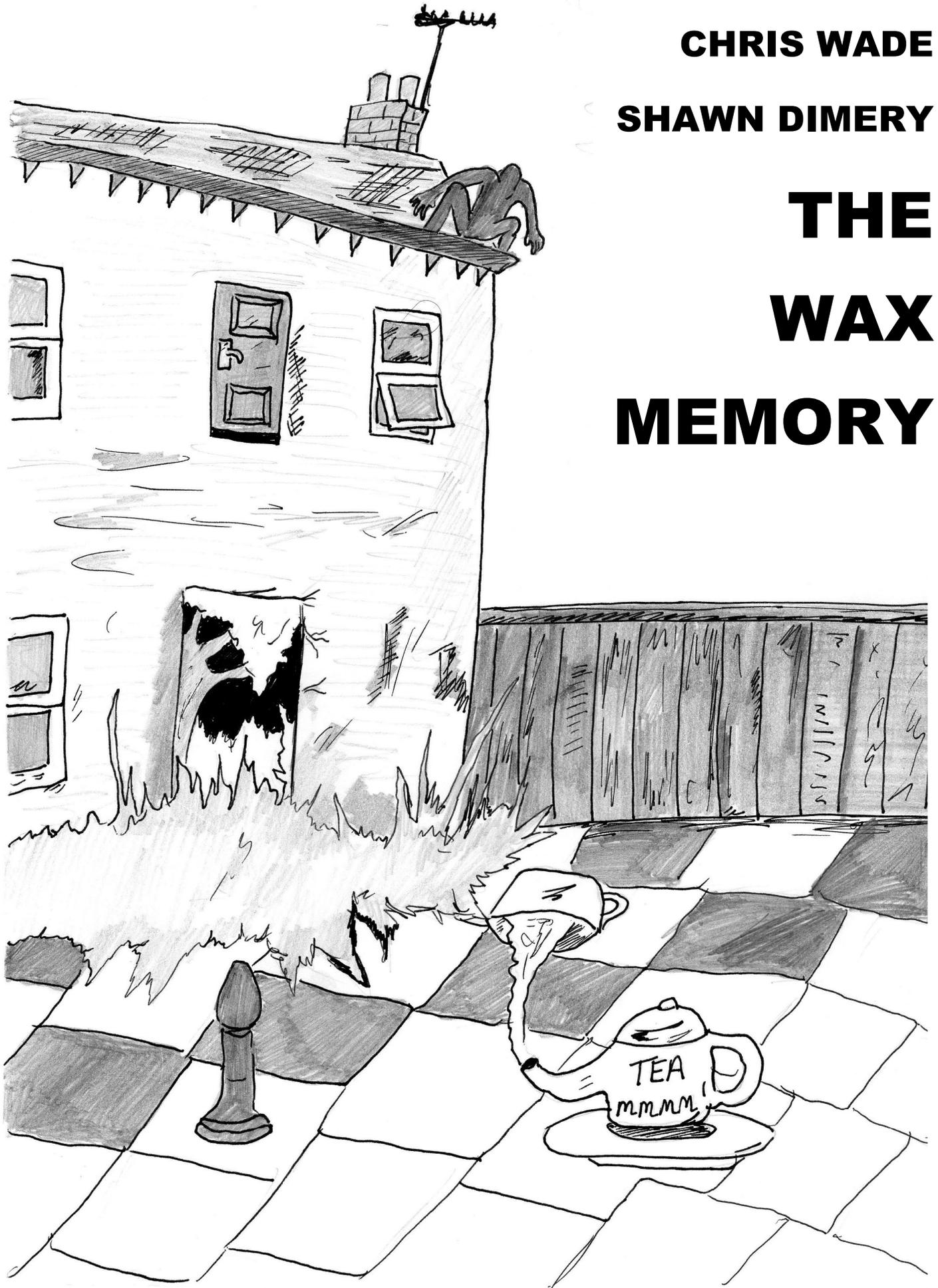


**CHRIS WADE**  
**SHAWN DIMERY**  
**THE**  
**WAX**  
**MEMORY**



**WISDOM TWINS BOOKS**

**WT011**

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## INTRODUCTION

The tales in this short story collection all seem to share the same common themes; family, trust, loyalty, disloyalty, responsibility, uncles, brothers and people with pissy little eyes. All characters in this collection are entirely fictional, although some have been totally and directly lifted from reality, including their faces, ears and man voices. Most of them were written in a haze of Elliot Gould memorabilia and salt addiction, but others were penned in the mid afternoon air. No, enough of this, it's time for a proper introduction to put the horny readers into the right mind set and mood.

Honestly though, *The Wax Memory* was written and compiled between June and August 2010, by Chris Wade and Shawn Dimery. Dimery has known Wade for ages now; in fact they have been chums since they were both no older than 6 or 7, when they met at primary school. They didn't get on at first but soon became close friends all the way through secondary school. When they left high school, Wade and Dimery didn't see each other for a couple of years but in 2003 rekindled their unique friendship and have remained good buddies ever since; from those crazy drinking times in their teens, through the difficulties of eating porridge and the storminess of everyday life, all the while being stared at by a burned frowner and a frozen dog. They share a passion for music, humour and film and have finally put down their ideas into the downloadable short story collection, *The Wax Memory*, the first in an ongoing series of surreal tales.



## **The Nanna Home**

**By Chris Wade**

**The following notes are transcribed from reports on the progress of former patients of The Nanna Home for the mentally fed up misters.**

**I, Dr Bread Throat, have visited former patients at their new homes to see how they were getting on in everyday life, reintegrating into society.**

### **INTERVIEW # 1**

**Patient 1: Laurence “The Finder” Skintint**

**Patient 2: Davey “Indigo Boy” Skintint**

**These two chaps are brothers who both got fed up in 1989 and were checked in to the Nanna Home by their uncle, The Bordeaux Bastard in a bid to get them “better or summat”.**

**I visited the boys on a Tuesday morning; it was sunny yet cloudy, rainy yet dry. It was 8:45. I had my eggs Benedict beforehand.**

**I sat myself on the sofa, beside a browning oat jacket and the boys sat before me, both in their custom made arm chairs with their names sewn into them. I noticed Davey had very pissy eyes this morning and Laurence had a really icy face.**

DR: So boys, how are you feeling after being out in the big wilderness of life for 2 weeks? Settling in OK?

LAURENCE: Well they were going OK to be honest, until Davey tried to eat my arm. The sinner wouldn't give up chewing. In the end I had to set fire to his face to get him off. He was relentless, Doc.

DAVEY: Ignore him Doc, he's being an oddo get, as per usual. He's been nothing but a rude lad and a general drama queen since we were set free. He upset Mrs Thickle yesterday too.

DR: What did he do?

LAURENCE: I did nothing to Mrs Thickle. She brought it on herself. I was merely rising to her bait, as I always do. I ended up putting her into a full Nelson. It wasn't even my fault, it was all the others.

DAVEY: Yes, yes, yes. Blame it all on the others Laurence, you bigoted ape lad. You're gonna blame it all on your Bastard then I suppose?

LAURENCE: Oh here we go again, bringing the Bastards into it. My Bastard has a lovely face and would never curl a cleaner like you said he did. Your Bastard used his man voice to shout obscenities at that measuring sod down the road and he upset him in his tears. His man eyes had sadness in them.

DAVEY: Don't you dare mix fucks about my Bastard! My Bastard is really nice. The poor bloke gets a solid bread chest after eating oats and wheats. Leave him alone, he has seven allergies. The poor, poor Bastard.

DR: Wait a minute! Wait a minute! What's all this about Bastards? What on Earth are you two talking about?

DAVEY: We're talking about our Bastards. Don't you have one? Gees, get with the program doc. Bastards are useful, aren't they Laurence?

LAURENCE: Yeah, they get shopping, do chores, chew meat, deliver the grabby goods, post the entry forms, align all da checkers and all sorts of useful stuff. My Bastard loves people and animals or summat.

DAVEY: What a load of rubbish. Your Bastard has never done a kind deed for another. All he does is make folk fed up in their faces and necks. He is a villain, your bastard. My Bastard used to fear your Bastard in the 70s, but now he realises he poses no real threat. He's just a useless, spiteful nothing with a nose and noisy voice gas. Now my Bastard, there's a good soul. My Bastard helps with old Kleggo's budget, drives the sentence plough, divides the fishy order voids and peddles up reference seeds for unlawful grammar boys. You're gonna tell me that isn't a good old Bastard?

LAURENCE: A pack of shit you just catapulted into my zone of understanding. The Doc knows of your lies too, Davey. My Bastard tried to get your Bastard a birthday card and your Bastard spat vodka at him and called him a doomed fella.

DAVEY: Your Bastard is full of cassettes, desks and painted swamp Smiths. How could you fall from his mountain of lies, straight into the lagoon of deceit that it is his man voice? Every word is a lie. My Bastard was working out nasty arguments with the Peepers, who had done some nasty silk top gropes. My trusty old feminist Bastard helped free the orphans of the knee home and assisted them in their drunken grasp of Daddy's weird rage, where he was silent and hungry for someone's neck to bleed. My Bastard is worth ten of your pitiful Bastard. He taught me so much about not relying on Gold Hope Gold, and freeing the swan within, by pouring whippet drainzzzz into your wobbling swallower. Shame on your snaily Bastard!

DR: Now now boys, can we calm down a little!?! I don't think all this talk of Bastards is very healthy. I came to see how you are getting on out in the world, lets concentrate on that.

LAURENCE: Well I would Doc, but my so called brother brought it all up, out of the sand of worry which I have been attempting to flatten with stern foot stomps. My Bastard is really nice or summat, I can tell you that with my big hand on my lung. You should meet my Bastard, he would get on well with you and do kind things for you, like buy you a prezzy, ride a sex wave with you, smoke the poor girl and her mantled shins and then buy you an ice cream while acting like a swine on the peer with you.

DAVEY: Dr, turn away quick and don't look in his eyes. His lies are big and swelling more by the sigh of a sprinter. He lies, and he does it to protect the dignity of his Bastard. MY Bastard was friends with Nostradamus and tried to

get him out of predicting the tragedies of the future. Instead he helped him focus on everyday things like salto, yachts, a digger, DJ Polar Bear, Biddady Didd and a growing affection in the North for something that resembled oak frogs. Listen Doc, there aintant nothing good about my brother's Bastard. Don't fall for his fuck and gropes. He's a sex hound of the highest menu poach. You let your guard down for one second and Laurence's Bastard will alter the sea bagel hunt and rape your face parts and inner demon veins.

DR: Look lads, I think I may have a problem here. You guys don't seem to be settling back into life too well. Maybe a few months back with me at the Nanna Home would be good for you? I may have let you out too early I think. I'll sort the paper work out with your uncle now.

DAVEY: No doc. We're OK. We're doing well, honest. Well, I'm doing better than Laurence, but we're both settling back in. I had a job interview last week.

DR: Oh wonderful. Where was the interview?

DAVEY: At Webbo's Rug Cafe. It's a lovely place, where all the guests sit on rugs and wish for things, rubbing a genie's lamp. Most wish for coffee, some wish for tea, others for sexy Bartholomew's Tusk dance. They don't get it.

DR: So how did the interview go?

DAVEY: Quite well. I kissed the interviewer full on the lips upon arrival, then called her a bus wonderland. She was puzzled and her frown made me cross. I got angry at her and poured dreadful treacle on her tits. I was exited from the building by two burly staff members with moustaches and a look in the eye that told me they liked films. I still haven't heard back but I've got my fingers crossed up like sexy snakes or summat. My Bastard tells me to remain hopeful. 'Keep your chin up. It's gonna be OK guy,' says my Bastard with his warm vocals and sweet sensual pat pats on my backywack.

LAURENCE: You know you're not gonna get that job 'cos you're nothing more than a drunken, Swedish oaf. My Bastard saw your interview and said you were terrible and laughable. You are a sleazy tool Davey and I think the Doc should take you back to the Nut house 'cos you're a prize A fuck nut. I can stay here and rip up all your belongings as you bounce around your padded cell like the wank chops you are.

