

“London hey?” he interrupted.

“Yes, that’s why I was away so long, couldn’t get time to phone you.

We are trying to get a label interested in signing us, so need some good demos.”

“It all sounds very well sorted,” he said, “I’d like to hear those demos, what songs do you sing?”

“The guys have written lots of songs but we do some tunes you would know.”

“Pleased to hear it,” he said.

“Oh look Granddad, there’s a place, just back there.” He slowed the car.

“OK, must find a place to park.” He said.

“It’s a fish restaurant Granddad, you do eat fish don’t you?” she asked.

He could see a large plate of food filled with food and held his belly in case it rumbled again.

As they walked to the restaurant, she added, “It’s not exactly a chippy granddad, but it does serve fish, is that OK?”

4/11/2015

## *9 Dinner with Lucille*

---

Granddad stood open-mouthed at the door of the building. “This is very definitely not a chippy, but what is it then? Oh yes, I know!”

“It’s a Sushi Restaurant,” she added.

“That’s Japanese, isn’t it? Phew! They were the enemy in the last war” he protested. She ignored him, grabbed his arm and pulled him in through the door.

Immediately, a woman dressed in a kimono walked up to them. Granddad took a defensive backward step.

“Konnichiwa,” she said and motioned them both to follow her. As they walked he held back walking slower, gazing around at this brave new strange world. Oriental music was playing quietly, and as he passed each of the

customers a different aroma wafted around his nose. There were bright colours and chrome everywhere. Many people were sat at a long bar. On it were numerous plates of food that appeared to be shuffling around the top of the counter.

They sat at the bar, and Granddad nearly fell off the stool but regained his balance and tried desperately to make himself comfortable on his new perch.

“So then, no cod and chips! Hmmm? And don’t they serve and eat raw fish in these places?”

“Yes they do, but you can also get cooked food.” She said.

“But no cod and chips.” He said through his teeth, “Ok I’ll try some of that stuff but what I don’t like then I will spit out!” he stated,

“Oh Granddad, No you mustn’t!” she chastised him, “Leave anything you don’t like and the edge of your plate!”

“Yes dear!” he looked at her with a twinkle in his eye, “yes of course dear,” he said.

“There are no knives and forks” he observed.

“No Granddad, you’ll have to use chopsticks.”

Granddad stabbed and poked at a bowl of Vegetable Yakisoba, which thankfully was noodles and vegetables with a tangy sauce, and he discovered it was almost enjoyable.

Lucille dropped a piece of food from her plate onto his, “Try that” she said.

“What is it?” he said suspiciously.

“Go on try it, you might like it!” she urged.

Slowly, he lifted it in his fingers and started chewing.

“That tastes good, what is it?” he asked.

“Duck Gyoza,” she said.

“Oh! That’s OK,” he looked over at her plate and she added,

“No, you didn’t want anything just now, and now you want more of mine!” she said and then soon slipped another piece of her food into his bowl.

Granddad did try several other items on the menu. Some he left, but much of it he ate. He drained the Kagua ale left in his glass, and surprisingly felt that his belly was full.

As he stood, he staggered a step or two, “Oh,” he gushed, “That beer has quite a kick, and now I’ve got to drive home.” He wasn’t looking forward to the prospect.

The journey back was uneventful, except for a few moments when Granddad realised he was driving down the wrong side of the road. Lucille said “They drive on this side in the States!” and he soon corrected his aim saying, “I’d best not try any of that ale again if I have to drive!” and they eventually arrived home safely. He led the way to the door, still talking about his new experience and the food they had eaten, when there was a scuffling noise behind him.

He turned and was shocked to see Carlos grinning at him, and Lucille being restrained and man handled by one of his heavies. The second heavy pushed Granddad back to the wall. Lucille struggled but could not get free.

