

THE DASTARDLY MR WINKLE MEETS HIS MATCH



RUFFLES OFF FOR

Introduction

“Thousands of years ago, before the, Buddhist, Muslim, Jewish and Christian beliefs were born. Before the gods of Rome, Egypt and Greece were called forth, before writing, before any of the Earth’s civilisations, even before man was a pack of nomadic hairy tribes, the Green Man over-saw all.

The Green Man breathed life into the Earth. The Green man made all and yet the Green Man was no God. He created life on our planet as part of a science project in his early school years. The Green Man was born into a people who travelled the stars, expanding their knowledge and in so doing, expanded the universal consciousness.

They didn’t hold belief as they had long since advanced beyond it; instead they held knowledge. They held the knowledge that all things were part of the great universal machine and that this machine was just part of a greater network of alternative realities and universes. They knew that they existed inside just one particular universe experiencing itself subjectively. All was joined and all had purpose.

The Green Man wanted to create more life in the cosmos so that he could increase the universe’s experience of itself, or in other words, he wanted to increase the universes productivity, to speed things up a tad. He was a visionary with a mind unlike any other.

For Millennia the simpletons on Earth praised his work.

He was kept alive through the millions of years of his existence by inseminating willing hosts with his soul. For the largest part, these hosts were of his own race. The green man's people had long since been able to surgically remove the soul using interesting looking bits of coiled metal, sticks and phlegm. Each incarnation would receive the teachings of the last and seek to improve on them to help the universe understand itself better. This was his life's work and his life had lasted for age upon age.

He would often pop back to Earth to see how we were doing and frequently marvelled at how far his little science project had gone. On occasion he would manipulate things and creatures, just sort of tweak everything a little so as to speed the evolutionary process.

The reptile era seemed very promising until a huge meteor set the project back a few million years. Clearly the universe had decided that it preferred mammals as the dominant species on the planet, and who was he to argue with the universe?

After the dinosaur's extinction all went relatively well. He spent a few million years away and when he came back, to his great surprise, he found some monkeys, monkeys that used tools and showed great promise. In fact, his experiment went so well after that, that one-day he decided to spend a few incarnations experiencing the planet first hand. With this in mind he randomly picked a willing young woman to receive his seed and artificially inseminated her.

She lived in Nazareth.

Her name was Mary.

The rest, as considered in some circles, is history, or as considered in other circle, myth. All of this was kept extremely secret after the first incarnation (he had a bit of a hard time with torture and being nailed to crosses) save for a select few. The Green Man took the Earthly title of the Sion (which was primarily a nick-name but it just kinda stuck) and those closest to him were known as his Priory.

One day, almost 2 thousand years since the green man had come to Earth, a child was born to some freethinking hippies called the Winkles. They were the type of people who made up their own names. They named their child Shoop (a word they believed should be the singular word for sheep. If there was more than one goose they were geese, so why not one shoop and many sheep. As I said, they were hippies and had messed around with a few too many psychotropic substances).

Something rather upsetting happened in Shoop Winkle's childhood that stayed with him for the rest of his life. It involved a death and a séance and he used it as an excuse to be a destructive, miserable and a sneaky sod ever since, happily annihilating everything even remotely strange that crossed his path.

It seemed to work quite well for him, so he stuck with it.

Shoop Winkle had no knowledge of the Sion and the Priory, which was probably for the best.

At least he'd known nothing... *until now!*

-Chapter 1-

The Dark Suspicious Alleyway and the Mysterious Man

It was a wet and miserable Saturday night, or Sunday morning depending on which way you were coming from. The streets had a fine layer of rain over them making some of the cobbled surfaces quite dangerous to traverse, particularly for the kind of alcohol sodden people that were trying to traverse them. The great British tradition of getting fabulously and unreasonably smashed at the weekend had, yet again, been honoured to its absolute limits.

The accident and emergency rooms were jammed full of drunk and battered people, some injured through mishap, others through the other great British weekend tradition of turning into a mindless scrapper and fighting like a psychiatric patient on amphetamines. The street sweepers were approaching consciousness and were facing the joys of cleaning up after the cities revellers while the early morning taxi drivers were preparing to pick up the bar and club workers, desperately avoiding any job that involved people that could barely walk. This always proved very difficult as those seemed to be the only sorts of people who needed taxis at four o'clock on a Sunday morning.