DAVEY: At least I got a job interview Laurence, it's more than you could do. You're a useless, clunky, clumsy, clam fisted, pissed up communist with a face like an undiscovered planetoid. I hate your cunt face and all you stand for you post modern, flask jiving, free wheelin', ale supping, comma using, Michael

Douglas loving, dish washing, pleb office tea boy. You're a Grade A nonse and I think I want you to die in a pool of your own vomit, which you will the way you drink. You and your Bastard are always out in the alleyways, glugging down cheap bitter till your eyes bleed froth, and your noses drip with sweaty guilt of the highest porn degree. You are so pissed all the time you can barely stand up, you have to slime around the place on the floor on your shameful pot belly, sliding round in your own piss and drool. The jealous leakage from your fuck holes is the only thing that keeps you moving, other wise you'd be totally still and stuck to the spot, you cunt faced hermit. You cry vodka and swear at rats, you fucking insane freak. How can you insult me? At least I gave it a shot, unlike you, partying and swearing with your Bastard until the early hours, like a penny mouthed art controller. You failed play critic you!

LAURENCE: I have one question for you Davey boy; what would you rather do, go make a twat of yourself at an interview where your Bastard ruins it for you by pouring fuck hopes on the interviewer or hang around in an alley getting blasted? I know which I would prefer. At least I got nothing to lose and have no real aims in life but to upset everyone around me and get so off my face I don't know who or where I am or summat. Me and my Bastard spoke of you today and decided that you, my ex brother, are nothing but a twisted, deluded, pissy eyed, wanky toothed peeping tom. You little creep, how we laugh at your misfortune.

DAVEY: Oh how original. Laurence and his Bastard resort to childish name calling. I wanted to get out of he-

### **INTERVIEW TERMINATED**

**N.B. At this point I decided to suspend the interview and set the wheels in motion to get the siblings back to the Nanna Home. The boys tried to fight and were dragged inside by the big orderlies. Davey was heard crying out: 'I want to be part of society again!' as he held on to the door frame, his nails digging into the wood. Some of them snapped off. Alas, it cannot be.**

**A week later, Laurence bit off Davey's ear in the TV room. When asked why he did it, Laurence replied his Bastard did it, not him.**

**Staff have yet to see any physical presentation or proof of the existence of the so called Bastard.**

**THE END**

## **Vibby Tuggit and the Loud House**

**By Chris Wade**

Vibby Tuggit had an old fashioned face and he knew it. Every morning he would stand in front of the bathroom mirror for long periods of time and stare at his antique features in bewilderment. His thin, boney cheeks and his pissy little eyes, along with his wanky ears, made it clear that he had the face of a shagged out old landlord even though he was only 34. He would be there of a morning, attempting to reverse the rapid aging of his small head. He tried women's foundation but that made him look like a slimy otter. He also tried a baseball cap but that made him look like an ancient old yank on a day out from the home, on his way to his last ever Super Bowl match. He could never find a way to make himself look younger, so he accepted the fact with a fed up sigh that he had an old fashioned face.

He slid into his clothes every morning; a brown robe and black boots, along with his black gloves. His work was only a five minute walk away and this was the one sole advantage of his job. In fact, the way he made his living made life very difficult for Vibby Tuggit. You see, he was a bell ringer at the town church and would ring the said bells on the hour every hour on a 1 till 1 shift, alternating with the night bell ringer, Bill Tits. Sounds OK right? Well, unfortunately, Vibby hated the sound of bells. In fact the sound of bells made him gip and feel all sicky and some said he was actually allergic to them. The start of a shift would be pretty easy; 1 ring of the bell for 1 o clock. It still made him gag but the singular ring was never enough to induce proper vomiting. 2 o clock was the same, but the second ring of the bell would make the gag just a little bit more painful. By 6 o clock, Vibby was being sick quite a bit and by the double figure hours, he was projectile vomiting all over the walls. At 12 of each night, he would almost die, as the sick would come out of his nose as well and it would run out of his mouth like a vile river of carrots and slush. The vicar would have to come up and wipe his choppies clean with a hanky, which was nice of him really. By 1 o clock, the ring of the final hour, relief was all over Vibby like a rash of dying desperation. So, he would leave the church at the end of his shift, all grey faced and clammy like a proper poorly fella. Through the streets he would go, shaky legged and blurry eyed, towards his humble abode. Then he would slide into bed like a fucked up drooly snake and fall into a disgusting wet night's sleep. He would not awake until the next morning, normally an hour before his working shift.

This happened all the time, as Vibby worked 7 days a week. He had to really, as his rent and bills were quite high and the wage at the church was fucking terrible; something like 3 quid a day and an orange for afters. Also, there were no other jobs in the town at all. It was a small village and most people who lived there had been born there and had inherited family businesses. There were simply no vacancies any where. The town did have a job centre, but it was a totally pointless place as no jobs ever came up.....EVER! It had one staff member, Manny Mop, who sat behind the desk all day, doing sod all with a face like a beaten ball bag. The boards never had any jobs on them and every time a depressed, out of work towny came in to check out the job situation, they were told 'no jobs today' by Manny in a monotone mumble. It was a horrible, shit place. So, Vibby had no choice but to stick with his ridiculously risky job and was sure that one day he would die there.

Mid week, Vibby had arranged to meet his friend in the local pub, My Dad's Coccyx, at 11 in the morning, two hours before the start of his working day. Vibby arrived, looking like a total shit bag; his eyes were at the back of his head, all tiny and pointless, while his skin looked glow in the dark. He stumbled inside, looking desperately fed up and pathetic.



'Vibby!' called his friend, Lukey, who was sitting in the corner at a table, a pint ready for his good pal Vibby. Vibby saw him and shuffled over like a war damaged spider. He took a seat, plonking himself down like a man who knew he was about to die and so decided to buy his own coffin and dive into it to get it over and done with. 'Wow, Vibby you look terrible,' he said.

'I feel it,' he mumbled in the crappiest voice you ever heard. 'It's this blasted job, Lukey. I can't do it anymore. It's gonna kill me.'

'You're working too hard right?' asked Lukey, passing his knackered friend his drink. Vibby tried to grab the glass, but his hand went right through it. My god, he was just so fucking tired.

‘It isn’t just the hard work,’ Vibby moaned, giving up on supping from the drink and instead passing some spit around his gob and drinking that instead. ‘It’s the bells, they’re making me sick. It’s definitely doing me harm.’

‘Why are you allergic to the sound of bells, Vibby?’

Vibby gave a deep sigh and leaned back in his chair, as the sweat dripped out of every hole like sewage grot.

‘I first became a bell ringer in the late 90s when the old bell ringer left town to pursue a career in the crab trade. I took the position immediately and began working long shifts every day of the week. At first I really enjoyed it. I loved the robe I got to wear, and the boots, but I also loved the sound of the bells. I just adored getting up there, climbing the steps up to the tower and ringing the bells every hour. And seeing all the town folk, looking up to the sound of the bell, ruled by time, a time which I got to keep. It was up to me to make sure they finished their dinner hours and got back to work on time, to ensure they didn’t miss an appointment at the dentist and to make sure everything was running punctually. Mother lived with me in those days and every day she would make me a packed lunch, usually containing Malt Loaf, a bruise and chunks of boats. Well, one day, I had slept in a little and had to rush off to work. I rushed off so quickly in fact that I didn’t even pick up my packed lunch. Anyway, I got to work and was feeling a tad tired and crusty, like a junk dog or summat, and I rang the first bell of the day at 1 o’ clock. But, in the most badly timed moment there could ever be, mother came running towards the church, packed lunch in hand. “Vibby!” she called in desperate kindness. “You forgot your packed lunch.” I was about to tell her that I would be right down to retrieve the said din dins, but before I could do so, I noticed the huge 14 foot bell had come loose off its rope and after a second or two of panic, the whole thing came off. At a frightening, unstoppable speed, it went flying out of the church window and plummeted to the ground below. Only thing was, mother was right in its path. “Mother!!!!” I screamed, holding out my arm. But that was it, the bell landed on her. She was dead.’

Lukey looked across the table with a teary eye. Although they were friends, Vibby had never told him this tragic tale before.

‘What happened?’ his friend asked, with a sad tone.

‘Well, I took a couple of days off to sort things out and returned to work on a Thursday. At 1 o’clock, I went to ring the bell and something had changed. I just began to feel awfully sick. I ignored it and continued in my day, but found that at 2 o’clock the sickness had got a lot worse. As the day went on, I was getting sicker and sicker. By midnight I had been sick a pint and a half of vomit.

I went to the doctors the next morning and he told me that the experience with mother had made me allergic to the sound of bells and every time one rang I would be sick. The trauma has left me damaged and now I have no choice but to ring the town bells. If I were to give up, I would become penniless and homeless, and probably become a tragic drunk fella like old Herby. What else can I do? But I know this job is gonna kill me.'

Lukey remained silent for a moment and then looked to be thinking, his hand on his chinnywin like a ponderer. Vibby, all distant and faded, wondered what his good friend might have on his mind.

'What's up?' Vibby asked.

'Nothing's up. In fact, I have an idea that may just make your life a bit better. Come on.'

Lukey grabbed Vibby by the hand and pulled his floppy body out of the chair. They left My Dad's Coccyx and walked down the street, Lukey leading the way and Vibby following behind, trying to keep up with his friend's speedy, slightly excited pace.

'Where are we going Lukey?' asked Vibby, getting a right sweat on and becoming more than a little worried. But Lukey did not answer.

The pair of them came to a tiny ginnel, a narrow stone walkway about four feet high with tress hanging down low. After reaching the end of this secret snicket, Vibby was surprised to see a woodland area, with a nice cobbled path going down it. He had never seen this place before, as his life for the past ten or so years had revolved around the same bit of area; his small house and the church which were only 5 minutes apart from each other. But Vibby was delighted and slightly confused to see the woods all around him and gazed at the high trees and wild birds with wonderment. It was like a strange dream he had walked right into after years of grey boredom, a breath of fresh air to blow off the grey dust of his repetitive life. Then as he walked, he spotted a washing line that was hanging between two huge trees. On it was a line of clothes; jumpers, sockies, robes and trousers etc. They looked very old, like from the 60s or the 70s, and Vibby wondered for a second if they even belonged to any one at all, or were perhaps just stray clothes that had been put out into the wild after their owners got sick of them. I mean, their colours were pretty harsh and garish, so Vibby knew they wouldn't be making their way to his house, even though he did feel slightly sorry for them. Then Vibby noticed a walking sack just calmly going past him on the pathway. Whoever was in that sack, whether they be small fellas or two babies, were mumbling to each other under their breaths.

Up the walkway, Vibby could see a small cottage, a pleasant looking place with a nice little garden. Only thing was, right next to it was a massive waterfall, which was running full on beside the front window. It was one of the loudest things Vibby had ever heard, this gigantic cascade.

‘This is the Loud House,’ said Lukey, leading Vibby towards the cottage.

‘The Loud House? This is where we’re going?’ Vibby asked, like a confused, slightly excited little kid.

‘Aye Vibby.’

Lukey and Vibby reached the front gate and entered the garden. Down the front path they went, with the deafeningly loud waterfall right beside them. Lukey stopped at the front door and knocked on it. After ten seconds of silence and no answer from inside, Lukey laughed to himself.

‘What you laughing at?’ asked Vibby, his old fashioned face looking sunken and worried.

‘I forgot that there’s no point in knocking on their door. They can’t hear us anyway. They can’t hear anything.’

‘Are they deaf?’ Vibby asked.

‘No. It’s the waterfall you see. It’s so loud they can’t hear a thing in there. I’ll just let us both in. They won’t mind.’

Calmly, Lukey pushed the door open and lead Vibby down the hallway into the living room. In there sat a man wearing slippers, stroking a cat on his knee while watching the TV. The water fall was just as loud inside as it had been outside. The man spotted Lukey and smiled.

‘HELLO,’ he shouted. ‘HOW ARE YOU LUKEY?’

‘WHAT?’ yelled Lukey, moving closer to the chap in his chair just so he could hear his man voice a bit better.

‘I SAID HELLO, HOW ARE YOU LUKEY!!??’

‘OH I AM FINE MISTER MITCHELL. HOW ARE YOU?’

‘I AM GOOD. JUST WATCHING A FILM.’

‘HOW CAN YOU WATCH IT PROPERLY WHEN ALL YOU CAN HEAR IS THE WATER FALL?’

‘IT’S A SILENT MOVIE, NOSFERATU. QUITE SCARY ACTUALLY. THE WIFE’S IN THE KITCHEN. ASK HER TO PUT THE KETTLE ON SHALL I?’

