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SWANSEA TO PADDINGTON

Peter John

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Introduction

Swansea.

The scene commences with the second World War, with the story enhanced to capture the feelings and emotions that portray it from the point of view of the author, who remembers certain things that you, the reader, may like to know about.

If so please read on, but be warned this story contains bad English, and words that may offend!

Chapter 1

Two wars seemed to be taking place, one with the Hun up there intent on landscaping Swansea to their own specification, that is, flat, and also someone down at ground level, with similar views, who caused havoc with a rebellious disobedience that made life hell for anyone who wasn't on the same wavelength as him.

In Swansea on the freezing cold winter's evening, all transport had been terminated, due mainly to the heavy snow that had fallen throughout the day, and frozen solid.

Swansea looked like a ghost town, and everyone was wondering if Gerry was on night shit, sorry, night shift, duties that night. They had flattened the lower half of town, and it looked like it was our turn next.

The cat was pissed off with it, she'd been shitting all over the house; but mind you the Hun gave us a lovely firework display on the hills surrounding our town with their incendiary bombs. They could have waited till bonfire night, bloody impatient that lot!

Talking about bonfires, there were reports that dummy fires were lit the previous night to divert the Hun to drop his nasties harmlessly in the fields, at Strady Park. I thought that was a rugby ground.

South Wales red double decker buses that returned to Swansea, were unusually full.. Pissed off I was, Gerry must have been short on fuel. Llanelli was not that far away, only waste ground to the west of us.

The time was 7.30 pm, well at least it was when I wrote this, so don't alter your clocks. Police Constable Williams had just arrived back at the police station after spending the better part of the day keeping out of the sergeant's way. He had the dreaded task of filling in his report sheet, which wasn't too difficult, because he had still been unable to solve the increasing crime rate occurring in town.

Could have been the reason why the sergeant was on his back, shouting "Williams, job for you!"

“What, tonight, I’m just knocking off serg!” said Williams.

“In that case go and knock at this address with this urgent correspondence, now clear off disappear!” replied the sergeant.

So Williams started on his epic journey to the upper half of town, like a snow plough.

Making heavy work through the deep snow up Carmarthen road, he eventually had to turn left up a very steep hill, murmuring to himself.

‘Just my luck, it has to be the very top row of terrace houses laying off this ski slope, but somehow I have to deliver this envelope, there’s no chance of getting up there.’

So, overweight Williams, that’s being a little kind, made a head start, slowly making progress. Starting again from the bottom, and again, he made his last attempt, and finally the reached the top. Well, not quite the top, there was still one more street to go up, but he had to have a rest, otherwise Williams would have been a past memory.

Picking himself up from where he’d been squatting, he put his leg forward to cross over to the last street, when unexpectedly an avalanche of snow hit him, sending him sprawling backwards onto his ass, well onto his behind, again.

Lying there in the snow, dazed, he began to realise there was something unnatural, something not quite normal, on top of him. Clearing the snow from his eyes he gasped, and let out a cry of horror.

“Fuck no!” he prayed.

“Christ tell me I’m dreaming,” for gazing directly in his face was Butch, a nine year old horror story, who was so feared, that when a bus conductress once spotted him on her bus, she shat herself. Even the driver abandoned the bus.

And now here was Butch, on top of Williams.

Williams needed no more proof, as an old woman he recognised as Butch’s gran, was catching up fast, clutching at the windowsills, coming towards them.

“Gran,” Butch belched out “It’s Porky!”

“Who?” she muttered.

“Porky Pig.”

Williams, choking, spluttered out “get off me you bandy legged creep,” splurting the rest of the snow in Butch’s face.

When they were back on their feet again, Williams snapped out “what the hell are you two up to on such a night like this hey?”

“Gonna get chips for supper Porky,” said Butch.

“Ho, are you? Well I might be able to save you the bloody trouble.”

“Wa ya mean Porky?” asked Butch.

“Watch your mouth boy!”

“Well wa yu mean Porky?”

“Its like this you see, I, that’s me, being Police Constable Mr. Williams, on Special Assignment as you may have noticed, happened to observe when proceeding past the Premises known as Chip Chip Shop, on close examination, I came to the conclusion that there’s now a bloody big hole there!”

Butch’s eyes were now spinning around in his head as his brain was working overtime. He finally bellowed “Gran the fucking fish shops gone.”

“Gone, gone where? asked Gran.

“Up in bloody smoke you stupid handbag.”

“Thought the chips were a bit burnt last week,” she said.

Butch was now looking at Williams with sadness in his eyes. He said “but we haven’t anything to eat in the house.”

“If that’s the case you had better get back on that bloody dustbin lid you have been using for private transport and bloody find some,” said Williams.

Butch turned and made his way back towards Gran, at the same time looking back at Williams, a bit bewildered.

“Us Policemen have hearts you know, not that the serg should be informed of course,” thought Williams.

“Well let’s call him back, against my better judgment,” he thought.

“Hey Butchie, just a minute, come back a sec.” he called to the boy.

“What is it now Porky?” A subdued voice now emerged.

“Now look here, you take handbag home, I mean gran, as it’s becoming very dark now, and meet me back here in about ten minutes, ok?”

“What for Porky?”

“Supper for the two of you.”

“Really?” Butch said running back.

“Not yet, I have to make a call first at the next street up,” said Williams.

“Why are you going up there, there’s no-one in?”

Silence, then nervously again in a quieter voice, “there’s no-one in Porky.”

“Well I will just have to find out won’t I, now take Gran home before she catches frostbite,” said Williams.

Still rather puzzled as to what Butch was trying to tell him, Williams made his way to No 9, one street up, now feeling a little bit sorry, repeat a little bit, for having called Butch ‘bandy legs,’ The other kids made fun of him with his steel reinforced boots that were made especially for his wonky feet.

At last his mission was accomplished. A quick flick of the torch. Blinds were down with the black-out in force. He knocked, hoping someone was in.

“God its bloody cold up here on top of this hill. Wind’s ten times stronger, and now I’m busting for a pee,” thought Williams. “For fucks sake come on, I’ve knocked twice, come on!”

‘Right Williams,’ he thought, now really busting, ‘in the doorway, in case someone’s looking. Co that’s better!’

“You dirty little bastard!” a woman’s voice shrieked out.

“Shit the bloody door has opened. Ar, I have something for you,” he said.

“I don’t bloody want it,” she screamed, with the door slamming shut.

“Hang on a minute,” shouted Williams through the letter box, “come a long way to let you have it.”

“I told you, I don’t fucking want it.”

“You don’t understand, it’s important you accept what I have in my hand without delay,” said Williams.

“If you don’t clear off I shall send for the police,” she shouted.

“But I am the police, it’s a letter I am trying to give to you, an important one.”

With the door opening again sparingly, she stated, “look more like a bloody snowman on heat to me. Letter you say?”

“Yes.”

“Must be about my windows that have been smashed at the rear of the house.”

“Windows did you say, broken?” Williams stammered, “but who would do such vandalism?”

“How should I know, you’re the Detective?”

Williams felt thrilled.

“Detective hey? Sounds better than never mind.”

“You had better come in for a minute, it’s too dark to read it out here,” she said.

So Detective Williams entered, only to be greeted with a screaming howl.

“That’s my fucking foot you just trod on!” she cried.

“So sorry didn’t see you were holding the door open.”

At the end of this dark passageway, a door was open, with reflections of flickering lights dancing on the walls, that a welcoming coal fire, burning fiercely, was giving off. He guessed that they were probably caused by the drafts coming from the broken windows, since the blinds were down.

She entered the room behind Williams, and on turning round he saw her for the first time.

‘God she looks like someone out of Hollywood with flowing blond hair, blue eyes, slim, around 20 years old, and lips set in the face of an angel,’ thought Williams.

Pure observation you understand, comes from basic training.

“Letter, please wait a sec, while I find my glasses, think they’re in the kitchen,” she said.

Williams took the chance to move closer to the fire.

“Co that’s better,” he thought warming his backside, and after a little while she came back and he stepped forward to hand her the letter. He noticed a slight tremble of her hand, as she was about to open it.

“Miss Bonnie Clee. Yes this is for me, I’m used to being called Blondie,” she said.

“Is that because of the colour of your hair?”

“Something along those lines detective!”

Williams noticed tears welling up in her eyes as she read the contents of the letter, so he asked politely “what’s the matter love, won’t the insurance pay out for the windows?”

“It’s my mother,” she said, “it says that she had an accident in London and the hospital wishes me to attend immediately, so it must be serious!”

“I am sorry Blondie, but what’s your mother doing in London?”

“Well my father is helping out with the war office there. You see, we are Americans and my mother was visiting him, going back home in the spring,” she answered.

“Ho you’re from the States are you, thought I hadn’t seen you hanging about the bus shelters.”

“What’s that?”

“Town I meant to say.”

“Between one thing and another I will be glad to go home. And now the windows. I’ll kill that little sod.” she said.

“Who, Butch?” he asked.

“Who the hell’s Butch? It’s that bloody cat again. See that pool by the fireplace, it pees everywhere, got an excuse for everything, if it’s not the bombs it’s probably the snow’s too cold.”

“Your cat?”

“No, last occupant’s, keeps coming back; they left about a month ago. We are renting the house temporarily. It’s the moggie’s fault.”

“Wasn’t the snow melting off my uniform was it?” asked Williams.

Blondie sat down on the arm chair looking at him with glazed eyes.

Focusing his eyes directly at her, she looked so beautiful, that he wanted to ‘you’re sick Williams’ he had to admit to himself.

‘Ho well, back to work,’ thought Williams, ‘let’s weigh up the situation confronting me, that’s what sergeant sent me on this delicate task for, knowing that with my cool head in all circumstances, I will soon have my good service medal with short conduct. So notebook and pencil. Soaking wet. Shit!’

He wrote in his notebook.

- (1) Female sobbing on chair, check, yes still sobbing.
- (2) One imaginary cat, gone missing.
- (3) No cup of tea, and dying for a pee.
- (4) One sex maniac
- (5) Delete last item quick.
- (6) Woman now looking sexier, sorry, serious.

Looking up at him, or down, as he is only short, she mentioned that if there was a train leaving that night for London she would try to make the journey, and did he know the train times?

“With the weather conditions, it’s very unlikely any trains are running,” he replied.

“Are you sure?” she asked.

“Well I did call in at the railway station on my way here to see if my friend Alex was back off the sick. Alex is the normal ticket officer, also doing other duties these days, station master, come what may, but there’s this man from Cardiff on relief standing in for him. He mentioned to me that all passenger trains to and from Swansea have been cancelled, apart from the Royal Mail Train, scheduled to leave for Cardiff and Paddington this evening. But he was worried, because the engine went to Llandore coaling depot and hasn’t returned and now it’s late. Might be stuck in the snow, and Spensor, the ticket man, wants to lock up for the night,” said Williams.

“I don’t quite understand why you are mentioning this, as it’s not helping me, is there a reason?” asked Blondie.

“Blondie don’t bank your heart on it, there’s a remote chance that if the Mail Train makes the attempt tonight .. I will disclose private information that’s only for your ears.”

“Ho please will you, what is it quick tell me?” she said.

“You must never underestimate us Policemen. Only recently, through much detective detection, it came to my knowledge that the leading carriage on the Mail Train has one or two seating compartments, plus a sleeper, only used for staff when on very long journeys. So use your charm and good looks to get round this Spensor chap, plus the engine driver, with your plight, maybe that’s the only chance you are likely to have of travelling to your destination tonight. Good luck, but a word of warning, this Mr. Spensor gentleman has been in the job too long if you ask me, thinks he owns the railway.”