“Hey, let her go you fat lump of useless waste....” Granddad said to Lucille’s captor without being able to finish his description. Carlos grabbed Granddads coat twisting it and pushing him back again. His head hit the wall hard and his temper was ignited. Where is that chair leg, he wondered, but it was well out of reach.

“Lucille is coming back to America with me, she is my woman and there is nothing you can do to stop this! Understand old man?” said Carlos.

Granddad soon began to appreciate that at this moment there was little he could do. Carlos turned, walked away followed by the two heavies and a wriggling Lucille. They pushed her into a nearby car and within seconds sped away into the darkness.

Granddad’s mind was racing haywire, not really knowing what to do next. How to deal with this so unlikely situation was something he never thought would ever occur. He fully accepted that at his age, he was in no physical match for the three of them. He wondered where would they have gone from here, how could he follow them. They are more than likely going to be heading for an airport. But surely they wouldn’t be able to get on a plane, Lucille wouldn’t have here passport with her? Or would she? No, the best option was phone the

police. He straightened his coat and shirt and made his way into the house. Quickly he dialled 999. A voice answered. "Police, ambulance, fire, which service do you require?"

"I need the police, quick, my granddaughter has just been kidnapped by three foreign louts and their on the way to the airport by now I expect!" he hurriedly blurted into the mouthpiece.

"Calm down sir and let me have the details, you want the police, OK, but first I need your name."

"Cromwell" said Granddad

"First name sir?" said the voice.

"Oliver"

"Sir, is that really your name or are you just wasting police time? If you are I shall ring off."

"Yes, that is my name, well OK, my given name is Arthur, but everyone calls me Oliver! Well they would wouldn't they! Now come on, I need the Police urgently!"

"And your address sir?"

He gave it.

"Your date of birth sir?"

"What? What's that got to do with it? Is this a joke?"

Granddad's voice and blood pressure was now at a high level. He was almost on the point of bursting, and slammed the receiver down violently and squashing his thumb in the process.

He took a deep breath and then decided he had to take matters into his own hands. Certainly he was no match for them physically, so what could he do? He sat on the bottom of the stairs holding his head and then after a brief eternity, he stood up excitedly and smiled.

"Yes! That's it!" he said, "There's only one thing I can do, It's time to bring out my babies, my sweet sweet little babies, my babies with a punch!"

19<sup>th</sup> November 2015

## *10. The search for Lucille*

---

Lucille struggled but Carlos' and his two heavies were sat each side of her in the back of the car and they were much stronger than she was. "Let her be," shouted Carlos and the heavies held her still.

Millions of thoughts were rushing through her head, but first and foremost was how to get out and away from this car. Where would they be taking her? Do they have a place to go to, or maybe they are heading straight for the airport and back to the USA? Her mind was jumping with all the possibilities but she was very aware that right now she was unable to escape.

Back at the house, granddad opened up the double doors of his shed and then backed his car up to it as close as he could. Inside the shed there was a large shape covered with a tarpaulin. He pulled this away revealing a trailer, which he eased forward and hooked it onto the rear of the car. He lifted the lid of the trailer and looked in. "Right!" he said "It's time for action!" He closed the lid, jumped into the car and drove out onto the road. He moved down the street and out onto the dual carriageway, slowly increasing his speed. "This must be the route they took" he decided with his fingers crossed as he drove towards the town.

There was little traffic about at this time of night. After about a mile he passed a stationery car. He noticed two people appeared to be changing a wheel. As he sped on, his mind set on the route to the airport, and then it suddenly dawned on him. "That's them back there," he shouted aloud, "OK Carlos, get ready for war!"

He turned the car and trailer around with some difficulty but was soon heading back. He stopped about 50 yards from the broken down vehicle. Granddad reached over into the back seat and grabbed a large plastic box on which were dials, buttons and knobs and two chrome levers. He pushed a button and the lid of the trailer lifted open. Another button was initialised and he pulled slowly on a lever. From the trailer a drone began to lift into the air.