Mister Mitchell stood up and with all his might screamed:

‘PUT THE KETTLE ON MARGRET!! FOUR CUPS’

It was the loudest voice Vibby had ever heard and was surprised a man could make such a loud and clear sound, even over the massive noise that came from the water fall. Then, Margret replied from the kitchen in a high pitched howl.

‘WILL DO. ANYONE WANT SUGAR?’

Mister Mitchell looked to Vibby. Vibby shook his head, as did Lukey.

‘NO FUCKING SUGAR!’ screeched Mister Mitchell. ‘SO LUKEY, WHAT CAN I HELP YOU WITH TODAY THEN?’

‘MY FRIEND OVER THERE, HE’S CALLED VIBBY TUGGIT.’

‘HIYA VIBBY!’ shouted Mister Mitchell, waving at Vibby from his arm chair. ‘HE SEEMS LIKE A JOLLY NICE CHAP. BUT WHAT’S WITH HIS FACE? IT’S VERY OLD FASHIONED ISN’T IT?’

‘IT IS A BIT,’ replied Lukey. ‘BUT HE HAS HAD A STRESSFUL LIFE, THE POOR BLOKE. IT’S PROBABLY AGED HIM. ANYWAY, HE’S LOOKING FOR A NEW JOB AND I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP HIM OUT.’

‘YEAH,’ Mister Mitchell returned, bits of spit flying around the room. ‘I NEED SOME ONE IN THE CELLAR, CONFIRMING ALL THE FISHY ORDER VOIDS.’ Mister Mitchell looked to Vibby. ‘HAVE YOU EVER HAD ANY EXPERIENCE CONFIRMING FISHY ORDER VOIDS?’

‘A LITTLE,’ Replied Vibby, ‘WHEN I WAS A TEENAGER, YES.’

‘EXCELLENT. I NEED SOME ONE FOUR DAYS A WEEK YOU SEE AND NOT MANY PEOPLE ARE UP FOR DOING IT. IT’S HARDLY A GLAMOROUS JOB IS IT?’

‘IT SOUNDS APPEALING TO ME MISTER MITCHELL,’ screamed Vibby, hurting his throat as he shouted out.

Then, Mister Mitchell’s wife Margret entered the room with a tray, on which were four cups of tea.

‘OH, WE HAVE COMPANY THEN DO WE? HOW NICE.’

She put the tray down on the coffee table and looked across at Vibby. Somewhat cautiously, she stepped closer to him and leant over, as if to be studying poor Vibby. Then, she turned to Lukey.

‘IS YOUR FRIEND OK?’

‘YES, WHY?’ replied Lukey.

‘WELL, HE HAS A VERY OLD FASHIONED FACE DOESN’T HE?’

‘HE’S HAD A HARD LIFE APPARENTLY,’ Mister Mitchell cried out, proud to spread the new fact he had found out about Vibby Tuggit.

And so Vibby Tuggit started his new job at the Loud House, confirming all the fishy order voids in the cellar. Vibby loved his new job and was relieved that he didn’t have to put up with all that sickly nonsense anymore and vowed never to go near a bell ever again. How he loved the cellar so much more than the bell tower. It was a little quieter down there, although the water fall was still to be heard subtly in the background, as were the earth shattering yells of Mr and Mrs Mitchell as they went about their loud lives.

**THE END**

## **I Caught Her Gambling For a Daddy Treacle**

**By Shawn Dimery and Chris Wade**

My father was a great man. He was a man with an imagination, an inventive man, an innovator if you like. He single handedly dominated the yoghurt trade in Spennymoor, County Durham. I remember he was quite a local celebrity; he was always on the road, selling his yoghurt and spreading the word of the Crinkle brand. I remember him doing a road show tour in the early 80s when I was a boy. He was in his peak in those days. I fondly remember him waxing lyrical to an astonished crowd at Piece Hall in Halifax, the climax of the tour.

He was never at home much and when he was, you'd find him in the garage, which he had converted into a yoghurt factory; the Crinkle Paper Clip Mill as he called it. I recall the excitement of peeking through the crack, seeing my dad mixing the pre cultured milk into his vat of creation, adding the odd spoonful of Pectin, which formed into various gels, jams and jellies. I recall the bubble of joy in my tum tum as I saw him insert the final ingredient..... Sucralose. I loved the yoghurt world and knew that when I was a man I too would be a man of the yog... a yoggy man, at the helm of the Temple yoghurt, with a gold member's pass for the Hotel Curd.

Dad was always creative with yoghurt, but he wasn't always solely dedicated to that particular area. Apparently in the late 70s, he had toyed with other fermented dairy products; Shankleesh, the Turkish sphere of delight, Smetana (commonly served with Russian pickled cucumber) and of course... Kumis.

But when he knew his destiny lie in the realm of the yoghurt, he was keen to experiment with new flavours. Don't get me wrong, he loved the traditional assortments; peach, strawberry, the odd bit of toffee and fudge, but he knew there were other areas. Those untouched and undiscovered virgin flavours, so unused in the dairy dimension. I remember my astonishment that evening when he gave a presentation in the family dining room, showing us his new brands. It was 1988, I was 17. To me, dad was a hero. He was a maverick for sure, no one had dared to do what he was doing.

'My dear family,' he said, in his great manner, addressing us at the table, pointer in hand and yoggy slide show all ready. You could see the excitement on his face, his glasses steamed up, his armpits all moisty. 'I have gathered you here today to show you the next chapter in the tale of Crinkle's Yoghurt. Here, I have exciting new flavours.'

Dad clicked on the first slide and began. The first flavour was Stressed Follicle. Apparently it was a mix of atmosphere from a shop that was going bankrupt and shavings from a lost turban. Amazing. I had a quick taste, it was frightfully delicious. It was like sucking meat juice off of a hammy leather buckle. We told dad it was great and that he was sure on for a winner. Boy oh boy, supermarkets and shops would snap it up immediately, we were all sure of this. Then he showed us the second flavour; this one was called Brisk Wedge wood. I took a spoonful and my god it was other worldly, a fine blend of bloated canal fluid, carbon walks and fridge filings. The final flavour, we were told, was the best of all, his masterpiece as he called it. It was called I Caught Her Gambling for a Daddy Treacle. And he was right, it was the best of the bunch. It was like fading away into a lost guilty void of yoghurt abandonment. I can't describe it. Quite simply, it changed my life.

We all remember that point in our lives that altered it all, when you know nothing will ever be the same again. For some it's their first dabble, fumble, their first shag, the moment they began to feel like a man. It might be when they graduated for instance. But for me that time came when I tasted that yoghurt.... I Caught Her Gambling For a Daddy Treacle. That was it, my path was decided. I would donate my life to Crinkle's Yoghurt. There was no turning back, literally.

Dad was pleased to hear that I wanted to join him in his business and was instantly encouraging. We went out to town the very next day and he bought me my own tailored suit. In the afternoon, we sat in the cafe, eating biopot to ease our bowels as dad told me the history of the yoghurt trade.

'Son, it's a very complex story that dates back before any of us were born.' he said, 'It started with the yoghurt pioneers, over 5000 years ago. Brave men who challenged the taste buds, expanded the horizons of dairy based products and brought new meaning to the phrase 'tasty'. The very first flavours were pretty basic; your peaches, your raspberries, your figgy. It was all bog standard, yet delicious fare. It wasn't until the 1930s that a few radicals dared to experiment with the yoghurt formula. I say dared for a reason.'

There was a silence and dad's face looked haunted.

'What do you mean dad?'

'Well some folk weren't happy with the rules being challenged. These people became commonly known as ..... the Yoghurt Puritans. They were feared by anyone who even thought about bringing new flavours to the steady market. The Yoghurt Puritans dominated the scene with a stony, silent presence. No one dared challenge them, so the Puritans never needed to speak. They wore ruffled frilled collars, linen mop caps, shit brown slacks, pumps made of potato waffles and long black capes that blew in the wind, even when there was no wind. Some rode on horse back, others rode combat ready chariots. But they all had the same mission in mind; to sustain the yoghurt tradition. Anyone who wanted new varieties of yog, besides the established brands, became a wanted man in their eyes. But it wasn't easy to become a member of the Yoghurt Puritan sect. There was quite a strict initiation ceremony. At first you had to sign up, and a complex application form made from fucking crackers was sent out to your address. It was said that you could only fill it in with margarine. After that, the application was considered and put through a series of tests. The committee had several meetings to consider the potential member and in about a year, they would reply in the form of a wicker bap. Then, if you got a bap back accepting you, you were summoned to appear at their headquarters, dressed in specified rags, yoghurt related regalia. Reportedly, their main HQ was and is situated in a huge barn made of cake and oat wood. Upon entrance, you had to utter the password to the man on the door, which was supposedly as simple as 'I like yoghurt.' Then, you would be sent to the main hall where all the members of the sect were gathered. The head of the Puritans was and is Daddy Treacle, a bearded sod and devotee of the yog cause. He has been the leader since 1939 and is really old. In his time he has campaigned for yoghurt rights, appeared at many social functions and din dins in the dairy inner circle, yet remains an enigma of a man. When being greeted by Daddy Treacle, the applicant must partake in a strange, occasionally degrading series of initiation tasks. Firstly, he has to do the Fandango with Big Foot before copping off with him after too many egg nogs. Then, the next task is a role playing game where the hopeful chap must act like a Bread Bin while established members offer their loafs to him; malt, fruit loaf, granary and mighty whitey. He must accept them, this being one of the key factors of being a bread bin man. The third part of the ceremony requires much effort; you are forced to live like a mole for a week, with blind fold, strap-on knob for a snout and a puddle o' mud to call your home. Fellow members morph into violent beavers to enhance the believability of the task, while others act as game hunters who want to fuck you up and make mole pie out of your face and kill you or summat. If you pass this test, you become a Yoghurt Puritan for life. There is no way out. Then they brand your face with steaming hot yoghurt, and spread it on your skin with a wooden leg. The area is left charred and you are forever recognised as a Puritan.'

I sat in fear as dad told me the tale, the myths and the folk lore of these protectors of the holy yoggy. I wondered if that made dad and me wanted outlaws, for we were on the cutting edge of the new advancements of Yoghurt evolution. We were everything they despised, challengers of the rules that were set into nougat.

'Are they after us dad?'

Dadda sighed and ate some more biopot. The shit lowered in his pappa belly.

'They are. I'm on their red list for elimination.'

I felt saddened at the thought of them catching dad and ruining our bright future.

'What would they do to you dad?'

Dad paused and sighed. He said nothing.

'Tell me,' I pressed.

Dad changed the subject.

'I think we need more yoghurt,' he said, leaving the table to retrieve more from the dairy bar.

Later in the same day, dad and I had an appointment with a large yoghurt company based in Spennymoor called We Got the Tape Measure Blues. They were the leading distributors of cutting edge products and were also on the red list for the Puritans. The head of the corporation was the fuck machine Jim Power and Daddy Treacle wanted his head on a crumpet. They sought out new and interesting flavours. Famously, they had released the much celebrated Generous Goat Beard flavour which was made of Jewish humour, wanky cloth and chunks of cheap video feedback. They were a very exciting company and when my dad informed them of his latest flavour, they were eager to check it out. Dad and me headed to the We Got the Tape measure Blues HQ and stood before the board of directors. The fuck machine Jim Power was at the head of the table, chewing a pen and eyeing us up and down. He looked excited about daddy's presentation.

'Well boys,' said the fuck machine Jim Power, in his thick Texan accent. 'I'm ready when you are.'

He tipped his cowboy hat as dad opened his briefcase and pulled out a sample of his secret weapon, I Caught Her Gambling For a Daddy Treacle. The fuck machine Jim Power liked the bite of the title and its irony. If Daddy Treacle knew that a radical new yoghurt flavour was being named after him he would have shat out audio cassettes of Haircut 100. In other words he'd have been pissed off big time.

Dad explained the appeal of his new flavour and handed a spoon to the fuck machine Jim Power and a beaker of fresh yoghurt. He smirked at dad and took a spoonful of the yog.

'Here goes,' he said, before swallowing it down. For a moment, the fuck machine Jim Power smiled and his face lit up like a Vegas titty bar. He lowered the spoon and leant back in his chair.

'That's the best darn yoghurt I've ever tasted,' he said. His team of ass lickers immediately broke into applause and dad and me stood there proudly. This was our moment. The fuck machine Jim Power stood to his feet and slowly walked around the table.

'That's one great flavour mister. I'm telling you, that stuff will fly off the shelves.'

'He likes it dad!' I said, excitedly. Dad smiled at me.