“Thanks for your help Mr...?” said Blondie, not sure what his name was.

“Ho, P. Williams,” he replied.

“Yes that name suits you. I mean Policeman Williams.” She said.

She led him back along the passageway to the front door.

“Bye for now, get in touch with the Police station if you need further assistance again and naturally you know who to ask for,” said Williams as he left the house.

“I won’t forget P. Willy, I mean Williams,” she smiled.

She closed the door.

‘Right now she’s gone, so, without delay. Co that’s better,’ thought Williams, as the fucking door opened again.

“You bloody at it again you dirty little bastard, now look here, when you stop watering my legs like I’m some bloody plant, take your helmet you forgot, and one other thing I forgot to mention.”

Silence.

“Have you finished ? Sure? Now go and find my air raid shelter someone’s fucking nicked.”

Slam went the door.

‘Gerry please drop a bomb on me, air raid shed, windows, what next?’ thought Williams.

He stood and thought awhile.

‘Swansea people don’t do that sort of thing; except? The little bastard, I’ll fucking kill him.’

‘Must not jump to conclusions must I? Now steady on Williams, some logical thought’s required here. That’s it, do some scientific calculations I will, now let’s see. Sexy lives in No 9, with the rest of the houses to the corner numbered 7, 5, 3, 1. So if I count nine doors up in the next street down I bet you anything that Butch’s Back garden lies directly behind Blondie’s, apart from the high dividing wall. Got him!’

Williams was now dreading the next mission. He thought that he wouldn’t wish it upon anyone, well not quite anyone, maybe someone that runs round in red and white, and that’s not a bus.

Rounding the corner he spotted Butch. This nine-too-many year old misfit was now helping a black cat to get over the deep snow to the other side of the road, on the end of his boot.

“Hey,” shouted Williams, “leave that bloody cat alone.”

“It’s been pestering my chickens,” said Butch.

“Chickens? And where did you get them from?”

“They flew in the other day.” answered Butch.

“Did they? I suppose bloody Heinz dropped them from a Dornier bomber especially for you. Did he also drop by parachute a tin shed in the shape of an air raid shelter, useful for keeping chicks warm that just happened to fall in your back yard?” said Williams.

“Give you some eggs when they start laying Mr. Williams.” said Butch.

Williams thought that sounded a good deal.

“Right then Butch, gave me a hand down this steep hill and we’ll go and find some supper for the two of you.”

Holding hands, Butch and Williams slipped and slid their way down to the bottom, and then turned down Carmarthen road, towards High Street railway station GWR. The road was now deserted, and dark, with the terraced houses and shops vaguely illuminated by the scant reflections of the starlight off the snow.

From a gap on their right came a waft of wind that smelt of smouldering chips, over-cooked. Williams wanted to say to Butch, "well Butch could say he had his chips," but he'd only say "but I never!"

Unusually quiet, Butch suddenly pointed his hand in the air and said, "I saw a German bomber plane flying up this road, and the driver waved at me."

He meant pilot.

"He must have been flying very low," said Williams.

"Yea just above those chimney tops."

"Well how do you know it was a German plane?"

"Because there were funny crosses painted all over it, then I was told the bloody R.A.F. did some target practice on it over the channel and it fell in the water," said Butch.

Relating this tale, Butch seemed to withdraw into himself, back in his own world again, as though the pilot had been a personal friend.

"Never mind, he delivered the bloody chickens, must have known that you would look after them for him," said Williams.

Still his quiet self, Butch and Williams slowly trenched their way along and, Williams asked him, "by the way Butch are you still selling candles for the rugby club?"

"Not any more," replied Butch.

"Love to know why?"

"Its that bloody dogs collar down at the Baptist church, he told me he would stick them up my trousers if I went there again, mumbled something about his lost flock that no longer worshipped there, didn't like R.C., stamped on them when lighting a candle," said Butch.

Church bells started ringing in Williams' head.

"Tell me Butch," he said, "have you lately been up to St Josephs R. C. Church doing errands for the nuns at the convent?"

"Do you mean that Roman Catholic church?"

"Yes I do."

"No, the nuns have gone," said Butch.

"Gone where Butch?"

"Well if they're not hiding in the cellars from the bombs, they must be on overseas missionaries, never see them these days."

"Thought they might have staved to death the way you were known to divide the groceries," joked Williams.

While he was still in a talkative mood, Williams decided to ask him about the tragic accident at the bus stop in the Waun Wen area.

Butch replied, "don't you fucking blame me for that."

"Ok" said Williams, "you don't have to tell me if you don't wish to, but if you withhold evidence from me I will tell the serg. who the culprit is who burnt the grand stand down in the park, twice!"

"Alright then, it was like this. No. 84 bus in the lead and behind No 84 was No 83, and behind No 83 there were ten more buses trying to catch up. But I only go on No 84 Ravens Hill, because it's the fastest. Besides, I've been banned off the rest. It's not my fault the conductor was leaning out of the standing bay at the back of the bus trying to see if I was on the bus stop, when the bloody lamppost knocked his head off."

"God forbid there's no end to it, and memories are still haunting me," said Williams."

Williams remembered that it was only last year that he was given the task to report on the situation regarding the kiosk on the Mumbles Swansea electric tram line. Innocently kids were building sand castles on the beach with a Punch and Judy show as the treat in the late afternoon. Butch, who had been looking forward to a bit more excitement, built his sand castle on the railway line.

Travelling at seventy miles an hour, a double-banker with over 200 passengers on board the trams, happily returning from the sands, sea, sun and seagulls, ploughed into an Egyptian pyramid that almost derailed it.

He thought about the incident involving the Tower cinema, but decided that it was best to forget it, as he could reel it off in his mind all night. He would rather join the children wondering what happened to the last in the series of Tarzan and Jane.

Butch started to complain that his feet were freezing.

"Why is that, you have a good pair of boots on?" said Williams.

"Holes in the soles Mr. Williams."

'Mr. Williams he's after something here,' thought Williams.

"Not surprised," he said, "after the way you been seen hanging on the rear bumpers of the Swansea double-decker transport buses making slow progress up this road, dragging along on your hob nail boots with sparks shooting in the air. Everyone wondered if the buses were on fire."

"I will make a deal with you Butch; you tell me what you know about the substance called glass," said Williams.

"Glass? Glass did you say?"

"Yes bloody window glass," shouted Williams.

"Shit, what's the deal Porky?"

"New boots from the Police funds," said Williams.

"It would help if you would indicate which area of town you're enquiring about," asked Butch.

"Chick chick area like."

"Didn't do it on purpose. I was only trying to shoot down one of those balloon things up in the sky above our house with my new catapult I made, it needs slight adjustment I think," answered Butch.

"You mean like your head! You see Butch, balloon things above your house and the surrounding hills are there for a reason and not intended as target practice for the likes of you."

"Wha they there for Porky?"

"Barrage balloons are to stop your friends doing guided tours of Swansea. If Hans or Heinz flies under them the strong steel wires hanging from them will rip their wings off," explained Williams.

"Is that why the German bomber flew up the main road just above the roof tops one afternoon?" asked Butch.

"Could be that may have been his only escape out of town before heading back out to sea with a shadowing spitfire waiting nearby in case Hans needed directions. RAF knew it could have caused a lot of damage to property if the Bomber had an accident in a populated area. Also when you stated that the driver waved to you, he was more than likely telling you to get out of the fucking way. Had enough troubles already, specially that your reputation had reached the Fatherland, and is more of a threat to pilots than a bussing bee above him."

Nearing the railway station one could not help but notice the high structural outline of bombed-out buildings, like decaying castles, and now with the moon's reflection penetrating through the gaps in the clouds casting an eerie shadow upon them.

Seemed like skeletons reaching to the sky as if to say "why?"

Williams stopped outside the station and, Butch looking up at him said "why are we waiting here?"

"It's ok. What I would like you to do is to go into the station and get some chocolates for you and gran from the penny machine on platform one, as I am now heading for the Police Station to salvage some pies and sandwiches from the canteen for your supper. As you maybe aware if you came along with me you will be eating your supper and breakfast behind bars. Here's six pennies, real ones, not the halfpennies you bunged the machine up when placing them under the steam engines to counterfeit the Kings coinage," said Williams.

Leaving Butch wandering his way, lonesome and confused to the entrance, Williams felt that he could feel sorry for him on rare occasions.

Dressed in rags, mam and dad blown to pieces during the blitz on Swansea, good job he was with gran that night, or was it?

Shut up Williams don't be so cruel!

Chapter 2 - Swansea High Street Station G.W.R.

The end of the line. If trains don't stop, they could end up other side of town on the LMS line.

From the majestic entrance, you had the view of the full length of this exciting station, where thundering, clapping monsters rolled in from far-away places. Frightening if standing behind the stop buffers, that unlike today, were smack against the end of the platforms.

On many occasions, a screaming express train with sparks shooting up from skidding wheels, entered too fast, and smacked into the buffers, ricocheting the carriages one by one right back to the end of the train. Departing passengers, after recovering from the shock, threw insults at the driver, who seemed to have quickly disappeared.

It was worth visiting the station on cold winter's evenings, to watch all of this thrilling activity, especially since there was nothing else to do, unless the air raid sirens went off. If they did, the people knew what to do. Pray!

The biggest difficulty was finding a penny, which you handed to the Ticket Man for a platform ticket, that allowed you to enter through the concertina steel gates.

In between the hustle and bustle of the patiently waited express trains, came the gloom, with deserted platforms and a couple of uninteresting small black engines coughing and hissing, waiting for someone to travel on them. Then they would silently leave on their lonely journeys to the back of beyond.

If you managed to sneak past the ticket man with the mass exodus rushing to catch a bus or something, you had your penny to spend in the choc machine, which is where Butch headed for.

In the ticket office, Mr. Spensor, extraordinary similar to the inspector on the buses series, sat in his chair in the dim light, quietly reading his railway magazine, drinking and sipping a mug of tea, half asleep.

“Hey! Steam man,” shrieked a voice from nowhere, splitting the silence, as if a steam engine had come crashing through the steel closed gates outside the hatch.

With half the tea inside of him, he couldn’t decide if it was going to make its way back to the mug or elsewhere. With choking and spluttering that could be heard in the Uplands of Swansea, he wiped the tears from his eyes, and focussed on the hatch, only to see a head peering through the opening.

Adjusting his specs, he recognised the horror kid!

Spensor had no difficulty in his mind as to what was glaring at him, as his picture was pasted on the office wall with a railway warning to all staff, that on no account should this juvenile be allowed near rolling stock, even if escorted by railway police!

“Hoy puff-puff man,” came a yell.

“Don’t you bloody-well call me puff man again, now P off.”

An air of silence gripped the air once again, when a gentle little voice asked, “Mr. Spensor can I go and get a chocolate please?”

“No,” said Spensor.

“Mr. Spensor did you hear me? I only want a chocolate please Mr. Spensor.”

This is what Spensor loved; people crawling to him giving him the air of importance.

“Do you have a penny for a platform ticket?” he asked, eyes still glued to his mag, hoping to frustrate horror child with his lack of interest in him.

“No I’ve only got one penny.” said Butch.

“Only have one penny hey, that will buy you a ticket if I decide to give you one. And after careful consideration I have made my decision. Piss off!”

Spensor, feeling as if he was in command of all security in the west Wales area, felt chuffed in his management role of handling this tricky situation.