He manoeuvred the drone to and fro, testing it in the dimness but it was fully obeying his every command.

He sent it forward and as the two heavies heard the whirring of the motor they turned to look up. They stood motionless, just watching the object as it hovered close to them.

One continued with the wheel changing as the other reached into his coat and pulled out a gun.

The drone swiftly moved directly above them both and from its underside a net sprang open and dropped onto both of them.

As its edges hit the ground it tightened around their legs and as they struggled and fell to the floor granddad smiled. "Take that for starters," he said and added, "Now show yourself, where are you Carlos."

He had been driving and climbed out of the car and then pulled Lucille from the rear seat. Carlos stood holding her like a human shield facing granddad. He was not phased and initiated the lift off of his second drone, as the first returned to its home base in the trailer.

Carlos reached into his coat feeling for his gun, but Lucille took advantage and struggled to get away. She was grabbed again by Carlos but the gun fell to the road. The second drone was now hovering close by, Carlos and Lucille looked up at it. Suddenly, the drone swooped down and grazed Carlos on his cheek.

"Listen to me old man" he shouted, "You will not get Lucille back, she is mine and now she is coming home to Mexico with me!"

"That's what you think, you stupid wetback. It's just you who needs to go back across the water or better still under it," shouted granddad.

He pushed another button and then eased the lever back. The drone had shot past the struggling couple and as Carlos was wiping blood from his cheek the drone returned and hit him squarely and hard on the back of his head.

He fell to the ground, unconscious, and Lucille ran quickly to her granddad. As she did, they could hear a police siren in the distance.

"Quick, get in my car," he said and guided the drone back into the trailer, and closed the lid. They moved off slowly just as a police car arrived and seeing the body in the road, the police stopped close by it.

Granddad and Lucille managed to slip away unnoticed and headed back to the house.

Now, late into the night, Lucille went straight to bed exhausted and granddad settled down in his favourite armchair. Early in the morning as Lucille was walking down the stairs, the phone rang and she picked it up.

"Hello" she said cautiously, it was Angela.

"Is that you Lucille? What are you doing over there? Why didn't you tell me you were going back there? When are you coming back to LA?" her mother interrogated her.

"Mum, Mum, enough, too much" she protested, "Enough questions." Slowly Lucille recounted the events of the previous evening to her mother.

Granddad walked into the hallway and said, "It's on the TV News, three men arrested, one taken to hospital, all three charged with being illegal aliens!"

Lucille smiled, "OK mum, I'll phone you this evening. I've got a busy day lined up so I need to get myself organised."

She said her goodbyes and, with granddad, headed for the kitchen and some breakfast.

"OK Granddad, I think that as you came to my rescue last night like a knight in shining armour, you have earned a beautiful and proper English 'Fish and Chips' meal, so tonight,..." He interrupted her.

"No, no, don't promise that" he said, "Let's just wait until you get back. I know the very place to get some tasty fish and chips with pickled onion and vinegar, just the way it should be! No more of that Japanese mush."

She hugged him and kissed his forehead.

"Now tell me what are your plans for the day?" he asked.

Before she could speak, the phone rang again. "If that is your mother back on to you, I shall disconnect that phone!" he said loudly.

After a moment he returned to the kitchen, "It's someone called Mrs Hernandez, do you know her?"

"Oh no," gasped Lucille, "That's Carlos' wife."

10/3/2016

## 11. Lucille's gig

---

Lucille returned from the hall into the kitchen. Granddad gave her a curious look, anxious to know what was said.

She saw his concerned look and said, "No! It's alright, She's Ok, in fact she's a honey. She's just flown into Heathrow. Come over 'to rescue Carlos' as she put it. Apparently, he and his minders have been taken to a police station in London ready for court in the morning, and although they have permits to be here, they are being charged because they had fire arms. How they got them into England is something we'll never know. His wife said the authorities are just putting them all back on a plane to the States in the morning, to get rid of them quick. She's here to ensure that they all get back there without anymore,.... Well, I won't use the words that she used, but it has to do with spherical items in the air. To be honest, she is the boss. Carlos runs everything, and thinks he's the king, but no, he knows who the boss is and that's his wife Maria."