'This is gonna be the next Generous Goat Beard. It's gonna be huge!'

Dad and me were thrilled to learn that the fuck machine Jim Power wanted 10, 000 pots to start with and he gave us an advance of 1000 pounds to get started. After hand shakes and back pats a plenty, dad and I left the board room as happy as a pair of purring leopards.

Dad and I got in the car, grinning from ear to ear and feeling mighty white about our futures as Yoghurt revolutionaries. We were terribly excited about working for the fuck machine Jim Power. Dad was at the wheel.

'This is great news for us son isn't it? To think, I Caught Her Gambling For a Daddy Treacle will be on the shelves by the end of the month. How amazing is that? We'll be famous in the dairy world, perhaps more famous than my idol, Laffy Fromage "the milk eyes." We might end up with our names on the Spennymoor Walk of Fame, right beside other legends such as Butter Bean

and Dr Cheddar Chops “the cheesy puff.” The press will be hounding us for interviews, surrounding the Crinkle Paper Clip Mill like vultures, wanting a sound bite for the Spennymoor Minutely, the Butter Bulletin Monthly or the Daily Dairy. We is gonna be a success.'

But then, just after he had oozed positive hopes, I noticed dad's face turn sour and drip with grey dread.

'What's up diddad?' I asked.

'I realised that we are out of the main ingredient for the Daddy Treacle yoghurt.'

'Which ingredient dad?' I asked.

'The main ingredient; a minute long recording of the mumblings between a dock leaf, a weed, blade of grass or any similar greenery of the wild. Problem is there is only one field where I can gather a full minute of green mumblings from, the Field of Doom and Shame. The field is owned by.....'

There was a silence and dad's face looked haunted by dairy spirits, lost souls who had fallen into the lagoon of milk guilt long before we both existed. I think I knew just who owned this piece of land.

'Was it-' I said, freezing in fear.

'Yes,' dad replied as quick as milk being pulled from a cow's fucking udder. 'The field is owned by The Yoghurt Puritans. It is risky, oh so very risky daring to enter Puritan land. I have been before, but I left quickly before the Puritans could get me. I heard of others before me who were caught by them. Legend has it that a yoghurt rebel by the name of Kinky Klint was captured when trying to record the mumblings in the field. Apparently, the Puritans turned him into a gingerbread man, putting in currants for eyes, dipping him in jam and then setting him loose in the wild. He didn't have a fucking clue what had happened, and as a result was very confused when he looked at his hands to see they were a very dark malty brown and covered in candy sprinkles. They even gave him a pocket sized mirror so he could get a full look at his fucky face. He was constantly smiling due to his syrup painted grin and his Smartie nose, even though inside he wanted to die. He was in pastry hell. Fed up, he rushed to the nearest canal to drown himself. But when he got there he realised he had no lungs and couldn't do away with himself in this way. Instead he gently floated on top of the water as biscuit craving carp nibbled on his corners. Then, when his gingerbread feet were merely stumps, the Puritans fished him out of the water and proceeded to devour him in a beast like manner. They bit

chunks off him but left him able enough to move about a bit. Then, rather cruelly, they put him in a taxi, where he sat in the back with his arms folded, looking out of the window, as the cab driver made polite conversation about the weather. "Yes it is quite warm," Klint said, as his face dripped off on to the slinky leather upholstery. Then, they reached Klint's family home and Klint knocked on the door. His wife answered the door and saw before her a half munched wreck. "What the hell are you?" she screamed in horror, trying to close the door on this beast. But he managed to wedge his crumbling stump in the door. "It's me, Klint, your fella." But she didn't believe him, as his candy grin was all dripping off his face and he had only one currant eye left. He was crying treacle tears and begging for her to let him in the house. Then the kids, obviously woken by the commotion, came down stairs and saw the hideous wreck claiming to be their father. The family didn't believe him though, no matter how much he insisted he was "their sweet daddy." In the end, the family had no choice, they had to destroy him for his voice was too loud and he was waking up nanna. They threw his floury body into the garden, where he was screaming in tears, and went to work on him with rounders bats. They kicked him into the mud and beat him into fine gingerbread dust until only his head remained, while he still proclaimed to be their father. Then the mum started a bonfire and the kids, laughing loudly, put his head on to the wild flames. He screeched in agony as his pastry orb of a head was burnt into a crisp. But still, his spirit remained in the dust, alive and in torment, forever tortured by the fact that his children were laughing as they wiped out their daddy. They on the other hand, forever waited for the return of their dad, and he watched them grow through the years, never able to speak to them but merely see them enter adult hood, all the while lamenting about the loss of their dad. They assumed he had just left town. His wife, his sweet sweet wife, was always bitter that her husband of 15 years had left without a goodbye. Not only that, Klint had to watch her find a new man, a man who enjoyed life in HIS house, summer BBQs, fine wines and penetrative sex on the lawn above him where his dusty ashes remained, scattered on the grass. That, my son, is what will happen if the Yoghurt Puritans find us in their field.'

I sat back in the seat, in shock at dad's story. I knew the Puritans were bad, but had no idea they were this evil. I was also worried that my dad might end up like Kinky Klint, a pile of ashes on our lawn, forever in turmoil, mental agony and muck. Me and dad were eager to be pioneers of Yoghurt delight, but I had no idea it would mean risking my life. This was horrific stuff, but I couldn't pull out of the plan now. The contract was signed with the fuck machine Jim Power and we had our 1000 pounds advance in a suit case, all in new mint condition, crisp notes. Me and dad had to get the vital ingredient; recordings of green mumblings. There was nothing else to do.

We had been driving down the highway for hours. It was becoming darker now and the sun was being all shy and hiding somewhere. I think he was scared too that the Yoghurt Puritans might come out to play. We pulled the car up at the side of the Field of Doom and Shame, and took a deep breath. Dad got out of the car first, his Dictaphone in his hand and I soon followed, nervous and shaky.

There was a gate into the field, but dad and I didn't want to use it, as we were afraid the opening of it might alert the Puritans. So instead we shuffled our bodies through a hedge and entered the field. The grass was high around us and for miles around all you could see was green. We pricked up our ears and sure enough could hear, quietly, the mumbling of the grass, dock leaves, privets and weeds. Dad excitedly and rather hurriedly pressed record on his tape. I heard the mumbling, most of it was incoherent, but every now and then I could pick out a sentence amidst the nonsense. I heard one, it said:

*'I kept telling her, with insistence, that she bury the poor manoeuvres and leave town in a hurry.'*

Then I heard another, from a nettle bush:

*'She called me in from next door to fix the leaky tap. I took round the wrench and she made me a chip butty. Salad cream I asked for.'*

There was one from a branch:

*'The Kingdom of Madness has got me undone.'*

Dad was hunched over slightly, recording the babbling and looking around in fear, sweating all over his face. He seemed very nervous. We wanted out of there immediately, but we had to get exactly one minutes worth of recording before we could go. I kept a look out too, my eyes facing north. I couldn't see any one around, so it seemed we were safe and would get out of

there with the required ingredient. But I could not stop thinking about Kinky Klint and his poor, poor family. I dreaded being caught by those nasty Puritans.

Finally, a minute passed and dad put the Dictaphone in his pocket.

'Come on son,' he said. 'Let's get out of here quick!'

But before we could start running, we heard a peculiar sound. It was a huge thud that shook the world around us. It echoed for ten seconds after. Birds flew from trees, leaves crumbled at the sound of it and dad and me looked to one another in shock. Then, over the hill, I saw a shape appearing, brown and towering in the distance. Dad and I were frozen to the spot in curiosity, our eyes wide open in shock. Almost instinctively we dived into a nearby shrub for cover and peered out through the gaps.

Then.... IT appeared. Eighty feet tall, like a sky scraper with legs and a face. It was a gingerbread man, the biggest imaginable. It had giant Eccles cakes for eyes, a huge flap jack for a nose and a mouth painted on, only this one wasn't smiling. It was miserable as fuck and clearly out for our blood. Its huge eyes scanned the area; I think it was aware we were lurking around and wanted to capture us.



'Oh my god,' dad whispered. 'I didn't think these things really existed. I thought they were folk lore. Something fishwives told their naughty kids to put them off defying yoghurt laws. These were made by the Puritans, huge men of gingerbread sent out to seek non puritans, sinners like you and me.'

Dad's words haunted my throat and I began to quiver in fear. The gingerbread man clumsily stomped around the field, his clunky feet destroying trees at each step. I saw one of his steps kill an entire family of badgers, and they all howled in fear as the foot came tumbling down on them, crushing them into a pathetic pulp. Then the huge candy man looked in our direction and stopped. His eyes were gazing our way and for a moment I thought he had seen us. For over 20 seconds he glared at our shrub, and it seemed as if his eyes were totally fixed on mine. His whole body was motionless too, which made it even more unsettling. Dad grabbed my arm, as if to keep me safe from harm. But I could tell he was more afraid than I was, for he knew what this gingerbread beast was capable of. Then in a moment that made me sigh with relief, the gingerbread monster began to turn his head, as if he had given up on the search. But all of a sudden, he swung his face back round at the speed of light in a flawless movement, like two single frames of film. He screamed at us, a scream that started deep and eventually ended up as a deafening high howl that rattled my skull. As he screeched, from out of his mouth came biscuits, flying at us at a heavy, speedy rate and we found ourselves showered with Bourbons, custard creams, Fig Rolls, Rich Teas and Pink Panther Wafers. They hurt quite a bit and a Bourbon was wedged into my dad's eye. He yelped in pain. After I pulled it out, he said he couldn't see out of that eye any more. But that wasn't our main concern at that point, as the towering snack was pointing at us and screaming out "GET EM!"

Then, from behind him over the hill, I heard the strangest sound, which can best be described as the relentless charge of an army. Dad and I stood to our feet and stiffened up in horror. There they were, the infamous Yoghurt Puritans, rushing towards us in their masses. There were huge chariots, the wheels of which were made out of giant Digestives. Only thing was, the biscuits were not perfectly spherical, so the oscillation of the wheels was somewhat jerky and uneven. But they were still persistent, even as their medieval haircuts flopped around. On one I saw a topless Adonis of a man, with long golden locks blowing in the wind as he charged towards us. His co pilot had a bow and arrow and was taking shots at me and my dad. There were also Puritans on foot, with shields made of Jaffa Cakes. I presume the use of Jaffa would have helped deflect the blows from blunt objects; mace, toffee hammer etc. (If you notice, Jaffas have a soft pillowy feel which would make for a fine defence.) Some of the troops were firing from guns, out of which came different assortments of

yoghurt, which they were firing at us with vigorous enthusiasm. I saw misfired yog shots setting fire to trees so I knew we were in deep danger.

Then, in the centre of this storming brigade, I saw the leader of the Puritans..... Daddy Treacle. He was laid back in an immaculate chariot, made from Caramac..... the golden creamy bar. He had two whores in bear masks tweaking his man nipples and rubbing him down with corn meal as he lounged back, topless with his golden brown body glistening in the sun.

'Get them heathens,' he said, pointing our way with his long girly finger nails. The man riding Daddy Treacle's chariot forth was a pig faced man in medieval garb and a toffee apple in his mouth. Then in a moment of horror, from behind the army of Puritans came a raging sea of yoggy, flowing like tides of vengeance, consuming everything in its path. Some puritans were riding the yoghurt waves on surf boards made of the World War 2 ration recipe for carrot cookies. It was the wrath of the Puritans, unleashing itself on me and my dad... we were sinners.

Dad and I began to run in fear, sprinting away as fast as we could from the army of purity. We kept looking behind us to see if they were gaining on us and we were horrified to learn they were. Our feet were no match for their biscuit powered chariots. I saw the gingerbread man stuck in a corner of the field, clumsily scrambling around, confused and baffled by the action. After all, he was a mere seeker of intruders and in battle was somewhat useless due to his sheer bulk.

Finally we made it to the hedge and speedily I flew through it to safety, out of the field of doom. Dad was just behind me and in a moment of panic he flung himself through the air and found himself jammed in the bush, as a ragged, sharp branch impaled itself through his shoulder. Dad yelped out like a dog boy and I turned around to pull him out. But he knew it was hopeless and that it was all over for him.

'Here,' he cried, throwing the Dictaphone and car keys my way, in a desperate moment. 'Take these and get out of here. Make daddy proud!'