Until a pitiful voice said, “I found another penny Mr. Spensor.”

“Show me,” he snapped.

Butch reluctantly offered the penny in the palm of his grubby hand, which Spensor duly grabbed before Butch changed his mind. He then issued him with a small red ticket to allow him on the platforms through the prison gates.

Threatening little Butch he would tell the driver of the steam lorry, that if he wrecked any railway property tonight, the fire and smoke belching out of the chimney, that petrified Butch, would seek him out when hiding in the shop doorways.

With the relief that 'it' had gone Spensor went back to his reading matter, but within minutes his concentration was disturbed by some unusual sounds coming from the direction off the platform vicinity. Raising his head listened carefully, and then it came again, must be a porter with some late parcels for the mail train he imagined. Creepy places railway stations at night especially when on your own, gives one the shivers.

Spensor's revelry came to an abrupt end as horror child mouthed "hey steam man the fucking things empty and I lost all my money!"

Realisation dawned on Spensor, and a forced smile steadily parted his lips.

"Ha ha I had the last one an hour ago, now get back to where you came from."

"You bastard," Butch mouthed, with all the venom he could muster, but realising the futility of the situation, turned and vanished.

After the nightmare, Spensor poured himself another mug of tea, glanced up at the office clock and pondered as to the whereabouts of the mail train engine driver. Thoughts of going home were uppermost on his mind but his sense of duty, as he would like to interpret it, held him back with the uncertainty of not knowing the mail trains driver's intentions. Enjoying this fresh mug of tea, his interest in his magazine deepened as something previously overlooked caught his eye.

Certainly did catch his eye, as a large snowball blasted its way on its journey smack into Spensor's face, propelling his glasses and cap in all directions plus, his tea all over his paperwork. Despite the shock he leapt and leaped in total anger for the hatch to strangle this little shit from? But knew all too well it was too late to do justice, he would be long gone.

Spensor couldn't believe his luck when seeing Butch himself, picking himself up, looking dazed, off the deck, for in his bid to escape he had careered straight into a young woman approaching the ticket office.

Helping Butch back up off the floor by his neck, when the lady cried "leave the child alone you're hurting him!"

"Hurting him, I'll bloody kill him," said Spensor.

Seeing that this young lady was defending horror kid, he said "who are you, his Mother?"

"No I have never seen him before," she replied.

"Take my advice love, you never want to."

Spensor now more intrigued with a woman's company on such a lonesome night, unintentionally slackened his grip on Butch, and he was away, disappearing into the darkness.

With the rat gone Spensor devoted more attention to this pretty girl stood there before him, and politely asked "what can I do for you my lovely?"

"Has the Mail Train departed yet?" inquired the young lady.

"Why, do you have a late parcel or luggage," he asked, seeing she was carrying something large in her hands?

"No, it's I who have to somehow reach London tonight," she said.

"That's impossible. All passenger trains have been cancelled due to the line conditions."

"But what about the mail one?" she mentioned.

Spensor could sense by the tone in her voice something was wrong, and said, "better step into the office and tell me about the urgency."

So sorrowfully she did.

"There might be a small chance if I make one or two phone calls, never know with my influence," he warmly assured her.

"Have a warm by the fire," he said looking her up and down for the down for the third time, and covering quickly his rail mags out of sight. Looked like he was taking her for a ride, unaware to her, but not on a steam train. Whatever!

His imagination was now running away with him. So after what seemed to be some official communications, relayed to her what she already knew. Repeat. One engine, plus one driver, somewhere on the outskirts of Swansea, coaling the tender for the anticipated scheduled long journey in hazardous conditions to its destination, London.

"I'm none the wiser," she said, "is it going or not?"

"You should appreciate the fact that unknowing to the general public, I can arrange for you to travel on this train unofficially with the bonus of a seating compartment in the leading carriage, as long as the driver agrees."

"I do appreciate your help, but I'm still in a quandary as to the fact will the train be going or not?"

"Don't know!"

Spensor shuddered coming back to earth. Lost for words, he suggested would she like to walk up platform one and see if the engine has retuned, as in the darkness and the curvature of the platforms it's impossible to see.

During the conversations Spensor's reaction escaped her. In his fantasy world, a Goddess was standing before him, casting sunlight in this dreary office he seemed to be a prisoner in.

She cast her mind back to Williams' remarks. This Spensor person seemed to be overwhelmingly considerate after mentioning the necessity to attend the hospital before the morning, can't fault him.

With a glimmer of hope, Blondie said 'thank you', and made her way to the platforms.

With no bill boards or train time tables obstructing her vision, she had a murky view of all of the platforms that ended directly in front of her.

"Number one, that must be the one on my left with a long line of windowless carriages tight up against the buffers," she thought.

In this alien environment that smelt of sulphur, with shadows of ghostly black engines lurking in other platforms, she felt nervous, and imagined they were staring at her, now alone in what seemed similar to walking through a cemetery at night.

Blondie made her way over to the end platform and slowly walked along, counting the mail carriages until she reached the end of the overhead canopy. Ten so far, with I think another four outside the shelter, but no engine in sight," she thought. Apart from the snow now falling heavily again.

Finding a station bench, she decided to sit down and have a cigarette, being careful not to let the light from the match reflect, as from the air the Luftwaffe could spot a glare a mile off. Sitting there looking at the sleeping mail coaches waiting for their engine to return and take them for a ride, knowing how they feel. Some time later, cuddled up underneath the flickering gas light tucked away on the wall out of harms way, she felt the air of gloom overtaking her, and came to the conclusion it's just hopeless. Now with the tears running down her face she finally thought, 'time to go home.'

But just at that moment she thought she heard the faint whistle of a steam engine a long way off in the distance. For what seemed like hours she listened carefully, keeping a sharp lookout beyond the station entrance through the flurry of snow obscuring her view from the various rail lines leading to the station. Time stood still, and she even truly came to the conclusion that what she heard must have been her imagination.

Blondie said goodnight to the lonely little gas light that had gave her the feeling of warmth and company when sat beneath it, then started to wander back down the platform, taking one more look back behind her as if a miracle was about to transpire. She stood there motionless, as there seemed to be a big black shadow piecing through the snow, like a sailing ship gliding out of the mist. 'What can it be?' she thought, 'it can't be, it's the engine, it's the engine!'

Blondie sank lifeless as this huge monster silently reversed on to the leading coach, giving it a gentle thump that creaked the line of mail coaches that she was stood by.

'So here is, the lost engine, thank God.'

Now elated she wanted to dash up to the driver and throw her arms around him, as if he had battled through the snow just for her. Before making a move she caught sight of the driver making his way towards her still out of the protection of the overhead canopy. He had his cap down covering his face from the stinging cold snow. Now very close to her, she said “excuse me,” very quickly waiting for a response, then “excuse me,” this time a little louder. He still seemed unaware of her presence, so rather louder said “Mr. Engine driver.”

Nothing. Pause, then, “are you fucking deaf or something!” she screamed.

Engine driver freezes one leg still in the air. Regaining his senses half glanced in her direction then took another jump in the air in total shock as if he had seen a ghost.

“God he said I’m sorry, I didn’t see you standing there. Exit’s that way.”

“Not the exit I want, it’s you.”

In disbelief, he didn’t know quite what she meant.

“Date tonight? Would like to help you lady, but I have enough problems already.”

“You have to help me please.”

“Well what’s the trouble?” he said.

So Blondie explained the tragic circumstances leading to her request for his assistance. The Engine Driver introduced himself as Dick, almost in tears himself.

“Dick you’re the second dick I’ve met tonight.”

“Pardon?”

Blondie gave him a smile and said “my names Blondie.”

“Don’t tell me you must have blond hair under your head scarf.”

“Maybe.”

She smiled again and Dick caught the glitter in her beautiful eyes, and he was beginning to feel the magic warmth of her presence.

“You will have to bear with me for a while,” he said, “I cannot promise you anything definite yet, so don’t set your heart on it. First I have to check on the line conditions with Mr. Spensor, who you already had the pleasure of meeting. Secondly signal clearance, and thirdly a bottle of scotch.”

“Scotch?” Blondie remarked.

“Afraid so. When I said to you I had problems I meant it.”

“You mean you’re on the pop?”

“Not me, its Jack my fireman. That’s why we are long overdue, as you been already informed we went for coaling And while at the depot Jack went for a piss, I mean...”

“You meant toilet?”

“Sorry Blondie. Well his idea of a toilet was tramping across snow-laden fields to find a pub toilet. That’s where I eventually found him. You see he’s an alcoholic, thinks it will solve the depression he’s been going through lately.”

“Ho I am sorry,” murmured Blondie, “is he all right at the moment?”

“He will be if I can find him a bottle of pop, lost his one in the dark getting him back from the pub, and now refuses to go anywhere tonight unless ..”

“Have you reported him?”

“I should I suppose, but who could report someone who’s been like a brother, always ready to defend me even when I may be in the wrong, best friend any one could wish to have, although a bit lacking upstairs on occasions. The truth is we shan’t be going anywhere tonight without him, with his size and strength he will have emptied a full tender of coal by the time we reach our destination , and that’s a tremendous feat I can assure you, especially in the state he’s likely to be in. Don’t worry, apart from the train spotters overhead, snow drifts are the only item we can’t handle. That’s what I have to check on now, so if you will kindly wait here I will see you shortly.”

Blondie felt a lot better.

‘What a nice man,’ she thought, ‘taking me into his confidence, and me a complete stranger.’

Dick duly returned, not forgetting Jacks lighter fuel.

“Right Blondie, it’s now or never, give me your bag and follow me carefully as it’s very slippery on the rest of the platform.”

“Ever such a long platform,” she remarked.

“Second to Paddington I believe, apart from a little known station at Pontypridd.”

“What’s that, are you swearing at me?”

“God it’s cold out here out of the shelter of the canopy. Nearly there, at last now you can cry out, ‘England we’re on our way.’”

“Here we are then, as they say in Carmarthen, right next to the tender. You’ll be able to wave to me. I will keep a look out from time to time to see if you’re aright. In you go then,” as Dick opened the carriage door and mentioned not to open the window blinds with the compartment lights on.

“I will leave my torch if you may wish to use the WC that is at the end of the corridor, before you enter the next coach.”

He showed her into the first compartment and switched the internal lights on.

‘This is lovely,’ she thought, ‘clean and tidy, can see it hasn’t been used much, just so cold in here.’

As though reading her thoughts Dick knelt down by the radiator and turned the reluctant valve until a wisp of steam indicated the heating was now in progress.

His concentration now removed from mechanical items, turned to face her. She had removed her head scarf and coat, and now in the full light of the compartment lights portrayed her full stunning beauty. And what Dick cast his eyes on made him weak at the knees, almost spellbound, that made him stagger back on the radiator.

Blondie, with a slight flick of her head pushing her shining blond hair sweeping backwards, said “hope you haven’t had a sly one out of your mate’s bottle.”

Dick was transfixed and continued to stare making her feel uncomfortable.

“Is there something wrong?” inquired Blondie.

“No,” Dick struggling to get his words out, “it’s just, and what I say is true, I have never ever seen anyone so mystical, so glamorous, you know what I’m trying to say?”

“Thank you,” she said, “I know people look twice at me, must be the American clothes I wear, or something.”

Then trying to cover her embarrassment, she continued to say, “do you think the engine can manage tonight? I counted 14 mail coaches on this train, I’ve never seen as many before on one engine. Nine I counted before trying to find the restaurant car on the last express I was travelling on.”