Bleary-eyed swaggerers swore fruitlessly at kebab shops for not being open and then tried to figure out where the nearest twenty-four hour grease pit was to give them fuel for later regurgitation. All over the city centre was the

debris of the usual weekend excesses. Empty beer cans and bottles, puddles of vomit, sleeping drunks in doorways, people urinating on the sleeping drunks in doorways and drug addled night hawks desperately trying to find parties to go to as the pills that they'd taken were far from wearing off.

Having failed to find anyone to have sex with, a young, barely clad, fully tanked woman was attempting to totter home on her high heels. She was wobbling quite a lot which was the opposite of her intentions. She was trying very hard to appear un-wobbly and failing miserably. The point of appearing un-wobbly was this, she was hoping to - against all reasonable logic – miraculously find a man on the way home to give her what she needed; cheap, meaningless, guilt ridden messy sex.

She didn't really mind what sort of man it was, she wasn't all that fussy really, just a man, but preferably one who was as drunk and horny as her. The hope was that if she appeared un-wobbly enough, then there'd be a slight chance that she'd manage to engage a man in conversation long enough for her to convince him that between her legs would be a very nice place for him to be.

In her thigh high boots, cheekily short skirt and flesh displaying excuse for a top, all massively impractical for the Scottish November chill, she blearily swayed through the streets looking for prospective sex partners.

Her plan to look un-wobbly and sexy appeared comical to the sober eye. For one thing, the crusty dribble at the corner of her mouth was unlikely to attract too many suitors; this mixed with the panda like smudged eye make-up and hair that looked like she'd had a close call with an electricity pylon meant that

she was more likely to repulse than attract. The ill executed stagger did little for her either. She was clearly paralytic yet she still held the belief that there was a man out there somewhere on the filthy morning streets that'd be as desperate as her. She was very good at lying to herself when it came to that sort of thing, as are most people after a fathomless volume of alcohol. Her willing suspension of disbelief was so highly tuned, or hugely warped depending on your angle on the situation, that she believed her meandering walk to be perfectly linear and her odds of scoring near perfect.

The drool on her mouth, which was working it's way down to her chin in a very lumpy fashion, was a by product of the sweaty kebab that she'd managed to swipe from an unconscious person in a doorway. Her dribble had chilly sauce in it, as did her top. Bits of kebab meat and sauce were poking out of her boob tube - which appeared to be dissolving under toxic chilli sauce - and the rest of the putrid kebab, which had managed to make it's way into the girl's digestive system, wasn't enjoying it's current location in the slightest. It was thoroughly unhappy about being in the girl's stomach and her stomach, in return, wasn't enjoying having it there either. The two seemed to have come to the agreement that they just weren't getting on very well and that it would be best for all concerned if the kebab simply upped and left. There was some discussion as to the stomach leaving but they realised that that course of action would mean things getting far too messy and decided against it.

The kebab was coming up and no amount of heavy breathing and suppressive gulping swallows on the girl's behalf was going to stop it.

She couldn't be seen vomiting in an open street, she didn't want to spoil her chances with any stinking drunk men; she had to get somewhere a bit more secret so she dived for the nearest dark and suspicious alleyway to hide her disgrace.

The alleyway sat between a tall 400 year-old stone housing tenement and something that used to be a building but had since partially burnt down so was only a wall with homeless people sleeping behind it. It was ill lit, wreaked of the sort of things that would normally be labelled a biohazard, was alive with rats and seemed to house some sort of maggot farm all the way down one side. The alleyway was very dark and *very* suspicious indeed. In fact it was quite unusually suspicious.

Alleyways in horror films would've been jealous of how deeply and unnervingly suspicious this path between buildings had managed to make itself. It had quite clearly been working very hard indeed at becoming as fantastically, unreasonably, brain buggingly suspicious as it feasibly could and had done a fine job of it.

The girl didn't notice this though, as she'd gone temporarily blind from the stream of water ejecting from her eyes as her stomach contents made a break for freedom. She was too far-gone to comprehend the mind bogglingly intense suspiciousness of the conduit, the only thing she was aware of was her insides trying to get outside and had a vague passing thought about how nice and dark it was. But mostly she was preoccupied with the streams of projectile vomit flying out of her in a fire-hose-like-fashion.