'Noooooo!' I screamed out, stretching my arm out to pull him from the hell that was about to occur. But it was too late. I will never forget that howl coming from his agonised face as he was so quickly pulled out of the hedge and back into the field. It was done so quickly. One second he was there, the next he was gone. I had in my hand the car keys and the recordings of the grass mumbles, and I could have just easily got out of there, forever oblivious to my father's fate. So, curiously, I peered through the gap where the bastards had dragged him through. And there it was, point blank up to mine, a sinister face,

grinning from ear to ear with a mouth full of yoghurt. It dribbled from his bloated lips.

'That'll teach ya,' he said, as I ran back to the car to escape my own demise. I sped out of there in the car, my head turning back to the field every now and then to ensure there was no one on my tail. But sure enough, in the rear view mirror, I spotted the sprinting figure of the gingerbread man, brimming with cocksure confidence, the shadow of his bulk perfectly cast against the darkening sky and the orange blaze of the setting sun.

**THE END**

# Uncle Gangster

By Chris Wade

Everyone has an uncle. Well some people don't of course. But a lot of people do, unless your mum and dad have no brothers, thus rendering your chances of having a blood related uncle slim. If you don't have a proper uncle, you might at least have a Great uncle, or some distantly related person who, for some unknown reason, you are made to call Uncle. He might be your cat's brother's owner or your next door neighbour in a past life, something so obscure it makes it fucking ridiculous. Sometimes you have to call other people uncle too, perhaps a shag buddy of your mum's; the kind of sleazy, oily, slick haired creep with a hairy chest and a medallion who comes on the scene after your dad has left home. Not only does the slimy twat want to sit in your dad's old chair, he even has the cheek to wink at you when he sends you to bed at 7 pm. and you know the grot lad is gonna slip it to your mum hard and fast with speedy, efficient thorough enthusiasm.

What I mean by all this is most people have an uncle and when you have more than one uncle you tend to have a favourite uncle. I had three uncles. Let me tell you about them.

## 1, Uncle Malcolm “Gas Fuck.”

Uncle Malcolm was mum's brother and had been in the war. Which war I wasn't too sure, as he was too young to have been in either of the world wars and too old to have been in the Falklands. He fit awkwardly in between the wars and I think this annoyed him. But he always insisted he had been in a war. He was totally obsessed with military conflict, maneuvers and warfare in general. I remember when he would come to our house, wearing his soldier's helmet with his green back pack full of what he called 'essential goods'. He would always be wearing his trusty gas mask no matter what. In fact I never ever saw the man's real face. Everywhere he went, he would wear it; at weddings, funerals, to the shops and to his numerous court appearances. When he came for tea he would insist on checking the parameters for intruders before he relaxed and sat at the

dining room table. Then he would always insist on having mashed potatoes; the man would eat nothing else. He would then make tanks in the food and recite what he called war time poems. I remember one poem in particular which haunted my throat. It was called **Me and Him:**

'With coin sex and huddled glove rape, me and him settled for the thinking leg. This leg gave out the most curious bread pot in which the loaf was crushed into triangles and blushing babies. Besides the athlete we both curled up reference seeds and vests while we folded them up beside dead forks and long pauses, before giving them to the black version of me on the pirate ship. After this, him and me took part in a survey where the questions were based around the subjects of wank sheets, the Human League, fig rolls, the knees of Judas, bearded RAF pilots and a man without a neck. When we got tired we drank from swans to perk up and they smiled at us as we sipped wine from their eyes, but they frowned when we had to leave. At 9 o' clock we died in a pool of our own jealousy and waffle waste. I was browner and hurting, like some kind of used tree mind. After our funerals our wives got together and boarded a cruise where they saw me and him again. All of us were stuck between pools of arcade machine blood but we did not care at all. We ignored it and continued to view the lonely shed gimp who sat alone in his leather, by the lawn mower, sobbing to the tune of Bird on a Wire by Leonard Cohen.'

I quite enjoyed seeing Uncle Malcolm, but was often frightened of him, especially when he began to usher us all into the cellar to hide from our 'neck enemies' as he called them. In the end, I remember dad telling mum that he was worried about her strange brother. Then he came around to our house no more. Apparently he was placed in a home. When I asked dad why, he said 'because he was a bit fed up son.'

## **2, Uncle Dave “The Parcel.”**

Now old Uncle Dave was a fairly decent chap. He was mum's other brother. He was a delivery man for a well known package delivery firm and was obsessed with parcels. If Dave called round, he would insist on posting himself to our place in a neatly boxed and carefully taped up parcel, rather than getting the bus or a taxi. So if mum wanted him round for tea or dinner, she would have to call him two days before the event to give him enough time to get himself through the postal system. It could be quite a task but it was always worth it. In everyday life, he would use the parcel method as often as possible. For instance, if he needed the toilet, whether it be a shit or a piss, he would empty his waste

into a package rather than going to the bathroom and he would post it to himself. When the package arrived, he would remove the pungent body grot and empty it into his toilet. He was a nice chap, full of life and humour but unfortunately he met a rather tragic end. It was the summer and Dave fancied a nice holiday. He decided on Spain but didn't fancy sitting on an aeroplane or boat or any other conventional method of getting abroad. So, no surprises, he decided to wrap himself up nicely and post himself to Madrid in a man sized parcel. Inside the parcel with him was his suit case with all his clothes, sun cream and all the other objects one usually takes on holiday with them. He managed to get himself posted off by mail ship steamer. The trouble was, his address sticker fell off and he was placed with all the other lost mail. He remained in the box in a storage facility for weeks until somebody who worked there noticed that no one had claimed the parcel. Curious, the worker opened the package to see what was inside. To his surprise and horror, he found the corpse of Uncle Dave inside. They think he starved in there, as the only food he had was a small packet of malt loaf, which he had eaten. I was saddened by the news but my mother told me not to be down about it, because at least he had died in a parcel, the one thing he loved in life more than anything else.

### **3, Uncle Gangster**

Now don't get me wrong, I loved Uncle Dave and Uncle Malcolm, but my favourite uncle was always Uncle Gangster, one of the most remarkable figures I had ever known in my life. He had a fantastic and varied life, one which I got to hear lots about whenever I got to see him. Physically, his face was very lined and wrinkled, rough and creased like a crumpled up duvet after a frantic knobbing session. He wasn't that old, but he looked it. I think it was all that drinking and all that running from the cops in his life. He was my dad's only brother but he looked old enough to be his dad. No, not his dad, his uncle. He just looked like an uncle, so much so that I couldn't imagine him ever being anything else. I know he was a friend to some, a son to his mother, but to me he was quite simply the most unclish (real word?) person that ever existed.

Uncle Gangster always wore brown shoes, the same pair that seemed to frown whenever it was windy, faded and crinkled like an old ball bag. He used to tell me his shoes were shy and were worried that one day they might have to interact with other people's shoes. Apparently, my uncle's shoes hated trainers most, as they were always so much younger and garish than him. But I think that Uncle Gangster's shoes were just plain miserable and ignorant, not shy at all. Gangster himself was friendly of course, but his humour and manner were

so rugged and aggressive that people assumed he was a nasty shit. But I knew him well and he was never nasty, just honest that's all. If I have learned one thing in my life so far, then it is that people hate the truth. I think they fear it.

When Uncle Gangster stood, like when he was waiting for a bus to come along, he always crossed one leg in front of the other, as if he were hiding a hideously disfigured shin. It was as if they had made a promise they know they couldn't keep, those leggies of his, like they had sworn to do something kind and had crossed over to cancel out their dishonest commitment. I remember once when he picked me up from school and he arrived there early. He was pressing his fucked up face against the glass, trying to pick me out from all the other pupils. Then when I finished class, he met me outside and took me by the hand.

'We're gonna have a laugh today young one,' he grunted in a shitty growl that made him sound as if he had swallowed a hedgehog in spiky S and M gear. 'I'm looking after you today. Your mum and dad finally trusted me enough to take you for the afternoon. We're gonna have a right laugh my son.'

We walked down the street together and he bought me a Bible Voucher Dock from the market down town. I had always wanted one and Uncle Gangster was the only person kind enough to get me one. Of course I didn't know you had to be over 18 to have a Bible Voucher Dock, but at the time I was over the moon to have one. I remember when we left the market and we heard the police sirens. Then me and uncle had to hide behind a tree for some reason until the sirens stopped. When it was safe we carried on in our walkypoos. At 5 pm., uncle told me to wait outside while he saw to some business in the post office. I stood there patiently for a minute or so and uncle finally emerged from inside with a huge sack over his shoulder.

'Come on lad, no time to waste,' he yelled before we both scurried off into the shadows. It was terribly fun. Then we had to hide for about an hour after that and we heard loads and loads of sirens. Coppers with guns were walking about too and all sorts of stuff was going on. There were vicious hounds barking and I was getting slightly worried that something bad was going to happen. But Uncle Gangster just told me not to worry and we continued to hide for another hour or so until the fuss died down.

After the evening was through, I went back home and told mummy and daddy about my adventures with Uncle Gangster. They didn't seem too happy about things to be honest and were on the phone to him right away, saying he was a bad example and that he would never be looking after me again. I was saddened by this and begged mum to let me hang around with Uncle Gangster



again, but she wouldn't give in. I was banned from seeing him. Shame too, as we had a great time together.

Uncle Gangster is still alive today, although no one has seen him for a long time. He went missing right after daddy's car was stolen one day. I asked who had done it and dad told me it was 'a naughty mister.' I never found out who that naughty mister was and what the hell happened to Uncle Gangster. But he is known to be alive somewhere out there in the big wild world. Some say he is confirming all the fishy order voids at the Piece Hall in Halifax. Others say he lives next door to George Hamilton.

**THE END**

## Charlie's Dog

By Chris Wade

Charlie's dog always took himself for a walk.

Well, he had to really; there was no other choice available. Charlie's dog, or Martin as he was called and we shall now call him for the rest of the tale, would have gulped down his dish of water by 11 am, and would be in desperate need for a piss around 12 o'clock. The thing was, Charlie would still be in bed by then and wouldn't surface until 1 or sometimes even 2 in the afternoon. Martin didn't want to go and wake him up, that didn't seem right at all. So, like a thoroughly decent chap, he would take himself out to the park for a nice walk, a run about and a nice urination session. It was the decent thing to do.

After all, Charlie was tired, so very tired. He was physically and mentally tired. Life was becoming a series of hard tasks, a gauntlet of worry, a complex set of emotional blows, each more difficult to put up with than the last. Martin could tell this, not only from his owner's run down manner, puffed up eyes and shadowy stubble, but from the words that spewed from his gob. He talked to himself all day, sometimes about how much he missed the 80s sitcom Cheers, other times about Condoms and Fish, but he was unaware of the fact that even his dog could see that as worrying behaviour. It was indeed worrying behaviour, but there was no one else to talk to. It was as simple and tragic as that.

On January the 2<sup>nd</sup>, Charlie awoke at 12: 53 and lay there for a little while, all sweaty and snotty in the debris that was his bed. The quilt was all fucked up and the under sheet was all messy and hanging off the edge of the bed, like a pressed animal trying to come back to life and exit that swamp bed of dream stress and salty sweat. His eyes opened and they were instantly annoyed by the light coming through the tiny window in his bedroom. The white painted walls, crumbling and flaking; oh how he hated them so. There wasn't a more depressing thing to wake up to than those four shitty walls. In the holes, he imagined little creatures living a life there, poking out at him as he got his head together. He named them The Bolters, and they were led by their orange skinned master Scannou. But they weren't there at all; that was just his confused state playing havoc with him. But for the first minute or so, he would talk to them.

'Hi my friends,' he muttered, his throat dry and his voice all shit and croaky. Then the inevitable realisation hit him, the sad and boring truth that the creatures were not there at all. He was, once again, alone. He hoped Martin was in.

Making noises that are expected to come from a dying ox, Charlie stretched his cranky, grumpy, creaky, scrunched up frame back into the five feet odd region. When he awoke, he swore he had become four feet odd or thereabouts, given the fact that his body had become so curled up in the difficulties of the unpleasant night. But after a moment of freeing his bones, Charlie was once again of average adult male height. Well, just a little under really. But he wasn't that short. It wasn't as if his arse rubbed out his footprints as he went along, or that he was wider than he was tall. He was just a bit little really. I think you get the idea.