Dick having got over his initial surprise, was now back on home ground, and in response to the question hastily lectured her, not realising he was sounding a bit serious when he quoted “do you realize you will be travelling tonight on one of the best engines ever built by man or God whoever, that let this miracle roll out of the Swindon engine sheds, believe me.”

Summoning up her scant knowledge of British locomotives, and wishing to show interest, and to keep Dick’s mind on the job rather than her tits he was staring at, she said, “it must be the Flying Scotsman then, right?”

If looks could kill, she was dead. Dick was now visibly frowning.

“That’s done it, do you really want to go to London tonight?”

“You know I do,” she added rather crest-fallen.

“Right, I’m going to see Jack, so settle down and make yourself comfortable.”

A wry smile lit the corners of his mouth. How could such a sweet maiden be expected to know anything other than woman’s things, hope she hasn’t taken things seriously. Should have just mentioned to her she would be travelling on Gods wonderful railway shouldn’t I?

With Teacher gone Blondie slumped on the full-length compartment seat, ready for the journey to the unknown to get rolling. Trying to regain her thoughts and relax a little. The sliding door burst open.

“What now?” she gasped.

Trouble. Must be. Jack?

Her fears were unfounded as Dick handed her a tin mug of steaming tea.

“Here,” he said, “this will warm you up for the journey.”

‘How sweet,’ she thought, him, not the tea.

Taking a sip, avoiding the soot decorating the white canister that might be mistaken in the dark as sugar supplement, she shuddered .

Dick smiled and said “blame Jack not me. I said you didn’t need a sweetener. Must have put half the bottle in.”

“Do thank him, best English tea I’ve ever tasted, thanks again.”

“We are ready to move, so hang on.”

Dick became very edgy and left quickly. Blondie could sense with a cold shiver he was keeping secrets from her. And that hissing monster up front sounds now, it’s ready to explode. She didn’t know why but she chased after him, only to see him climbing up on to the engine under a canvas top that he had mentioned was to keep the cold out and the fire glare from nosey Dorniers .

Above the din she shouted as loud as she could , “I’ll give you a big kiss when we get there.”

She didn’t think he had heard her, but thankfully he must have, as he peeped out behind the canvas shield and said, “promise?”

She threw him a kiss, with a promise from her heart.

Back in the coach again with the tears to keep her company, she finished drinking the tea, accompanied with bag pipes ringing in her ears. ‘Bloody Jock (Jack), I’ll kill him.’

Away, yes or derailed, God what’s going on? One gigantic jerk forward, accompanied by some thunderous blast that must have awakened half of Swansea, this sleeping giant that slid into the station almost unnoticed, now showed its fire and glory, begging to unleash its

fury on come what may. She hoped that Dick could control this beast, glanced out of the window remembering the drill. Lights out, blinds up, window down. Yes finally on her way, and looking out of the window, she could see behind, the long snake of carriages winding their way out of Swansea High Street, slowly disappearing in the background, looking so lonely.

The train now settled down a bit, but still thrust forward, picking up speed all the time. The peaceful sight of the now lightly falling snow covering the rooftops of houses and factories, struck her, blanketing the landscape as the town settled peacefully for the night. She now turned her attention to the engine, avoiding some black smuts stinging her eyes, and witnessed for herself this great wonder, with its massive driving wheels carving through the snow effortlessly. Not knowing if it was the melting snow or a few tears that were streaming down her face, as it now really dawned on her that this majestic engine was in reality helping her to achieve her objective to get to London.

At that moment she had a view of the nameplate above these gigantic wheels, made clear by the snow stuck to the letters, and straining her eyes tried to make out the name in front of Castle, despite the rush of icy air blasting in her face, she stuck to it until she had deciphered all the letters-Dryslwyn. So this is his little baby, Dryslwyn Castle, more like a Welsh dragon the way it's thundering along now, what power and beauty with its silhouette vivid against the silky snow background.

Time to settle down back in the warmth, so go through the instructions and by doing so thoughts of Dick crossed her mind, woman's instinct knew he was fond of her, and although handsome seemed a lot older than her boyfriend back in the States.

Dismissed the thought.

It was her mother this course of events that has put her in this situation and mother needs daughter full stop.

Now comfortable, stretched out on the cushioned bench seat with time ticking by, the 'clunk clunk' of the rails, the swaying carriage plus the sound of a gale passing the windows, she now became as snug as a bug in a rug, escaping reality of the treacherous conditions prevailing outside. Strangely kept thinking about Dick up front, knew he could have aborted this nightmare journey, all he had to do was mention that his fireman wasn't fit for it. Love these Welsh men, so kind. Second thoughts, what about that man ringing an innocent kids neck, and the police man peeing over me, and my windows, and the bloody air raid shelter, ho go back to sleep Blondie.

And so she tried, but then started to feel sorry for the cat outside in the cold. She eventually did fall asleep.

She wasn't aware that sleep had overtaken her until she was thrown off the seat by a violent lurch of the carriage, the brakes squealing, with the train shuddering very erratically, now coming to a grinding halt. Scrambling very unlady-like back to the seat as if it was all a bad dream, that distinctive blast of this indispensable Castle let rip again, and yes they were moving again, ho thank God for that. Beginning to sound like Dick.

Slipping into a world of dreams, half awake, half asleep, where reality gets blurred to what seemed like hours, her sixth sense brought her to realise that all of a sudden her legs were frozen and a casual glance at the compartment door seen it was open. Must have opened when the train came to a halt, that's it, so she moved in a defensive nature and closed it, still pondering in her mind what really had caused the door to open. She lay back down but sleep eluded her. A feeling of foreboding had taken hold, filling the carriage with its doubting presence. Time after time her eyes seemed to be drawn towards the door. God it's open again! Calling upon her reserves of courage she forced herself to open the door fully and look down the corridor and with the torch light seen nothing. Her imagination playing tricks probably. All the reaction of the shock with the news concerning her mother.

Desperately now in need of the toilet, but too frightened to venture down that creepy dark corridor, it became a case of having to, so she grabbed the torch again, closed her eyes and made a dash for it, half expecting for someone to put a hand on her at any second as if expecting it.

On rounding the corner at the end of the corridor, she found the toilet, and a view of the entrance to the following coach, dark & scary, shaking to and fro with the wind howling through the concertina walkway, and with the defining clatter being emitted by the wheels racing over the rails.

Glad to be in the safety of the WC with the door locked, she found the light switch. With the small cubical rattling and rocking with the speed the train it was impossible to stand up! Sitting there amongst all the din taking place, the confusion of the noise and clattering, further torture confronted her with the realisation that the engaged sign of the door handle was being violently manhandled. Could it be the swaying and rushing wind combined with this expresses flight penetrating the darkness on this cruel night? Now obsessed with focusing her eyes to the door handle, it finely dawned on her, she wasn't the only person travelling on this train tonight! The immediate situation left Blondie in a state of panic. Imprisoned now in this cubical, she pondered what to do, still praying it was her imagination again. After a while she came to the decision either stay put or make a dash back to the compartment and pull the emergency stop cord, then the train will stop and then she will be safe in Dick's arms. The latter she decided on. With a mad dash she raced towards the stop cord.

Without any hesitation she was half reaching at the emergency cord to bring this train to a grinding halt, with everything moving in slow motion, or so it seemed, with hands like jelly trembling and frightened, when she sensed something was already behind her, an evil presence lurking in the compartment doorway. Slowly turning her head to confirm her instinct, there it was in the shape of a naked man with a mailbag over his head, with slits for the eyes. In an instant he was lunging upon her with no sign that her attempt to stop the train had worked. Her resistance was futile, he soon overpowered her, and in the attack knocked her flying backwards, crashing her head against the metal radiator, and that would be the end for her to have any more recollection of what was about to take place.

Meanwhile up front battling against the odd, Dick commented to Jack, "Cardiff coming up, stopping to lose five mail coaches, we can shift then, be much lighter. Had some nasty moments back there didn't we?"

"Did we?" Jack bit confused replied.

With the chattering of the wheels over the many rail points Dick now eased the train into platform two, and came to a long awaited stop, time for a quick mug of tea.

“Not having my cup, you gave yours to the American girl,” Jack sniggered.

“Give it here, but don’t let anyone see you drinking out of the bottle,” was Dick’s reply.

“Wonder if Blondie would like another cup, know you’re dying to see her again?”

“Good idea I’ll go and check on her.”

He leapt onto the platform, and walked down the line of coaches. He was back in a brief few minutes.

“That didn’t take you long,” Jack grunted.

“No I know, but I think she must be asleep , I knocked on the window had no response, wouldn’t like to disturb her.”

“This is it, whistle were away again, and next pick up water in the water troughs, so shovel with the other hand until its calling time.”

Like a swallow diving into a barn, the express flew into the Severn tunnel like a bat into darkness. Crossed Dicks mind, ‘In this hell hole that if it wasn’t for the German pumps keeping the sea water out it would be flooded again as the British ones failed.’

No good mentioning this fact to Jack he would only think the tide was out.

On the English side of the tunnel some time later, Dick, peering through his smoke stained cab window, sensed something ahead along this stretch of rail he was familiar with. It rang danger bells, so he rapidly slowed the train down. It was too late, and they crashed into an avalanche of snow that had slipped from the embankment. This unscheduled halt sent cascades of snow towering in the air, rocking and shaking the whole train to its violent stop.

Recovering from the shock, and regaining their senses, Dick thought it would be wise to check that all the wheels were still facing in the direction of London, and on the rails. Dick instructed Jack to inspect his side and if all’s ok there wont be any need to check the other side, only further confuse Jack if he explained why. Furthermore, he told Jack to come back through the carriages to save breaking his neck twice.

“Hey,” Jack said, when he returned, “there’s a carriage door open towards the end coach!”

“That’s strange, better see to that if you will Jack, I had better go and check on Blondie after I have inspected the engine.”

Now going about the necessities, a peculiar sensation came over Dick. He just knew something was amiss, so he headed quickly to the side of the coach and was further convinced seeing no response from Blondie, as the incident was enough to wake the dead.

Climbing on board was surprised to see the compartment door open with the lights on. He was even more surprised with what greeted him. In total shock he stood there as if he was dreaming; he screamed out for Jack, but Jack was at the other end of the train.

“What on earth has been going on here?”

Blondie lay, totally naked, with legs spread apart, looking rather vulgar, between the compartment seats! Dick called her name in case she was sleeping, then nervously knelt down by her side, trying to avoid the distractions. He felt her heartbeat and realised how cold she was. Still in a quandary as to what was wrong, or what had happened, and with little medical skill himself, the only realistic thing he could do was to cover her with some blankets from the adjoining compartment.

Trying to lift her back onto the seat, he heard footsteps approaching the compartment, and not knowing who it was, dropped Blondie back on the carriage floor ready to defend the situation, when Jack looked in.

Before Dick could do any explaining Jack put two and two together, and made five, and lashed out in sheer anger thinking that Dick had taking advantage of this poor girl. Catching Dick a glancing blow to the side of his head, was enough to send him crashing smack on top of Blondie, with Jack very unsteady on his feet completing the trio falling on top of Dick.

It was blessing that Blondie was in another world, as if her eyes had opened she would have soon closed them again in total shock the way the pair of them were mounted on top of her like a pair of sex maniacs.

All this messing about on the floor suddenly came to an abrupt end as the three of them were lifted a few feet into the air accompanied by a loud explosion.

Gerry!