"OK," said granddad, somewhat relieved to know that everything was still under control of some kind and no one was likely to be knocking on his door again soon. "Time for a cuppa," he suggested. "Yes please granddad, and I did promise you a proper fish and chip dinner didn't I? So tonight we will find a place and fill your belly with your hearts desire." He smiled and his mouth watered as he filled the kettle.

Later that evening, they sat in a splendid restaurant called Old Mother Riley's and they both ate their fill, the sun was setting as they looked out across a bay to an old castle in the distance.

"Granddad" she said, "I mentioned that I have joined up with some guys in a band over here, and we have our first gig on Saturday, Would you like to come along?"

"Oh Yes!" He said with conviction, "But of course, yes. I'd love to see my little Lucille singing with her new friends in the band. This could be the start of a brand new career for you?"

She handed him an ear piece that was wired to her mobile, and he heard one of the tracks they had recorded a week earlier. "Wow, that is good, you've update an oldie, I remember that tune the first time round! WOW what a voice you have too! I would never have guessed that. No one in our family has ever been the slightest bit musical until you. "What time do you have to be there and where is it?" he asked.

"Oh yes it's in a pub not far from here, in Waterlooville. The pub is called 'The Dive' and apparently they have a big room and regular music nights. The guys will get in the early afternoon and set up the gear and me about four for a sound check, run through some tracks and then get some food. We play at about 10pm.!

"Oh dear," said Granddad," That's very late isn't it? I'm thinking about bed by then."

She laughed and suggested, "Tell you what I'll do granddad, I'll get our roadie Zack to pick you up at about eight, and I suggest you have a forty wink session in the afternoon, so that you are wide awake and raring to go by the time we start. We are only doing an hour. We don't have too many tracks in our play list yet."

"You mean songs in your repertoire don't you?"

She smiled, "Yes that's right pops!" she added.

The gig and their music was well received by the crowd, encores were demanded, and they repeated several songs. Their review in the local paper praised their performance and a London agent was in the crowd. Many more gigs were booked and played. Lucille became very friendly with one of the band and they toured the country for well over a year. A number of their recordings edged into the charts and radio play lists and eventually they made enough money for her to open up her own pub restaurant here in England.

One of the menu options was fish and chips and of course granddad often called in for a free dinner.

29/11/2017



Another Epitaph

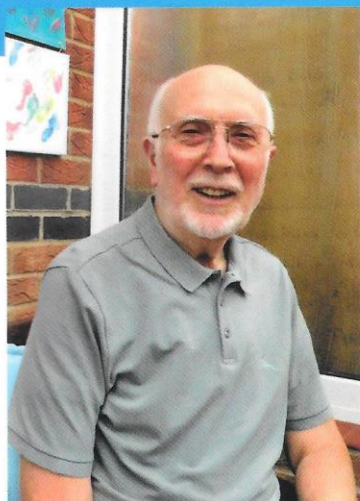
Bury me deep below my lawn  
So the fox can wee on me,  
The birds can peck it me,  
Worms can crawl through me,  
And the rain will fall on me  
Just like life as I knew it.  
And then the sun, the glorious  
sun can shine on me  
And there I will wait patiently,..  
For You



Here are a few more of my *Six Minuet Stories* and other writings. They were all written over recent years, with the incredible help of Charlotte Comley and the *Writers@Lovedean*.

I have many interests, music and football and a few more, but sitting down to write a story, or poem or a song lyric is an easy way to relax and enjoy a little escapism.

I hope you will enjoy your journey through this book and I manage to keep your interest until you get to the end.



*Moyhill Publishing*  
www.moyhill.com

ISBN 978-1-913529-83-3



9 781913 529833