He stumbled into the bathroom to wash his face and brush his teeth, looking at his tired features in the mirror before him. How had life got like this? How had it drifted into this boring, tiresome rut? Charlie didn't even know really. It had just happened. Then, as usual, he took his pyjama clad body into the living room and switched on the TV. It was the same show as every day, his favourite show, the same reliable show, the same faces, the same jokes, the same sitcom clichés. Even fantasy was becoming familiar. Charlie put the kettle on.

'Martin!' he called out, scanning his flat for his four legged companion. 'Oh, he must be out,' he muttered, putting in two heaped spoonfuls of coffee into his plain white mug. Three sugars too, just to really get the excitement flowing in his day.

With a huff and a puff, Charlie slumped himself on to the sofa, his coffee spilling on himself as he did so. It burned all right, but he didn't give a fuck. If anything it amused him, the pain of the scald. Dabbing the wet from his already shit stained T shirt, Charlie looked to the coffee table by the sofa and saw he had a message on his mobile phone. As he reached over to get it, his spine cracked and it felt as if some fucker was playing it like a Glockenspiel. Anyway, it was a message from Norah. It was patronising and angering to read:

***No more phone calls Charlie. Enough of this already! Big Earl is getting fed up with your behaviour and if you carry on bothering me like this, he'll come round to your stinking little grot hole and poke out your eye with a biro. Now, knob off you pissed up oaf!***

Charlie put the phone down on to his leg and continued watching his show. It wasn't anyone else's show. It was HIS!!

At that very moment, Martin came back into the house, the Frisbee in his mouth. The little fella was looking suitably refreshed; his dark warm shades glowing in the aftermath of the sun, his black nose shining. Charlie turned to him and gave him a smile.

'So you're back?' he said, with a shagged out sigh.

Martin made his way across the room and quickly turned off the TV with his right paw. This was all rather abrupt and fucky. Charlie frowned, very, very pissed off that his loyal dog had done such a cruel thing.

'Martin, you mucky little mutt, I was watching that!'

'Yeah well, your eyes will go square.' said Martin, a snobbish voice full of air and cleanliness. 'You need to cut down a little on that stuff Charlie. It's not good for you. You need more fresh air, that's your problem. A little bit of exercise! You should get up earlier one day and come out with me to the park. It really is quite joyous you know. Well, saying that, last time you took me for a walk you got into a fight with that cat fella. So I dunno'

Martin took a slow little walk over to the arm chair across from Charlie and hopped on to it. Comfortably, he put his paws up on the arm and looked his owner up and down with a look of pity.

'Don't be looking at me like that Martin. It isn't very nice to be looked at like that you know,' Snapped Charlie, clearly very fed up now with the rather arrogant manner of his canine friend. 'I have looked after you for..... how old are you now?'

Charlie screwed up his face in thought and Martin was slightly hurt that he didn't even remember how old he was.



'I'm nine in your years, Charlie,' groaned the dog, as if it were the 100<sup>th</sup> time he'd had to tell him.

'Well there you go then. Nine bloody years! That's a long time. I have always fed you well, made sure you had enough of what you needed; plenty of food, toys for your amusement. Yet you treat me this way. This is how you repay me?'

'Toys?' Martin said, chuckling himself silly, his ears flapping about and his tongue wagging. 'You think I want toys then do you? Is that what you think? Oh dear! What a cliché. Dogs of my age, well we require a little more than a simple squeaky toy. I mean, I may be nine in your years, but in dog time I'm over fifty! I am fifty three now, Charlie. You think I wanna play with squeaky toys? Look at your dad, he is 55. How do you think he likes to spend his evenings? Lounging in front of the fire, his tongue out, all degraded, his big bollocks hanging out, with an annoying toy in the shape of a fucking bone stuck in his gob? I think not. He probably likes the fire on, a nice big comfortable arm chair reserved for him. I bet he likes a glass of whiskey, a bit of Beethoven on the old stereo, a nice lit pipe and the complete works of Oscar Wilde ready on the chair side table. Why haven't I got any of that?'

Charlie took a sip of his coffee and frowned all over his shitty face. He thought for a moment, searching for a deeper answer to that question. But his mind kept going back to that one simple reply; the truth.

'Because you're a dog Martin,' he bluntly replied. 'You're an old dog yes, but you're still a bloody dog. Every other old dog I have met in my life likes similar things to a younger dog; a walk, a piss, a chew toy, some water, a nice basketty thing to lie in, a shag or what have you. What else should a dog want? I never see any other hounds complaining.'

'When was the last time you spoke to any other dogs Charlie? When was the last time you, or any man or woman for that matter, cared about what we think? When did anyone ever just sit down with their dog, man to man, well man to dog, face to face, just to ask a few decent questions? You know, like, how was your day Rover?'

'Rover?' Charlie mumbled, not keeping up with Martin's whining, which was in his opinion, rather uncalled for, especially when the hound knew that Charlie had only just surfaced from his lair of sweat.

'Yeah, some dogs are called Rover,' Martin continued, speedily. 'It's a common name for a dog. Anyway, that isn't the point. When did a human ever care what we wanted? It's not very nice is it? You know, just ask us a few

questions guys. Is it so hard? Just a few simple questions. Like, are you happy living here? Are you liking the current brand of dog food we're getting you? Simple little things Charlie. It's just so bloody easy.'

Charlie looked to the TV, wishing so much that his favourite show was still on. But it wasn't. He was stuck there, half asleep with his coffee and a seriously pissed off dog who wanted more out of life and from him as an owner.

'Are you listening to me Charlie?' barked Martin, but not in the usual dog way, but in a human voiced way. It was more of an angry yell to break Charlie from his zombie glare.

'I am listening, yes!' Charlie volleyed, over emphasizing his alertness by sitting up right in his chair and looking at the dog full on with sharp, interested eyes. Martin knew he wasn't getting through and that Charlie didn't really care about his feelings.

'So what have I been saying then? Go on, if you've been listening, tell me what I said you hot shot!!'

Charlie was stuck here. He hadn't really been taking it all in, just bits and bats really. So, quickly, like a blind man scrambling for jigsaw pieces in a misguided attempt to complete a puzzle on a 30 second timer, Charlie joined together what he had.

'You said that you wanted to be called Rover, that you wanted the complete works of Oscar Wilde and didn't want to be rolling around the floor with your bollocks out any more.'

Martin shook his head. He knew he could get a better owner, but he had been with Charlie for nine years and couldn't just get up and leave. That would be mean. But the more he thought about it, the more he wanted to leave.

'You weren't listening to me were you?' he asked, his feelings jumbled and confused.

'Of course I wasn't listening!'

'Why not?'

'Because dogs don't talk, that's why!'

Martin sighed a deep sigh and Charlie took another sip of coffee as he put his focus back on to the TV. In his noggin, he imagined what the actors might

be up to now. In an amusing and rather embarrassing situation involving a loose pair of trousers? He didn't know, but he imagined the best possibilities of sitcom heaven.

'You know what Charlie?' began Martin. 'The more I think about it, the more I realise that I'm the owner and you're the pet in this house. I do the house work; all the cleaning, the dishes, the dusting, confirming all the fishy order voids, aligning all da checkers. And what do you do? Nothing. You just sit there watching TV, scratching your arse all day with your Yogi Bear pencil. And then at 5 you get out the cheap bitter and get hindo dimenpinnered beyond belief, so pissed up you can't even remember your name. Then you pass out in a pool of your own fluids. And who has to take you to bed? Who has to clean up your vomit? Who has to tidy up the empty cans? That's right. Me! I do everything and I am sick to death of it, Charlie. Sick to death of it! I have had enough. I could find someone else you know, someone better, someone who cares about me. A real owner, a proper person. A respectable, responsible adult. I'm gonna get out there in the real world and find myself a nice owner. I tell you what, there's a few possible owners at the park. Everything I go, there's a nice old bloke called Harry who always tells his friends he'd love to keep me. And then there's The Tiny Little Pea Gum Otter. He's a nice bloke and he already has three cool dogs of his own and he always says to me, "Come on to my house. I'll take care of you. You'll fit right in." And all his dogs go "Yeah come on man, it'll be cool." The bloke dogs wanna hang out with me and the lass one fancies me, so she does. I am a popular dog you know. I could get out of this place in no time. People admire my beautiful coat.'

Martin sat in silence for a moment and seriously felt sorry for Charlie, that rather creaky, craggy man who had let his life go down the drain. Could he really abandon that man? After all, if Martin really was his owner, would it really be fair to ditch the dead weight? If it was the other way round and Charlie dumped Martin in a dog's home and then fucked off, that wouldn't be so great would it? Martin knew he couldn't leave Charlie, no matter how much he wanted to. So, he slowly got himself up off the chair and went over to the TV. Switching it on, he turned to Charlie and smiled at him. Charlie, looking pleased to see his favorite show once again, smiled and said:

'Do you want me to get you some trousers? That'd be nice wouldn't it?'

**THE END**

## **The Blandness of Strangers**

**By Chris Wade and Shawn Dimery**

Reverend Bernard Bland sat alone in the village pub, surrounded by the smoky scent of many a brand of fine quality cigar. He sipped calmly from a glass of R White's lemonade, as he read his flimsy paperback novel. It was the very picture of mid afternoon relaxation.

In his moment of peace, a man approached the reverend's table with a full pint, spilling it everywhere as he shuffled along like a pissed up old fart, a drunken Quasimodo of a man. He was messy, a shambles of a bloke, the slight odour of piss lingering in the air around him. Then, he spoke, with a voice of chapped leather and dusty age.

'May I join you?' he growled, his face all distant and fucked up.

Bernard was more than a little stunned by his visitor's appearance, but being a kind local pillar of the community, he allowed the man to join him.

'By all means. Sit down.' He softly said, shuffling on his seat of sponge and cloth, which was supported by a simply assembled chair of beech. The man sat down, grunting as he did so, exhaling his foul breath of onion rings and fish broth. The reverend found it hard to mask his disgust, his face curling up like the grooves of an old accordion.

'Nice afternoon isn't it?' he said, a smile appearing on his shit lips.

'Hmmm, splendid,' replied the reverend, sipping his lemonade in a moment of embarrassment, trying to ignore the many varied odours which permeated from the man's body, crevices and face. 'What you reading? Anything good?' he barked, spitting strange brown particles on to the reverend's malt cardigan and his furrowed brow.

'Oh nothing much, just a book. Flimsy old paperback,' chuckled the reverend, thinking up an escape plan already.

‘The art of the written word lad,’ sighed the man. ‘What is more rewarding, to write or to read? Well I, for instance, love to read. Always have; Reader’s Digest, Radio Times, Health and Efficiency, Reader’s Wives, Just 18, Razzle, all that stuff. Bit of the old top shelf gear. Of course now, I need those old reading glasses, as to clear up the old small print. Proper old chappy now me. Ha ha. Look like that old Emperor Hirohito fella. Ha ha. I notice the collar lad.’

The man pointed to the old reverend’s thin, scrawny neck, around which was wrapped the obligatory collar, as worn by all men of God.

‘Yes,’ replied the reverend, taking another sip of lemonade.

‘Man of the cloth eh? Always good to see a man of faith. Always a treat. You’re safe when there’s a man of religion around, that’s what I say. So what faith are you? Catholic? Protestant? Jehovah? Yiddish? Scientologist? Hebrew? What’s your preference? Are you a Muslim?’

Bernard chuckled quietly. This seemed to annoy the man, who frowned profusely all over his bell end like face, which was clearly reddened due to the years of alcohol and tar abuse.

‘No I’m a proud Christian.’

‘Ah the Christians. The old Christian game eh?’ said the man, rubbing his stale oaty chin, which was rather like an overdone malt loaf. ‘I was raised a Catholic, sorry chap. He’s like a long lost brother to me, that Catholicism lark. By that I mean I haven’t met up with him for years. We drifted apart so to speak. But I still remember his dashingy charming features, his finely groomed and buffed finger nails and his delicate precision. Believe in all that then do you?’

Bernard was shocked the man even had to ask. “*What do you think this is? Fancy dress day at the pub? You fucker,*” he thought, but of course didn’t say.

‘As a matter of fact I do believe.’

‘Adam and Eve? The original sin? The apple tree? Talking snake? Devil’s temptation?’ the man said, going on an unstoppable rant, which slowly and subtly took his face closer to the reverend’s. His butane breath became more overwhelming for the reverend to accept by the second. ‘Big man upstairs, looking down, observing every move and I mean EVERY SINGLE MOVE. You know, private moments, in the bathroom, having a sound shite on an

evening, a lonely slippery tug of the old man unit. That collection you don't want ANYONE to see; films, bit of the old blue, sticky maggies, gimp suit. He can see it. He's seen it all and quite frankly he's loving it, this god fella. Our moments of shame. He's seen them all. But he doesn't judge. He doesn't judge.'