“For fucks sake, we’ll be blown to pieces.”

Another loud thump came from the rear of the train, as Dick and Jack leaving Blondie covered in soot, made for the engine with all haste. Outside the carriage all mayhem was taken place, plus the terrifying sound of deafening thunder above, with the drone of Heinkel bombers, on their mission in the dark skies, homing in on this stationary train now with the rear coach ablaze.

Dick hit all the controls in panic to get this race horse moving, trusting absolutely in its pride and glory, that had never let him down.

“Must accelerate now as never before, to get them to the safety of a tunnel further up the line.”

But now even this Castle noted for its excellent traction capabilities, with its massive driving wheels, were skidding on the snow ridden rails. A further tremor, combined with the scream of more bombs following, panicked Dick to quickly decide whether to abandon the

train and run for safety. But what about Blondie, there's no way he would leave her. At that instant Jack mentioned "Have you injected sand on the track?"

"How could I have forgotten that?" asked Dick, shaking his head, and immediately he did.

With a little cursing, and clever operations of the controls, the Castle started to move, very slowly, but gradually gaining speed until they were in full flight again, heading for the tunnel. Some observation of the rear coach indicated there were still flames coming from the roof, but not so serious as when the train was stationary.

Dick then came in for another surprise, just about all he could take for one night. To his shock and horror, the glass on some of the instruments shattered in the engine cab due to Jack taking a swipe at him with his shovel. Lucky for him that Jack was still shaky with shell shock and refreshments.

Pointing his finger directly at Jack he sternly quoted, "You still think that it was me that harmed Blondie? If you ever try anything like that again, besides what I may do to you, it will be the end of our friendship, is that clear? Now once and for all, I did not touch her. Has that sunk in? Now sort yourself out and see to the fire, if that's not too technical for you."

Jack got the message and became like a lamb. No one in their right mind ever got the better of Jack, but his down to heart affection for his companion no one would match, he just thought that his hero had let him down.

The tunnel came and the tunnel went. Dick told Jack "we're steaming with every available ounce I've got to get to a main signal box to summon help for Blondie back there. Poor kid, still can't imagine what took place."

So streaking along now like a bat out of hell, within an hour or two they slowed down gently and came to a rest below the anticipated signal box.

"See what you can do with the rear coach Jack, try and uncouple it."

So Dick without bothering to watch Jack, leapt up the wooden stairs to the door of the signal box. Bursting in he saw an old gent sitting in a chair smoking his clay pipe. Without showing the slightest response to the invasion of his privacy, he completely ignored Dick.

"Have an emergency!" Dick raising his voice rang out.

Slowly raising his head above his glasses, the old gent said "problems boy?"

"Yes I have an injured person on the train."

"Driver had an accident has he?" asked the old gent.

"I'm the bloody driver you docile halfwit!" replied Dick.

"Name please?"

“Name, what for?” asked Dick.

“Have to make out a report you see, covers me with the authorities and possible union investigations. Rule No whatever states driver not to leave engine on main line unless unavoidable due to---.”

“Look here you, if you want to see your pension, I suggest without delay you get in touch with all emergency services at Paddington to be on hand when we arrive in about an hour’s time. And just to liven up your night for you, there’s a burning carriage dumped outside,” said Dick.

“Can’t leave that there!” said the old gent, “what am I going to do with it?”

“Try sticking it in your union book, and if it’s already full there’s somewhere else I could suggest.”

“Look here I have had enough delays with complaining engine drivers being delayed on their routes through your unpunctuality. You’re the Swansea out yesterday aren’t you, what you been doing a trip via Lands End?”

“No had to go back, I forgot the secret bomb? Now in your hands on the you know what!”

“Are you mad, say the Luftwaffe see it?”

“BANG, cheerio.”

With a sigh of relief Dick left stooge to his lonely world, and trickily made his way down the slippery wooden steps, with the intentions to cover his loved one with a blanket. But on second thoughts, still trembling inside with Jacks cruel challenge of trust, he now couldn’t be sure if and when fate may spell disaster to end all faith in human nature. He climbed back on to the engine. Jack gave the thumbs up that all was clear.

“Right Jack now’s the time to show me your skills, get all three of us to Paddington like a streak of lightning; it’s a matter of life or death,” said Dick.

And so he did. Like a slave he tempered the fire for this last stint, with skill and determination to prove his worth. No sneaky stops at Reading tonight for hot pies from the canteen. No, if anyone was on the platforms, the only thing that would have disturbed the still night air, would have been the gust of wind rushing past with someone commenting “what the fuck was that?”

“Faster Jack!” were Dick’s words.

“Faster? We’re doing 110 mph now!”

“Well let’s see if this Castle can do what some drivers claim it can do, not like the Mallard that claimed the world speed record on it’s down hill stretch of track with the wind behind it and was timed officially for momentary reaching 126 mph.

GWR drivers on many occasions claimed the Castle was faster, but were not officially timed.

“Never mind, it’s the past. Who cares?” was Dick’s final word on this prestige subject.

Paddington at last. What a welcoming end to the journey.

“Entering too fast,” Jack seemed to judge.

“Christ we are too!” Dick realised, slamming on the brakes for all they were worth.

“Too late Jack, hang on tight!” were Dick’s last words, before slamming into the buffers, reeking havoc as the engine catapulted with a horrific deadly impact, sending it almost back to where it came from.

Apart from the belching steam covering the vicinities of the platforms, with the engine protesting of the unkind treatment, probably injured badly, all was now deadly quiet, uncannily quiet, few creaks and groans echoing from the carriages finely at rest.

Peeping out of the cab sheepishly through the clearing steam, Dick and Jack noticed little heads popping up from behind various station furniture, and they heard a voice saying, “co blimey “ its that bloody Taff again. Just because we beat them last year at rugby, they’re still trying to wreck our station.

“Look out,” Dick commented, “here comes the law, doctor with his case nurses and fire crew.”

Dick stepped down from the engine on to the platform. Someone shouted out, “is that bloody thing safe to approach?”

“Which one of you two is the badly injured person?” the doctor inquired?

Dick looked at Jack and Jack looked at Dick.

“I’m ok how you are Jack?”

“I’m ok.”

Doctor looking puzzled queried, “is it me, or am I imagining that the message I seem to be receiving indicates that I am standing here, wasting my bloody time? Yes or no, quick, please enlighten me.” The doctor glanced around at the gathered police, with the big one stepping forward almost on top of Dicks boots, poking his face at Dick, almost knocking him over.

“So,” he said, “you two ladies have called out all emergency services needlessly! Hey, what’s wrong with your wobbly mate, are you sure he’s not hurt?”

“Ho he’s ok.”

“Can you explain to me then why he’s behind you giggling or crying. You think this situation to be very funny do you? Shall we all have a laugh? Come on boys join in!”

Dick turned his head to Jack, who now seemed ignorant of the seriousness of the situation, and with the policemen laughing, was limbless, spouting out something like “he thinks I am a lady, how many has he had?”

“Sorry if you are misunderstanding our request for your services, the reason we need your help, there is a casualty in the first carriage,” said Dick.

“Hear that boys, the gentleman says there’s a casualty on the train. Please don’t tell me, I know, the strings come undone on one of the parcels, is that it?” laughed the Policeman.

“I think you had better have a look for yourself,” Dick informed the Police Officer.

One of the Policemen wandered to the first coach and shouted back, “this one?”

Dick gave him a nod, and he entered the carriage. The next thing he was signalling to the various personal on the platform to escort the doctor and nurses to climb on board immediately.

The Police were quietly mumbling amongst themselves, when two of them made their way towards Dick and Jack and said “you had better come with us now gentlemen, to the Police station.”

They were led away to separate police cars, as a stretcher and a red blanket were being rushed from the ambulance to the carriage.

And so the mail train’s mercy mission was completed, ending in Paddington, from Swansea, And that was that. Full stop. With the aid of the buffers, of course.

It was many days later that Blondie did fortunately make some sort of recovery, with severe bruising to her head that occurred on that awesome night. Many questions needed to be answered.

Luckily her mother was also on the mend.

It was a different story for Dick and Jack. Both were in the doldrums, locked up in prison cells anxiously waiting for news from the hospital reports.

Information eventually reached them, giving them a sigh of relief. Privately they were told, that Blondie had disclosed certain evidence, that cleared them of all doubts that they were involved on that night, but she couldn’t explain why she was covered in coal dust. Futhermore, her private parts hadn’t been interfered with.

The medics came to the conclusion that the accident could well have been that she may have slipped due to the severity of the line conditions swaying the carriage, not unknown on previous occasions. Fortunately, remembering vaguely the circumstances that lead to the attack, it was clear in her mind that the train was travelling at high speed because it was very

difficult for her to keep her balance in the corridor. That portrayal of the circumstances more or less only contributed to their opinion.

Sadly for Blondie, she was now on her own to prove otherwise.

Time heals many things, so in due course Blondie was released from hospital and returned to Swansea with her father on short leave from the ministry.

The police and railway police were far from satisfied with the mystery surrounding this tragic affair, half believing Dick's summary of events, whilst Jack was of little use and in a lot of trouble with his medicine intake. So was Mr. Sponsor at Swansea, for allowing passengers to travel on the Royal Mail train. He didn't take it too kindly, since it was a slant on his unblemished railway career.

In due course, Dick and Jack were released without charge, due to lack of evidence, but they were advised to stay in London pending Transport Police enquiries.

After various meetings that followed at G. W. R. headquarters at Paddington, Dick was summoned once more before the top brass. This time he had some good news, virtually praising him for his complete honesty and courage shown under stress with atrocious weather conditions in completing that hazardous journey, especially saving the engine and not abandoning it when bombed. Jack also came in for a small thank you, thanks to Dicks praise for him, and categorically insisted that Jack's legless state was a once-off occasion. He added that Jack thought with the appalling weather conditions the shift he was due on was abandoned, so went for a beer, simple as that.

They believed him.

Dick now enquired if they could help him to trace Jacks whereabouts, and was informed that he had been temporary transferred to freight duties down in the West Country. This news upset Dick, because he knew Jack would never cope for one reason or another.

But all was not lost, and Dick was given the opportunity to take charge of the rugby special in a week's time, scheduled to leave Paddington on the Saturday morning for the international game at Cardiff, with the train terminating at Swansea, for refuelling ready for the return journey in the evening. This was wonderful news to Dick, as it was a golden opportunity for the home journey to Swansea, to find his loved one.

"Will Jack be working the train?" he asked tentatively?

"No promises at this stage!" he was bluntly told.

All the same, Dick readily agreed and excitedly left the offices counting the minutes to next Saturday.

The following week seemed to drag, apart from dodging some nasty cargo being dropped from the skies, until the big day at last came.

On a beautiful sunny morning that filled the air with jubilation, Dick hurriedly made his way to Paddington Station, running rather late due to the crowds with the same idea. The situation got worse entering the platforms, with hoards of supporters, including the Air Force,

Army and Navy, blocking his way to reach the engine up front. He had great difficulty breaking through this wolf pack, shouting and generally messing about full of spirits in anticipation of crucifying Wales at Cardiff Arms Park.

When eventually Dick, weary now, saw the light of day again, with the mob behind him, he stopped momentarily to absorb the sheer beauty standing before him. There, with the sun's golden rays glittering through the haze, reflecting the sheen from its surface, stood a brand new Hall Class Engine, patiently waiting for its excursion to Swansea. Another surprise waited Dick, for there, stepping down from this beauty, was Jack, now making all haste towards Dick to greet him as if he was a lost child.