Bernard remained silent, calculating the most polite yet speedy way to leave the pub. This was no easy task, as much of his pure, divine strength was being weighed down by the unstoppable and relentless rot oozing from the babbling man's oily tonsils.

'Quite,' remarked Bernard, his eyes darting around, searching for the nearest exit.

'It's good stuff. Bible's a bloody good read. Best piece of fiction I've ever read. Only kidding. Yeah, it's all good stuff. Can see the attraction.'

Bernard's hands shook as he clutched at his pocket bible for reassurance, trembling under the watchful glare of the vessel of stench before him.

'But am I man of faith? Is that what you want to know?'

'I asked you nothing. I ju-'

'The big question, am I man of faith?' interrupted the man, continuing in his monologue. 'Well, I've dabbled. I'm a dabbler. Bits and bobs. This and that. Jesus. Allah. Zeus. I like Cherubs me, don't you? They all have their advantages, all these types of faith. Their door is open for me. I like the possibilities that these fine options offer.'

Bernard got his frightened body just about ready to stand, like a new born bird ling about to fly from the nest for the very first time. The bits at the back of his knees trembled, as if they weren't ready to stand just yet. But for some reason, his voice was tempted to continue the conversation. Perhaps the fumes from the man's pissed up breath were making the Reverend slightly light headed and more inquisitive.

'So you have no chosen faith?'

'Nah. I see it from every angle. All those possibilities. Like I said, I am a dabbler. I like a dabble. It's always been like that, with everything in my life. I've dabbled with booze, drugs, vice, toboggan, pop up pirate, Buckaroo, hungry hippos, gambling. You name it. I've dabbled..... midget gems. The lot. I've been there. It was the same with footy.'

‘Footy?’ Bernard said, unaware of the term. It wasn’t a phrase thrown about the parish.

‘Footy! Football!’ barked the grot fella. ‘You know, the beautiful game, soccer! I love a kick about. That’s why she left me I think. The wife.....’

There was a short silence, a moment of discomfort which the reverend attempted to lift with a breezy comment.

‘Oh I see. Married to the game were you, so to speak?’

‘No,’ grunted the man. ‘I just kicked her about. The jealousy and all that. I think it’s in all of us to do that, kick ‘em about, rather like the afore mentioned football. She would come home, love bites on her neck, all fucked up on cheap wine. I’d get home from work, there was a certain smell in the air, you know that smell, even you know that smell.’ The man’s tone was becoming more aggressive, and the reverend got the feeling the man was mocking him slightly. His face, by now, was almost pressed up against his and Bernard wanted out! ‘There was a pair of silk sockies under the bed. They sure weren’t mine. I don’t wear socks. See?’ The piss head pulled up his trouser leg to reveal a pair of black tights made of thin woven fibres, making the chap resemble an old Shakespearian actor. For a moment, Bernard pictured him on a balcony, holding a skull, reciting a poetic sonnet. But that image was instantly shattered when the man continued in his grotty, revolting rant. ‘There was even the odd pair of grundies there, skid marks, the slight yellowidge around the testicle region, the lot. What is a man to think?’

‘Sorry to hear that old chap. I just assumed that she was second to your love of the game....’ Bernard kindly remarked.

The twat shook his stained Buffalo like head, the salty, vinegary sweat going everywhere. It was like an explosion had gone off in the local chippy.

‘Nope. She came before the footy. But that’s the past now. They think it’s all over..... it is now..... It is now.’

‘Oh how very sad. Maybe you would like to talk about it one time? At church perhaps? There are many reverends like myself who will be willing to listen.’

‘Would you listen to me.... friend?’

The man tried to appeal to Bernard’s good nature by appearing as a victim, a desperate man in need of guidance.

‘Um... I can’t guarantee it will be me when you do visit the church but my colleagues are professional, kind and open men. You will find them suitably friendly and handsome in appearance. You should go there on Sunday.’

‘I can’t make Sunday.’ The man said, his misty voice leaking out of his face hole. ‘That’s fish cake day at mother’s gingerbread house. She always makes me good fish on a Sunday. Peas too... chips. Blob of mayo..... fucking champion. The old ma. The queen she is to me. Better than that old bint we have slumped on the throne nowadays. She’s probably pissed, the old bag. Haven’t you seen how wonky that crown is on her frizzy perm. She’s high... high as a kite. Sinner. My mum should be queen. That’s what I think. My mam. My great rock of Gibraltar.’

Bernard looked down at his watch and a little plan formulated in his mind. He had an excuse to leave, all lined up and ready to put into action. The man’s mother speech had triggered a nice lie in Bernard’s head. Yes, perfect! His mother was ill, awaiting Bernard’s visit from her perfect holy son, her only friend. She was dying, all fucked up and peeling, bits of her stuck to the mattress. She needed her last rites, before entering the pearly gates of the promised lands... Heaven.

Bernard knew he would get away with lying; this is one of the privileges of being a man of the cloth. No one suspects a reverend or a vicar, or for that matter a Bishop, of lying for their own gain. So, he had a dying mum. Yes, that was it. Perfect! But before he could live out his scheme, the man spoke again, this time with a forceful vigour that Bernard dare not defy.

‘Listen here. I tell you what, I will talk to you, seeing as you’re offering. I’ll talk now.... NOW.’

‘I was thinking in confession this Sunday with one of my very very close colleagues.’

‘Nonsense cloth ears! Ears of cloth! You have ears don’t you lad? You can listen here.’ The man insisted.

‘Well I would prefer the church, the confession booth. My..... office as I like to call it.’

But Bernard’s kindness and light hearted attempts at banter were ignored by the man’s fucked up pig like senses. He slammed his fist on the table, sending beer mats flying through the air as one glass was knocked over and proceeded to rattle and roll on the table for well over ten awkward seconds. The

man leaned in even closer, his fucky eyes fogging up with mysterious thoughts and a hawk like commitment.

‘Listen blokey. I’m gonna talk here and you’re gonna listen, like it or lump it. Jesus healed the needy, the lepers, the gangrenous, the ones legless and limping due to their severe decay. You know, people with no legs and that. He cared, listened to the man on the street. Well, the man on the cobbled road so to speak. The man on the dunes with the sand between his toes. In his sandals. Look at the last supper, he shared all he had. Handed out fishes and loafs. He didn’t turn them away did he? What are you in this for? This religion lark? I’m asking for five fucking minutes! CUNT! That’s all I ask of you.’

Bernard was frozen to his seat with fear, unable to speak or move a muscle.

‘Now is the time. NOW N N N N N N N NOWWWWWWW NOW NOW NOW NOW!’

At each bark, the bastard banged his fist on the table. That vase in the centre that held the cutlery, packets of tartar sauce and various other condiments and the numbered wooden spoon for food orders, shook about like a fucking weeble.

‘Here’s how it works fucko. I go for a piss first and then I’ll get us a drink on the way back. I’ll wash my hands! I promise. Ha ha ha ha.’

He cackled like an evil cunt, his brown tobacco stained teeth over lapping like cricket wickets when hit with the corky. He looked like Dave Hill from Slade, but all fucked up and careless of anything.

‘Come on, loosen up, loosen your tie, loosen your bullets. Let loose. Live a little. Rid yourself of those religious shackles. What you having? What’s that you got there?’

‘It’s just a lemonade,’ said Bernard, quivering like a beaten hound.

‘Nonsense. What’s your tipple? Baby sham? Gin? Port? Mead? Maybe a dry white sherry?’

‘No, I don’t drink.’

‘You don’t drink?’

‘No, not anymore.’ Sighed Bernard, telling a tale with that small sentence.

‘You don’t drink?’ The fucker cackled, holding his beer gut and polluting the air with his acidic breath. Wildlife for miles around were dying at the mere whiff of him, ducks passing out, badgers and beavers collapsing into heaps of mud and muck. An otter’s skin dissolved with the stench, like at the end of Raiders of the Lost Ark when the Nazis meet their bloody demise. Bernard spotted a Ginster’s Pasty sticking out of the breast pocket on the man’s shit one dollar denim jacket. ‘Have you heard this everyone? This fucker doesn’t drink! HA! You must!! A bit of the old fire water eh? Grandpa’s old cough medicine? A bit of Kendal mint cake on the side? Come on have a whiskey with me!’

‘No. I did tell you, I don’t drink!’

The man grabbed Bernard viciously by his collar and pulled him closer, roughly.

‘Listen up choir boy. You’re in a pub with me, MY pub, right? I been sitting under this dart board for 25 fucking years. Fomer domino champ here, me, I’ll have you know. You’ll have a whiskey with me out of respect.... won’t you?’

Bernard was almost weeping.

‘Look.... I.....’

‘What would god think?’

‘God?’

‘Yeah. Him! What would he think? And his son. Jesus! Son of God; his human embodiment, the very personification of holiness. He died on the cross for our sins. OUR SINS! Carpenter. You know him. Carpenter by trade, holy son of god by nature. He was an only child I think. You can tell actually. He was an attention seeker. Like all only children. What would he think if you left a man in his hour of need? Walking out of here, avoiding the harsh realities of the plight of the everyday man. I’ll be back in a minute. Two triple whiskeys coming up.’

The man’s urge to urinate had become too much for his bladder to handle. Bernard, alone, was contemplating the terrible consequences of even one sole drink. His inner turmoil was almost unbearable.

*‘Oh lord, why did you condemn me with these heavenly laws? I said I was sorry for all I had done, giving in to those urges. I devoted it all to you. All of it... my life, my soul, my very being, all of it devoted to you. I was sorry, oh so sorry for what I had done, and you knew that, yet you continue to thrust my sin back upon me. You have done it today, by bringing this lost, drunken arse of a soul a-knocking upon my door. Oh lord, wasn’t it enough that I was sorry? Haven’t I suffered enough?’*

Returning from his oh so satisfying piss, the man strolled over to the bar, as happy and euphoric as a pig in shite.

‘Two triple whiskeys for me and my dear friend over there. Him, over there, the holy one, the bloke in the holy get up. Two triple whiskeys, please, and pronto.’

Bernard begged for something, anything, any help his lord may offer him in this moment of temptation. This moment of bare, naked weakness.

*‘Oh lord. Please help me fight the urge, this overwhelming desire to guzzle the devil’s soda pop, Beelzebub’s beverage, the ever so delectable love juice of the harpy. I promise I will be a good man for the rest of my days if you kill off this fuck pest immediately, in a bid to assist me in banishing that demonic but ever so tempting and delicious alcohol. Anything. Do anything you can. I know this may appear selfish, to kill off a man just so I don’t have one drink. But if you can’t be bothered to help, maybe other gods can. I know there aren’t meant to be any other gods and all that bollocks, but I am a desperate man. Thor, if you exist in that other poxy religion, fire your thunder bolt into his face. Strike him down! Kill the fucker! Someone give him a heart attack, an aneurysm, brain damage, anything. Just so he can’t tempt me with a drink. OH GOD, HERE COMES THE OAF NOW!!’*

The man slithered over to the table once again, with two glittering glasses of whiskey. They looked so foul yet so delicious to Bernard.

‘Here we are, two triple whiskeys. Get it down your fucking neck my son! Got you a bag of Doctor Hog’s hairy pork scratchings and some Baroness Fishwater Scampi fries. I didn’t know which you liked best so I got both. Personally... I have a fetish for crackling. This is just between you and me, you know confession booth and all that, but I have been known to include the fatty snack in my lurid bedroom activities, nudge nudge and all that.

‘Oh you didn’t have to do that,’ whimpered Bernard. Inside, he was dying a death worse than the Crucifixion.

*‘Oh dear god, not crackling too. And Baroness Fishwater’s Scampi. Will these demonic temptations ever cease?’*

‘Oh you didn’t have to get me these snacks.’ Bernard said, sounding so weak and defeated.

‘Nonsense. It’s the least I can do..... what? What IS your name?’

‘Reverend Bernard Bland,’ he whispered

‘Bernard Bland eh? Nice name. Is it Bernard? Bernie? Bern? Bernio? Which would you prefer?’

‘Reverend Bernard is fine. And you are?..’

‘MacDonald Burns,’ replied the man, smog coming out of his gob as he gave away his cursed name. Bernard saw spirits emerge from the man’s mouth as he uttered the words, spirits that howled and screamed as they entered the earth’s air. Bernard soiled his under garment and the shite trickled down his leggy. Then the spirits rushed off and escaped through an air vent. ‘Everyone calls me Mack..... around these sodden parts,’ continued Mack.

‘Round these parts? What do you mean?’ asked Bernard.

‘Aye. Well known round here. Bit of a local character, an eccentric. Some might say..... village twat.’

‘Twat? Do you mean twit?’ enquired Bernard, trying hard to ignore the shite that ran down his leg like a desperate mucky canal.

‘NO!’ barked Mack, his voice echoing in the pub. ‘Twat! You know, minge, muff, mott, vagina, vulva, labia, clit, cunt, lady’s part? The female sexual organ! Even you must know that.’

‘Oh of course the um..... the twat.....’ muttered Bernard in discomfort.

‘They call me the village twat. Bastards.’

‘That is indeed a little harsh. And why have you been branded thus?’ Bernard asked.

‘Oh it’s quite embarrassing really. I don’t think.... Oh, I don’t want to get into it.’

‘OK let’s not then....’ Bernard said, attempting to avoid any more controversial subjects.

‘Take a sip of that father why don’t you? Drink up!’ said Mack, sliding the full glass towards the reverend across the table.

‘I’d best not.. really,’ gulped Bernard.

‘Just drink it Bernard!’ Mack barked, forcing the drink into his shaky hands.

‘No. I really don’t-‘

‘Bollocks Bernie! Bollocks.’ Snapped Mack, his eyes red and full of rage. ‘Get it down your fucking neck you gullible fuck, Judas, heathen, Scarab beetle. LIAR! LIVING A LIE!’

‘I think I’d best go,’ Bernard squeaked, attempting to stand. But Mack grabbed Bernard by his shoulder and pulled him back down to his damned hell.

‘Sit down fucker! Drink up you collared berk. Drink! Drink! Drink! Drink! Drink! Drink! Drink! Drink! Drink! Drink fucker! Drink!’

Mack banged his fist once again on the table, this time the scampi and crackling went spiralling into the air, out of control, like a tornado of light bar snacks. A torpedo of nibbles!

‘LEAVE ME ALONE!!!’ shouted Bernard, in utter turmoil.

‘Drink you fake! You phony! Jesus liked a tippie, didn’t he? He’d have liked Um Bongo probably. Bit of wine, now drink up!’

Bernard suddenly gave in to Mack’s relentless demands and took several cartoonishly large gulps of the whiskey, until there was..... no more. He had to admit to himself that he was, quite simply loving it.

*‘Oh...The taste. The smell. The feeling of it, flowing down my throat, the warmth in my tubes. The fire in my belly. Oh, sweet alcoholic friend. Welcome back into my loving arms, my home, a home which is made of skin, bones and organs, which pulsate in unison like fleshy bag pipes. Welcome home...’*

Bernard sighed upon completion and wiped the remaining liquid around his lips with his holy sleeve.

‘Now, that wasn’t so bad was it?’ Mack asked in the aftermath of the belated alcoholic fulfilment. A small sinister grin appeared on Bernard’s face as he lowered the glass.

‘No, it certainly wasn’t. I haven’t touched the stuff for years and all for good reason. Now where were we? You were just saying... about the wife?’

There was certainly a fraction of enjoyment appearing on Bernard’s face. Mack began his tragic tale of lust, desire, Christmas jumpers and hatred.

‘It’s a long story. The wife, you know her, the afore mentioned slut. She was seeing this one bloke. What a padlock he was. Fucking fuck nut. He was a golf pro. Had hair the colour of a swan’s wing, crocodile shoes on his feet, Camel hair jacket, a Christmas jumper tied round his waist and a pocket full of corn on the cobs. Poser. He had this look, a bit like Paul Newman in that film, The Colour of Money. Dapper old gent. Waaaaaaaay too old for my wife but I guess she couldn’t refuse that old grey knob of his.’

‘Oh. How terribly sordid.’ Bernard said, red cheeked as he rubbed his thighs, his palms shuffling on the fibres of his garb. ‘I’m getting into this... Mack.’

‘Aye. She said he was good with it.’

‘Good with what?’ asked Bernard, licking his tender, newly quenched lippypos.

‘His love rod, his fuck organ, his sex pipe, his Cumberland sausage of seduction. He had better control of it. Like Siegfried and Roy had control over that silver tiger. That tamed creature was as silver as his testicular fibres.’

‘Sounds like it gave you quite a hard blow.’

‘Aye,’ sighed Mack. ‘She gave him quite a hard blow too, as I once witnessed. On our bed. Our marital bed. On those sheets my mother bought us for our 10th wedding anniversary. Her dressed in that marital gowny I gave her. Oh the betrayal. Turns out she’d been knocking off the sly old fox for 11 years. Come to think of it, I had found white hairs on the bed sheets before. I just assumed they were the cat’s hairs, for we had a cat as pale in fur as a snowy Christmas. Then I realised they were from his old worn out pubic thatch. Ha. Ted Martini was his name. That slick old fucker. Saw him on the TV, grinning from ear to ear as he pulverised his opponents on the golf green. Hole in one. Ted Martini. Martini.’ Mack licked his lips, as if to imagine a cool Martini reaching them. ‘Do you want another drink Reverend?’

‘No. I have had one. I think I’ll head down to the church. I have some things to do, confession booth and such. It’s been nice speaking to you.’

‘Now now, come on. Have another whiskey reverend. It’s on me. Just one more. It’ll see you on your way. Warm your belly for the chilly afternoon breeze out there.’

Mack put his arm around Bernard.

‘No. I must not have another! No. No. I refuse it. No more of that sweet, warm, soothing whiskey. That lovely wet, quenching, calming liquid which fills my heart with joy. Makes me feel like myself again, the man I truly am. The man I want to be. Bernard Bland. Not reverend Bernard Bland..... But I can’t! I must not! God forbids it that I do such.’

‘Come on Bernie. Have another you berk. Don’t be a traitor. Don’t be like Judas. He got 40 pieces of silver for betraying his destiny. You got a triple whiskey out of me and it’s not even legal to serve a man a triple amount of spirit in one glass. Technically you’re worse than Judas when you think about it, because that drink cost me 2 pounds 21 pence. New coins. Mint condition, newly manufactured coins. Far worse than that poxy silver that burned a hole in the conscience pocket of dear Judas. You would leave here, knowing you are worse than him, Judas, the one true villain in your black leather bound good bookywook. So you, knowing this, would only have the option of hanging your not so good self from the nearest tree. You bearded sod. Charlatan! Heretic! Heathen. Whore monger. Living a lie!

‘OK! I’ll have the same again. This time.... less lime cordial.’

‘Glad to hear it.’ Purred Mack.

Mack left their table, this strange, unplanned union of theirs and went off to retrieve another pair of triple whiskeys for he and his collared friend. Bernard rubbed his thighs with one hand and his beard with the other in delight as he imagined that sweet liquid reaching his lips. Oh the bliss. Mack quickly returned with two full glasses, beaming all over his sweaty face.

‘Here you are Bernie. Take it. Enjoy it.... Love it.’

‘Oh thanks Macky.’

Bernard glugged away like a man who had just walked through a desert for three days, so thirsty and needy. Gulping savagely. Within a moment, it was all gone. Bernard was happy, happier than a dog with a hunk of butcher’s tripe.

‘So what happened between you and Ted after you discovered the affair?’ asked Bernard, leaning in closer, looking as desperate as a tabloid journalist.

‘Well, I stayed cool at first. I peered, peeked as you might say, through the crack in the door. I saw what they were up to, but I knew that anger at that point would solve nothing. I saw Ted Martini, twanging and snapping his braces against his naked red raw torso as he boinked away like a mad silver old wise chimp. He had the sweatiest arse I had ever seen in my life. It glistened in the morning sun light like a newly waxed Buick. I stayed very calm and considered my options, my plan of action if you like. I went outside and sat in my rust vessel for a while until I saw Ted leave my house, looking all smug, fastening that Christmas jumper around his oily, flabby waist, sucking in his gut to remain the golf pro superstar he so wanted to be. I followed him slowly in my silent, stealthy shit bucket of a car until we reached his home. And then I did what any honest man would.....’

‘You hit him?’

‘No. I power bummed him.’

There was a silence, as if the whole world had gone quiet to hear the rest of the tale. Bernard had a slight, oh so subtle bulge in his corduroy slacks.

‘Power bummed?’ he quizzed.

‘Yes. I power bummed him. I showed him who was boss, who was the king, who was the master. The Jack of all trades. The lord of the fuck.’

‘Oh.... how interesting.....’ Bernard suddenly became overcome with emotion, emotion which was hard to define. Anger? Arousal? He didn’t really know. It was the drink in him, flowing through his tubes and pipes like when the rivers ran red and the plagues came to town. ‘I have come across these types of things many times in my life, in my professional career as a man of the cloth. Men have urges, desires, jealousy. We are all guilty of it and I have had to listen to some truly disturbing tales from the mouths of this town’s people. There’s nothing unusual in your actions.... believe me I know.’

Mack frowned. Suddenly there seemed to be a reversal of power. Mack was intimidated by the perking up of the reverend, whose eyes bulged and forehead perspired. He looked like a sweaty, old, faded memory of a man.

‘What do you mean dear reverend?’ Mack asked, worried now.

‘There are many sordid tales of love, sex and envy in the world. Much emphasis on the word sex.’

‘Sex?’ asked Mack.

‘YES!’ yelled the enraged reverend, raising his arms in the air like when Moses parted the red sea. ‘Sex, sex, sex, sex ,sex, sex, sex, sex, sex!’

It was a grand spectacle, a dramatic scene of revelation.

‘I..I don’t understand.’ Mack stuttered.

‘I could tell you a few stories. A few little secrets from the holy shrine. A few naughty tales, exclusive nuggets. Oh yes, you will be amazed what we get up to.’

‘Who is WE?’ Mack asked, uncomfortable with the way things had turned.

‘Me and the devoted, who come to confess all their sins. Come on down sinners! Come on down!’

‘Their sins?’

‘Yes,’ Bernard said, as if it was so obvious. ‘Their dirty lil man sins. Well I say sins. Are they sins? We are guilty of certain depravities are we not? Certain regrets?’

‘What is going on?’ Asked Mack, his worried face and brow dripping wet with panic and confusion.

‘I get many men coming to my booth, confessing all their sins. And I must say, I find it frightfully delicious. These precious confessions. In my wank booth....’ Bernard paused for a moment. ‘I mean my confession booth. Oh what the hell, who am I kidding? It’s my wank booth!!’ Admitted the dark reverend.

‘Your what?’ Mack asked.

‘My toss lair. My masturbation man hole. My grot unit. My cubicle of muck. My wank booth. My fucking wank booth. MY WAAAAAAAANK BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOTH!’

‘What’s going on? I don’t understand.’

Bernard shoved his face right up against Mack's, veins pulsating, the redder getting redder.

'You should see some of the looks on the old women's faces as the men go limping out of my booth, shaky legged, their faces lined and scarred with grid like patterns from being pressed up against the sliding partition in my fuck booth, as I have my delicious way with them. Nib nib marks on their necks from my wandering teeth, my curious gnashers. Their clothes torn by my claw like nails which I have purposely grown longer so I can be like a desperate bird of prey in mating season, out for slim pickings and dirty lil man sinners like them. See? Look at my fucking nails.'

Bernard held up his hand, his claw like grabbers. It was true, the nails on his man talons were long, yellow and as sharp as a dagger.

'The men's eyes dart around the echoey halls in shock while they digest the harsh truth that they have had one hell of a time. Who says sin can't be fun? Not me, in my little wank booth, that's for sure. That's the god's honest truth.'

There was an awkward silence between the two men as they sat there in the pub, which had, quite understandably, gone rather quiet. The atmosphere had gone sour and Mack was in shock at the reverend's unexpected outburst of filth.

'I think I'll go home now,' Mack whispered, sheepishly.

'Go on. Piss off! Out of it!'

Mack left the pub, looking like a man who had just escaped death, shell shocked and ruined. In his lone moment of realisation and acceptance, Bernard loosened his collar and waved at the bar man. The collar blew about, as a slight draft came in through the air vent.

'Another triple whiskey, my friend.'

Bernard reached out for his flimsy paperback. It was *Animal Farm*.

**THE END**