Jack, with tears visible, threw his arms around Dick with full emotions being expressed.

This warm welcome now seemed to catch the eye of the crowd nearby. Just like that, apart from some gentle hissing coming from the simmering engine, all went strangely quiet. Oblivious to the attention being drawn towards them mainly from the rugby crowd, came a voice

"Do you two mind there are children about?"

Dick and Jack were completely unaware that anything was being directed at them, and were still hugging each other, when someone else loudly remarked,

"Don't forget to lock the toilet doors boys!"

Then came another,

"Bet we break down in the Severn tunnel."

"Hey Shirley get back on the engine if you have to do it."

Finally, with comments now flying fast and furious, the two of them realised it was them in the firing line, Dick quickly removed Jack's advances, and pulled him towards the engine like a rag doll, big as he was.

In the safety of the engine cab, Dick explained to Jack what the unkindly comments referred to. Jack seemed willing to step back off the engine and take them all on, when came a charming little gentleman now standing outside the engine cab entrance said "hello, I'm Melvin, you must be Shirley?"

"No my name is Dick," replied Dick.

"Really, ho that's my favourite, dickey boy is it, and whose the big feller?"

"That's Jack."

"Well well, Jacky boy, isn't he beautiful?" said Melvin.

"Who Jack?"

"Don't be silly, I was talking about the engine."

"Yes she's a fine machine," said Dick.

"Ho it's a she is it, I'd a thought it would be a he," said Melvin

"No Melvin the only engine we usually refer to as a he, is the King Class," said Dick.

"Tell me Dick, where can I see him to?"

Jack had had enough, and angrily sneered at Melvin "if you walk up the line you can meet him personally he's due in any minute now!"

"Perhaps another time, not in the mood at the moment," said Melvin.

"Thank God for that," smirked Jack.

"Tell me Dickey boy, are you the one that fiddles and twiddles with all theses lovely brass knobs? Oh, and I love the shine on Jacky boy's shovel, bet you're at it all the time!"

"If you don't fuck off, I will stick it up your ass," said Jack, looking daggers at his new admirer.

"Now now Jackey boy, no need to be rude, any way I'm off now and find my seat, must digest the thrill of all the excitement I may anticipate in on this trip to Cardiff. Cheery bye see you later Jackey."

"Like fuck you will!"

Everything's was on the boil, with the engine raring to go, Dick getting a little disorientated, Jack not accepting Dicks advice that Melvin was probably a nice guy if one got to know him, saying , "I don't want to get to fucking know him."

Screaming rugby fans shouted "have you two finished yet, for fucks sake leave him alone Shirley."

Jack decided to patrol the platform with his shovel, looking for trouble. The whistle couldn't have come soon enough for them to depart.

Dick was quite proud that he was in charge of this immaculately turned-out engine, with more than enough allocated carriages dragging behind him, full of excited rugby fans eager to get going. With the sudden departure whistle echoing out, they could start to roll at last.

With three mighty blasts from the polished brass chimney, the mighty steam locomotive prepared to blast its way out of the Famous Paddington station. It was a staggering sight, in full glory of anyone fortunate to witness this it.

They would head west towards Reading Station. Dick informed Jack they would be stopping there to pick up the rest of the gang.

"I should pop in to the toilet before our long haul to Cardiff," Dick mentioned to Jack, "but don't follow me, it may give people the wrong impression. You go and get some cups of tea please."

Reading would be the last stop before Cardiff, hopefully, otherwise there wouldn't be much left of this classic spotless line of carriages looking like a painting behind them.

Dick took a short breather, and drinking his tea Dick, noticed a struggling coal engine making slow progress towards them with what seemed a mile of wagons following it.

Dick called to Jack.

"Look at this lot on the centre line, remind you what you've be doing this last couple of weeks?"

Jack popped his head out of the cab as the coal engine drew close, and it was apparent that the freight engine driver was admiring the classic shinning elegant engine standing at the platform. Dick was just about to give a friendly wave to the driver who was now level with them, when Jack spurted a mouth full of tea over the coal engine, splashing the driver in the bargain. The driver gave a rude sign saying 'and fuck you too.'

"That wasn't a very nice thing to do Jack, he was only smiling to congratulate us on working such a fine engine that he would like to have the chance to drive himself one day," said Dick.

Jack, red in the face seemed speechless.

"It was that Melvin chap throwing me kisses from the window of the first carriage behind us, that's why I spat my tea out," shouted Jack.

"That's the reason was it, the driver must have thought you were insulting the fact that his fifty engine shouldn't be allowed to pass through the station!"

"There's the whistle, here we go, next stop Cardiff Central."

"Don't stop there," Jack muttered, "that'll teach that Melvin feller!"

"Be the last coaling duties you'll be doing on this planet with this English Britalion on board," Dick smiled.

Now on the flight to Cardiff, the journey was more or less uneventful, a nice change from the chaos of the boarding.

"Carving through the beautiful English countryside with the sun following gives one a better outlook, plus we're on the home bound run to Swansea and Blondie. We've been blessed with the sun, and soon well have the sand sea and seagulls. And a few pints of beer to celebrate whoever wins at Cardiff."

'Shouldn't have said that last remark,' thought Dick, 'because Jack's now starting to get miserable.'

"Don't get upset, Wales might win!" Dick assured Jack.

"Yea I know," Jack half-heartedly replied.

Then it dawned on Dick that wasn't quite what Jack was referring to.

"Will this cheer you up?" Dick asked, handing him a bottle of Scotch.

"No Jack, save your hugs for Melvin, that's a present for you, now I know we will make better progress to the Capital, and get there on time!"

That more than did the trick, and they started to motor, showing the grace and sleekness of the fine engine, capable of break-neck speeds, but not quite as fast as the best Castles. But there again, the Hall had the advantage of pulling very heavy loads and still gave a fair turn of speed. In fact the Halls were the lifesaver of the country during the turmoil of the times, as some other engines were of other railway companies.

When everything had settled down, including the fluid in Jack, giggling to himself, Dick said to him "Jack would you like to hear a story about a rail journey I took on my holidays last year?"

"Not again!" Jack smirked.

"No, this is a different one," said Dick.

"All you ever talk about is bloody railways, it had better be good otherwise I'll need a few more drinks to recover!"

"Ready, ok, here goes. As I was saying I was on holiday and decided to catch a train."

"Not again," said Jack.

"Now listen, let me finish," said Dick.

"Thought you had," said Jack, still interfering.

"I repeat, I boarded a commuter branch line train going to a small Welsh market town. I was sitting at the back of the single open carriage, you know the type that's like a bus inside."

"Get on with it, my whisky's getting cold."

Jack again.

"Anyway, I sat in my seat on my own, and was wondering if the train would ever leave the station. About twenty five minutes later the coach started to fill up, a sign of hope at last. Opposite me was sitting, and I'm not kidding, a huge fat man that took up the whole two seats. Eventually the coach was full, and we started to move. Well I think it did as the trees outside the carriage window started to move, but I wasn't quite sure if it was the strong wind that was blowing. Clunk, clunk, we went over this bandy windy railway track, and apart from watching some cows in a field we were trying to overtake, all was disturbingly quiet. So quiet that I started to glance around the carriage to see if anyone was alive. What a miserable lot. I swear I was in some Welsh chapel at a funeral, and started to think to myself, that I never managed to do anything right. Why didn't I go down to the seaside or do something more interesting? Well after a while I was almost half asleep myself, when all of a sudden this plumpish character opposite me started to chuckle to himself. He was reading something in the book he was studying,

"Ha ha ha," came this sound, then twice as loud, "ha ha haa haa ha. Then he burst out with such a tremendous roar of laughter, that somebody actually turned their head round thinking he was ill or something. These repeated out bursts, now explosive, continued to fill the air without a break, with him now choking, howling and whaling spitting everywhere, tears rolling down his now scarlet coloured face. The behaviour actually caused someone further along the coach to break out with what one might term as a squeak of giggles, which in turn aroused some more passengers to try this exercise for themselves. This chain of events now set off further outbursts, with solemn respectable people trying to keep a stiff upper lip, turning around to face each other to indicate their disapproval of this disgraceful behaviour. But when their eyes met they too burst out laughing. And secretly I was at it too. The plump man was now jumping up and down on his seat, hilariously out of control, with the rest of the crowd flopping about in tears trying not to fall off their seats. The whole situation seemed now on the verge of insanity. It might have been my imagination, I'm not quite sure, but it seemed that the whole carriage was rocking."

Dick paused.

"In tune with his humpty dumpty spasms, the passengers realised unbelievably that the train had reached the little station of the market town. They tried to act with such an air of dignity while disembarking from the carriage, until someone screamed 'I can't stand anymore of it,' then the whole bloody lot burst out laughing uncontrollably again. The passengers waiting for the return journey stood there watching this exodus. They must have thought this bunch was a day trip from the mad house, all choking as if they were recovering from drowning, falling about in fits, with one old lady now looking back at the carriage saying to me, 'look he's still on the coach, must be going back.' And he was to, he must have done that sort of thing all day, some people will do anything for a laugh."

Jack grunted.

"That it?"

"Why would you like to hear more," asked Dick.

"No wonder I drink," came the reply.

They were still thundering along towards Cardiff when a gush of wind rocked the train, with Jack spurting out "what the fuck was that?"

"Greyhound going the other way," Dick informed him.

Jack looked at him as if he'd had been at his bottle.

"Dog on the rails?"

"Bloody Castle you fool, you know, puffer on wheels going like a bullet? Oh forget it, have another drink, or see if Melvin's keeping an eye on you."

Dick thought 'I shouldn't have said that, it look like he's going to hit me with his shovel again.'

"Won't be long now, I can see Cardiff in the distance," he said.

And so they duly arrived, and on time too.

The avalanche of ruby supporters now made a mad dive to the pubs, but there were still lots of them hanging around on the platform meeting their friends in Wales, all singing 'Rule Britannia, while from the Arms Park came the sound of the Welsh singing.

Everything seemed perfect until .

"Jacky boy, I've come to say cheery bye, and to ask you"

"Don't!" snarled Jack.

"Well I was only going to see if you would be working the latey back tonight?" asked Melvin.

"NO," shouted Jack, "now fuck off, other wise you will be getting a birds eye view of the goal post from the end of my boot."

"Well if you're that good Jacky boy you should be playing for Wales," said Melvin.

"Hey," someone shouted, overhearing Jacks kind remarks, "that's no way to talk to the referee.!"

'No wonder England won last year,' thought Dick, 'they said the ref, kept interfering with the Welsh scrum.'

"Off to Swansea now is it Jacky, thinking of moving later this year to that area. What part of the Town are you from if you don't mind me asking?" said Melvin.

"Not telling you, next thing you'll be applying for a job on the railways," said Jack.

"Oh no, not me, spoil my hands poking the fire all day like you do."

"Whistle Dick, quick get us out of here," said Jack

"Bye Melvin, enjoy the match," were Dicks last words, as the train started to pull out of platform three with some defining blasts drowning Melvin's emotional goodbye.

They headed out into the Welsh countryside leaving the Capital behind, the splendid Hall Class spread her wings for the last time to reach its destination, and gracefully ventured through the woodlands and over rivers with a majestic picture that can never be recaptured, leaving a gentle breeze in its wake as it passed by.

Hoping the train now that left platform three doesn't reach Swansea too quickly, as there is a lot of catching up to do as events have also moved since we were last in Swansea.

While our two railway friends were on their holidays in London the last few weeks, Blondie had the honour of making the acquaintances of Butch, who recognised her while on his paper rounds. He remembered her for defending him from steam man, and she became his friend for life. Blondie had been to visit gran, who had not been very well, and had kindly let little Butch stay with her, and was looking after him temporarily until gran got better. To Butch's delight, Blondie made the effort to take him down to the railway station to see the big

trains coming in from London, hoping also one day that she might meet Dick again. Butch had already mentioned to Blondie that he knew Dick, who gave him sneaky rides on the engines when they went for coaling.

She also had the pleasure of meeting Alex, now back in charge, with Spensor back on duties in Cardiff. Blondie really took to Alex, and found the short stocky little chap always full of wit and humour. He was constantly on the sick through injuries inflicted on him by frustrated passengers, for his flippant jokes and remarks when communicating with them. But strangely enough, the more clouts he got, the more he encouraged this attention, and seemed to thrive on it.

Alex happened to mention to Blondie that Spensor, who lived in Cardiff, was known to hitch a ride on late trains leaving Swansea for the city to go home for weekends, when on relief duties at Swansea,. He mentioned that she should not to draw any conclusions, as Spensor was a very respectable gentleman, ignoring the impression of authority portrayed by him in public. Alex continued to say that although Spensor still made social calls, it was becoming too regular lately, and always seemed to be airing his rank of authority to the porters loading the Mail Train, as if he was looking for something there.

Blondie didn't like what she was hearing, but there was no real connection or proof to pin-point Spensor on that night. She knew if they crossed paths again, he would be very cross with her for discrediting the image he had created for himself, showing his superiors that his was an example that they expected all GWR staff to follow.

It wasn't all bad news though, as Alex whispered to her that a little bird had mentioned to him that Dick and his companion would be coming home in charge of a prestige express train on the Friday or Saturday.

"Hope he slows down in time, judging from past experiences, as this engine belongs to old oak common depot Paddington, and we don't want any clashes with our English colleagues by smashing up their pride and joy," said Alex.

Blondie was filled with overwhelming emotions with this news, and disregarding thoughts of her future, felt ready to accept all the complications with her willingness to show compassion towards Dick, even though she wasn't really in love with him. She was returning the love he showed for her, and now waited for his return to welcome him home and give him the kiss she had promised him, hoping she could withhold the tears.

Friday morning dawned, and after seeing to gran, Blondie was worried about the apparent deterioration, and wondered what would happen to little Butch if the situation got worse.

After a shopping-spree down town during which she spoilt Butch with things he never had before, without convictions entailed, she had some dinner, then went to the station hoping to see Dick on one of the expresses that came rolling in.

With various trains coming and going, and no Dick, Blondie was becoming despondent, but there was another train due in within the hour, before she had to make her way home, and check on gran again. Sitting there on a platform bench seat with the warmth of the sun, Butch wanted pennies to raid the chocolate machine, so Blondie gave him some, and made him promise to behave himself while out of her sight. Comfortably sitting there,

anxiously waiting, and half asleep in the sunlight and fumes, she realised Butch should have come back a long while ago, so she quickly made her way to No 1 platform to find him. A chill ran through her seeing the mail coaches once again lined up ready to depart, but no sign of Butch.

'Where can he have got to?' she thought, now peeping in each of the open doors along the carriages, then she shouted "come out of there" when she found him sifting amongst the parcels in one of them.

Realising that he was in trouble, he dropped what he had salvaged, and was confused when Blondie said "get me that mail bag, the one with rips in it at the bottom of newspapers."

Blondie's eye had caught sight of a disregarded sack with splits in it, just like the one that the creature had been wearing when she was attacked. Picking up a pile of new ones, trying to make up for his naughtiness, Butch made his way out. Blondie told him to put them back, as she only needed the torn one.

He handed it to her.

"Come on quickly before someone sees us," she said.

Butch was in his element, thinking he had trained Blondie to be like himself, when a strong hand grabbed hold of Blondie's arm from behind.

"That's railway property give it here!"

Startled, she slowly turned and stood motionless, in shock, for she recognised that standing before her was Mr. Spensor, with a very unfriendly expression on his face accusing her of stealing an item from the mail coach.

Embarrassed, Blondie tried to plead.

"It's only a broken one!"

"That's not the point," Spensor insisted, "now let me have it."

But before she could hand it to him he, snatched it off her and made his way back to the office, or somewhere.

"Butch," Blondie said, "see what he does with that sack, and try to get it back for me."

"What do want that one for, it's broken?"

"Don't argue, now go before you lose sight of him!"

She felt really sorry for the poor kid as he ran alongside her as fast as his little legs could move him, with sparks flying from the new boots that Williams had paid for from the Police funds, slipping, and going nowhere due to the metal studs on the soles.

Blondie thought quickly, and sent him off with a gentle shove, sending him motoring along the platform with no brakes working to stop him from hitting Spensor, and sending him flying into a pile of milk urns.

Spensor, horrified that the plague was back in action again, scrambled to his feet to give chase after the horror kid, who now had the mail sack.

Blondie, loaded with the shopping bags, followed as quickly as she could, and caught a glimpse of Butch heading through the exit out of the station. Reaching the exit herself, all hell seemed to be breaking loose outside, and she was wondering what all the commotion was. She heard a bus conductress screaming "you little bastard, I'll fucking kill you, I will, you just wait."

Seeing Blondie also looking at her in horror, she said "you seen that didn't you?"

"No, why what happened?" asked Blondie.

"Didn't you see that fucking kid steal my bus?"

"Steal a bus, how could a little boy manage to drive a bus?" Blondie quizzed.

"Every time I go for a you-know-what in the station, or a cup of tea, my fucking bus has taken off when I come out. The little bastard sees I'm not on the bus, rings the fucking bell and "dopey" my driver thinks it's me and he's away. Now there's further trouble with Spensor trying to get his leg over some create of a push bike making his way out of the station and heading north, that means one thing, Butch's house."

An upset Blondie decided to telephone Williams at the Police Station, and explain her concern that Spensor may be on his way to unnecessarily cause Butch's gran problems she wasn't capable of handling.

Unknown to Blondie, Butch had already abandoned the bus by jumping off the rear standing bay when the bus slowed down, and he ran home to safety, only to Spensor's GWR porter's bike leaning against the lamppost.

'Christ, what the fucks that doing there?' he thought, discretely observing steam man tapping at gran's door. To protect his gran, Butch did the only thing he could think of, he rang the bell of Steam man's bike to attract his attention, then he stole the bloody thing!

It did the trick, as Spensor raced to the corner at the gallop, only to find Butch trying to cock his leg over the cross bar of this mans cycle, without much success, the bike gathering speed down this steep hill out of control. Butch finally let go.

Not far behind chasing the creature now doing well over the speed limit, two members of the GWR property were heading for disaster, for unknown to Spensor and his machine, Gorge the gorilla resided in his domain directly across the road from this steep hill.

George the gorilla was well known to the residents of Swansea. After all, he had titles to go with his name. Ex Scottish crofter, ex marine, ex boxer, ex con, ex just about everything. The only tender part about him was the loving care which he devoted to his baby greenhouse seedlings. He had been tenderly watering them, when without warning, crash!

'What the fucks happened?' he thought, when this onslaught almost give him a heart attack. There had been no air-raid warning, but a bloody bomb shattered the glass in pieces, and a lump of iron landed on top of him.

"My bike, that's my bike," Spensor now enlightened him, poking his head through the roof of the glassless greenhouse.

"Bike, I'll give you fucking bike, come here!" said George.

Spensor wasn't there. He had gone, with George hot on his tail, on an excursion back to Cardiff via the airways. With Spensor in the gorillas clutches, ready for take-off, the sound of a Police car's bell drew near. George did the legging this time, and quickly hid behind a wall. He was surprised to see the Police dumping the railway man in the back of the car. He sighed with relief. He had only just got out two days ago!

Saturday, the day of the rugby international at Cardiff Arms Park between England and Wales, was also the day that Blondie's longing for Dick to turn up, came true. She made a special effort to look her best, and wore a silky light cream coloured costume with a sky blue blouse matching her blue eyes. Her silky blond hair truly was an eye catcher.

Little Butch felt uncomfortable in the new gear that she had bought him the day before. He complained that the smell of the new clothes was upsetting his tummy.

Blondie made arrangements with the Doctor to call and see gran while she was out with Butch, as things weren't looking too good, she thought.

It was late on Saturday morning down at the station, and Butch was laughing and joking with Alex over a cup of tea in-between insults from passengers who he was encouraging wholeheartedly, hoping for a clout or something to prove to himself he was getting through to them. It was an understatement for him to be called Station Comedian.

After the entertainment, Blondie and Butch toured the six or so platforms viewing the various engines and many types of coaches, some stationary, others coming and going. There was plenty to occupy Butch's mind to try to keep him out of trouble.

There was a smart, long length of posh carriages at platform six, and she remembered what Dick had said about the Castle class. Out in the very warm sunshine, away from the overhead canopy, stood one, looking so picturesque at the front of this immaculate line of coaches.

Over at platform one was the lonely looking mail train, again being loaded.

Butch went to buy some chocs, with a warning to stay away from the carriages.

With all the thunderous noise of slamming doors of passengers disembarking and entering carriages, mighty blasts of the engines getting moving with heavy loads, Blondie went for a rest and sat down near the ticket office away from the stares of passengers curious to know who this celebrity was that looked like a film star.

Sitting there with Butch, Alex shouted that an express was due in any minute, and he was right two when the loud shrill of a steam whistle indicated one was coming in.

Blondie jumped up with excitement, lifting Butch in the air to get a better view of Dick's engine now approaching.

"That's not Dick," Butch snorted.

"How do you know?" Blondie said disappointingly.

"You'll see," he sneakily laughed.

And he was right, it wasn't Dick. But then another whistle sounded, and Butch jumped up off the seat screaming "he's coming, he's coming!"

"How do you know?" Blondie quickly asked.

"You'll see!" came his excited cry.

The gleaming show came thundering into the station, too fast, with showers of sparks flying from the wheels, groans and creaks, blankets of discharged steam streaking across the platforms, and everyone driving for cover.

Then the crash, crash, crash of the carriages trying to overtake the engine, crucifying the emergency stop buffers and ricocheting all behind back where they came from.

When everything finally settled back on the rails the passengers started to emerge, dazed and very annoyed. Lucky the majority had got off at Cardiff for the match, so what was left practiced some bad English when unsteadily passing the engine, with no driver in sight.

One old lady, dragging behind the rest, wanted to make her point to express her disgust at being thrown on the deck, and looked into the engine cab. She spotted Dick and Jack on top of each other in the now empty tender, thrown there by the impact.

"Disgusting!" one could hear her saying, "my feelings were right about those two, look at them, I knew they couldn't wait. Pair of fairies!"

As the mayhem died down, the station went temporarily quiet, apart from Butch's uncontrollable excitement, thinking Dick had given the display just for him?

One head seemed to be debating if it was now safe to step down from the engine, and Butch made a bee-line to greet Dick, who also spotted him, then Butch was in his arms. But in no time at all, little Butch was pointing his hands in towards Blondie. Dick dropped the boy like a stone, at his feet.

Dick stood there motionless not making a move so, Blondie slowly walked towards him, and without words, gave him the biggest kiss one could ever give. She felt him growing weak in her arms.

"Come on now," she said to him, not showing him that she was in a worse state, than he was. She stepped backwards to talk to him. He cringed when looking her up and down.

"God, look what I've done to you!"

"Why what's wrong?" she asked, looking down at her clothes.

She didn't have to say any more; her costume was dyed cream and black.

"Come and have a sit down," he said while Jack tried to get back to his feet.

"I don't know where to start," said Dick, "there's so much to say."

She put her finger to his lips, and he knew this wasn't the time for regrets, just a quiet chat.

Butch disappeared to let the grown-ups get on with boring lovers talk.

The silence was broken by roars of laughter and singing, as a endless crowd of Welsh rugby fans crowded on to the platforms, drinking bottles of ale, with groups gathering together, singing lovely Welsh songs in perfect harmony, happily entertaining the entire surroundings with a joyous vocal musical memory never to be captured again in the troubled times.

Dick mentioned about the rugby special he had just brought in from London and thank goodness the English fans left the train at Cardiff. He removed his cap to cover the tears he was trying to hide, and Blondie inwardly admired his dark hair and brown eyes that seemed to look through her, with love.

"Smashing engine you came in with," she honestly stated.

Dick seemed amused with that remark, and said "it is now." Then it hit home. If you know what I mean.

There was a loud blast of a whistle, and Dick, in the know, was alarmed to see in an instant, the London-bound train with the clean coaches that Blondie had been admiring, pulling out of the station without the troops, all of whom were still in heartily vocal chords on the platform.

Panic struck them, and the commotion that followed one cannot describe. Rugby fans dived into the moving carriages, almost trying to commit suicide trying to board, but with this powerful Castle up front it was hopeless as it blasted its way without delay out of sight.

Alex strung up by his neck, surrounded by screaming maniacs demanding an explanation as to why the whistle blew early, sending the train on its way.

Couldn't be; or could it ? It was.

Butch crept back, hid behind the seat, and stuck something in Dick's pocket.

'What's this?' thought Dick, and he pulled a whistle from his pocket.

"Where did you get this from Butch," he asked.

"Found it in the mail train yesterday," he said.

Blondie explained to Dick about the incident that took place with Spensor.

"Right," said Dick, "I'm going to get to the bottom of this lot. First I want a word with Alex about this Spensor, he will tell me more than he would disclose to the Police."

There was a slight delay at the ticket office, as Alex shoed away the left over, disappointed, crying ruby supporters. He told them to not get upset, as England was going to slaughter Wales by ninety points to zero.

Dick took another glance at the guard's whistle before handing it to Alex to return to whoever had ever lost it, and to keep it safe from Butch playing guards man, when he noticed the name W. Spensor engraved on it. With the mail sack now in Police hands, plus the whistle, some questions need to be answered.

When the crowd had finally moved away, Dicks way was further obstructed when a cracking looking blond WRAF moved in to get her ticket. Dick smiled at Blondie and commented "didn't realise you had a twin."

"Watch it!" she nudged him.

The bomb-shell said "excuse me" to Blondie and Dick, with an air of culture, music to ones ears, with her distinguished Oxford English accent, until she opened her mouth a lot wider.

"London ticket," she said to Alex, "which platform?"

Alex, taken aback by this gorgeous uniform peering in at him, hesitated momentarily, and then said "London is it?"

"Come a bit closer and watch my lips. London, yes, now has that registered?" she replied.

"Oh, you want a ticket," said Alex now trying his best to rile her.

"Now listen here you two-foot dwarf, I'm now getting very impatient, so hand me my train ticket immediately, otherwise if I miss my departure, shortly due to leave, it will be the last ticket you will be issuing, understand?" she said.

"One London ticket madam, here we are," replied Alex.

"Don't you dare call me madam, you address me as corporal, I'm due for promotion actually."

"Any chance of you buying me a cup of tea while you kill the time?" Alex asked her.

"What do you mean kill the time, the train's due to leave in a minute. Furthermore, I don't associate with gnomes, it's rather belittling."

"Ok," Alex said, "the train due to leave platform one will be calling at Cardiff and terminating at Paddington, departure time 7.05pm."

"What did you say? I don't want to catch the evening train, I want to travel on the one that's due out now," she said.

"That one? Oh there's a problem," said Alex

"Two-foot, come, come, what platform?"

"Well it was on platform six, but it was a bit impatient and left," replied Alex, frowning.

"Left? What do you mean it's left?"

"Seems to have sneaked out of the station."

"Am I hearing you correctly? Sneaked out of the station? You had better call it back immediately!" she insisted.

"Cant shout that loud, its probably racing through Port Talbot by now."

"Well suggest something," she said.

"Tea," said Alex.

Alex got the first whack across the face, and loved it.

She continued.

"If I'm not back at base camp by tonight I could get court marshalled, I'm already a day late now."

"Co," said Alex, comforting her, "will they strip you?"

He got a second whack across the face, and waited and hoped for more.

"Well two-foot have you thought of anything?"

"Let me see, ar, I got it, you could try flagging down a Spitfire or Hurricane, you know, hurry hurry,"

Even Dick shuddered at the whack Alex got, but he still bounced up for more.

"Right two-foot, listen to me once again; come closer when I'm speaking to you, I want a train for London forthwith, is that clear, in other words, now!" she said.

"The only train leaving for London will be the Royal mail train due out shortly," said Alex in reply.

"In that case I shall go on that one, why didn't you mention it before?"

"Let me explain," he said. "You see that train carries parcels not passengers."

"Parcels? Surely there's room for a passenger," the WRAF insisted.

"But there's no seats on the train, you would have to sit on a pile of ..."

"Of what?"

"You know," Alex said with a sneer on his face, "woman's things."

"What are you talking about?" she said stamping her feet.

"Toilet paper and other necessities like."

"You dirty little stump, now get the pilot down here, I wish to have a word with him about accommodation on this train," she said.

"Pilot? Oh, you mean the engine driver, I'm afraid you will have to go and see him for yourself."

"Right without delay, what runway is he on?" she asked.

"Try runway one," Alex informed her.

She looked at the platform.

"You mean that filthy object over there on the left of me with wine coloured coaches? I presume it has a well maintained engine?"

"Why don't you go and check it out love, but you will need a platform ticket to enter the runways."

"Platforms you fool," she informed Alex, "and I don't carry pennies."

Alex said amusingly, "but every girl carries pennies."

"What for?" she angrily snapped.

"Well you know."

"Know what?"

Alex put his hand in the air and made a squashy sound.

Smack!

Alex picked himself up, and saw that she had taken off. She soon landed back, calling "two-foot, where are you, show yourself?"

"Yes madam can I be of some assistance to the air cadets?"

"Now look here undergrowth, soot man on the engine informs me that they have technical problems, with vital apparatus for the engine to function unavailable, and unless the service engineer can find a replacement at the iron-mongers, the tin bucket wont be going anywhere, so what are you going to do about getting me to my destination?"

"Taxi?" Alex called out.

"Yes," she said, "that's it, phone for a taxi and find out the price."

"There are taxies out side the hanger, sorry station," Alex informed her.

"Yes I know, but they're only local ones," she said.

"So where are you heading for gorgeous?"

"Listen here you little halfwit, I have to be in Manston in Kent tonight," she shouted.

"Where," Alex misunderstanding the fluent cultured, beautiful accent, thought she said man in

"What!" she gasped, when she heard the price of a taxi, "I rather go on the back of a bloody motorbike than pay that!"

"How would you like me to take you?" asked Alex.

"Do you have you own private transport?" she asked.

"Parked outside lady," replied Alex.

"Seems I have under-littled you, sorry misunderstood you. Where do I find the means of transportation?"

"Parked outside. I will be off duty in a few minutes."

"Great," she cheered "see you shortly. Are the doors open.?"

"Never shut them," was Alex's final communication, as air force blue ventured to locate the vehicle.

In the meantime, a grumpy porter passed the ticket office mumbling some thing about 'if I ever catch the little bastard who flattened the fireman's shovel underneath the departing Carmarthen express I'll bloody kill him.'

Woman's Royal Air Force returned in a hurricane, sorry, hurry.

"All I can see outside apart from taxies, is a smelly red motorbike leaning up against the wall, standing in a pool of oil, and with a bloody horse saddle for a seat" she said.

"Latest model you know. Did you notice the curves and leather seat, no more drafts up your legs to freeze the.. "

"You dirty little fart, you dirty little hangover, you filthy cowshed.."

God she was in a bad mood, and she gave Alex another whack across the chops.

He bounced up for more, and said to her "try the bus station love, or the LMS line Victoria station, be able to see the scenic beauty of Wales to tell the kids one day, providing a Stuka bomber don't fancy you beforehand."

"Now you listen to me template, I shall be reporting you to the ministry for sabotaging the war effort when I get back to base. Nazi collaborator!"

Eventually she flew off, to Alex's disappointment.

Other matters now emerged when PC. Williams entered the station. Butch hid away, in big shovel trouble, but Williams wasn't there for that. It was gran.

He calling Butch to one side and broke the bad news to him. Butch started crying, and William tried to comfort him.

Williams asked Blondie to kindly keep looking after Butch until arrangements could be found to take him into care. Williams was quite upset himself and not to show it he soon left, but not before mentioning to Blondie and Dick that Spensor has been released with-out

charge, and that he disclosed the reason why he had been in the vicinity of the mail coaches, that he had lost his whistle, which was of sentimental value. A man sleeping rough in a railway abandon wagon has been charged, as women's underclothing were found in his possession and would keep in touch as developments progressed.

Little Butch hugged Blondie and looked up into her face, with floods of tears in his eyes.

"Will you be my new mammy?" he asked.

Without hesitation she said "of course darling," then turning to Dick, Butch asked him if he would be his new daddy.

Dick looked at him, not knowing what to say. Butch said again "will you be my daddy?" Dick cast his eyes at Blondie. She stared back at him for a moment, then nodded her head with a smile.

They said goodbye to Alex , and made their way out of the station. Luckily there was a bus waiting.

Dick held Blondie's hand to hurry them on, so as not to miss it. When Butch emerged from dragging behind the two of them, a howling scream came from from the bus conductress, and she rang the bell like hell so that the bus accelerated away.

Dick and Blondie looked down at Butch laughing to himself, and decided to walk home. They soon disappeared into the casting sunlight shadows and then in to history.

. . . .

THE END.

Almost.

A bit more news came to light.

Wales lost at Cardiff. They said the ref was intimidating the scrum.

Spensor went on to become an inspector on the buses as he felt his ego had been slanted.

Melvin moved to Swansea.

Jack said he would kill him if he ever saw him.

Alex died in the dock trying to save a drowning fish.

PC Williams suffered a heart attack during his many visits to see Butch.

Blondie went on to become a film star.

Dick became a miserable sod.

Butch studied hard in college, and on release managed to take up a position working on the council ash carts.

Writer. "Nurse what's our telephone number in case someone wishes to contact me about this book?"

"Hang on, doctor what's our telephone number?"

"Have we got one, no-one's ever phoned here?"

"It don't matter, he's gone to sleep now."

"Good thing nurse, he'll be writing about us next!"

End.

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Information only

Someone who runs around in red and white refers to rival rugby club – known hatred of Swansea club. No names, but lies to the West of Swansea.

Castle engine: They were the true greyhounds of the Great Western Railway, with typical speeds of over 100mph. After the war some were renamed – Hurricane spitfire swordfish etc. When steam finished in around 1968 all were scrapped, about two engines salvaged from the scrap yard at Barry docks in South Glamorgan, Wales. The engine referred to in the story was one of them, and still running today 2013 on British Rail. Given back it's original name D/Castle.

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