It absent-mindedly occurred to her, briefly and in between gasps for breath, that wondering up dark alleyways is the kind of thing that stupid people in cheap films do just before they get gutted and flayed alive. In the instant that this thought brushed past her pickled brain, she managed to almost instantly discard it with the following reasoning:

- She had had a massive amount to drink.
- People in films don't usually have three-dozen alco-pops and a bucket of sambuca in their system before they get themselves in trouble and people in films die.
- Drunk people are notoriously good at not getting hurt. In fact she had a brother who'd once fallen asleep five stories up on some scaffolding, fallen off the scaffolding, plummeted toward the pavement, bounced off it a few times and only been winded. Drunk people are rubbery and don't get hurt. Of course the brother in question had since been hospitalised for liver damage through alcohol poisoning, but the fall was the thing to be focused on.

So, in conclusion, she was drunk, ergo, she was invincible.

An apposing point of view, and probably the most common, would be that she was being tragically dim-witted.

People in real life only ever wander up dark suspicious alleyways when they are either as hard as nails, looking for a quiet place to do illegal things or seeking pain, or death, or both. Alcohol is no excuse for such moronic behaviour, only a predilection for pain.

The dark suspicious alleyway continued doing its job exceptionally well. It had attained the perfect level of darkness with just enough light to appear good and eerie. Even at the smallest glance it could be deduced that it undoubtedly commanded a mastery for suspicion uncommon to its neighbours. It even came complete with its own shadowy, skulking, dark, pail-faced, red eyed menacing man; an attribute which was hugely uncommon in the suspicious alleyway fraternity.

Of course the stupid, barely clad, vomiting girl had absolutely no comprehension of the trouble she was blindly staggering into. The alleyway was for one purpose only, she just needed to puke and it suited her down to the filth ridden ground.

She managed to blunder half way up the alley before her internal disagreement reached its pinnacle. Chunks of semi digested, hardly chewed, sweaty offal meat, brown lettuce and unreasonably acidic chilli sauce flew hither and thither, adding to the suspicious alley's already pungent odour. This would have pleased the alley very much, had it been capable of feeling pleasure.

It didn't please the menacing man though as, being a vampire, he had unnaturally acute olfactory senses: he could smell flatulence in a hurricane. Foul scents were massively intensified and bothersome to his un-dead nose. This particular vampire was very old indeed, which meant that he had self-control above and beyond your average neck biter. He could block out outstandingly nasty aromas, but sometimes people's fumes took him by surprise and proved to

be a bit too much. Gagging would be the unpleasant side effect. Gagging whilst trying to drink fresh blood wasn't enjoyable.

The un-dead like drinking blood, this is widely known, but what is a little less known is that when the drinking of blood is combined with a rancid pong, it has the effect of making the blood taste as foul as the smell. Vampires have compared the effect to trying to snort petrol while drinking yak urine. The un-dead preferred to prey on the non-stinky, but then, you don't always get what you want.

As I've said, the vampire had been around for a very long time and had developed a way of blotting out the smell of the streets. In past centuries, in his younger years, he hadn't had much call for blotting out unpleasant smells. He had been of wealthy lineage when he was bitten and had consequently used his wealth to hunt all over the world, sticking to the higher levels of society to which he was accustomed. He had hobnobbed with the aristocracy and dined on the choicest of meats before flying off into the night.

The problem with that sort of thing in the present day were a) he didn't have as much money as he used to, and b) The modernisation of the world had erected obstacles that were just too dangerous to traverse. He couldn't get anywhere near them - the sort of people that ate fine cuisine and drank the finest of wines - opulent people with rich blood. The criminal investigation advancements of the previous fifty years or so meant that his prior high society carnage wasn't as easily achievable as once it had been. Every now and then he would find the odd extravagant rich food filled upper class person wondering off

from it's herd and he'd revel in the tastes of days gone by. Sadly, though, these morsels were all too infrequent. Nowadays he mainly feasted on the down and outs and drunks. His last feed had been a month ago. (*Contrary to popular belief, vampires do not need to feed every night. In fact, if they have a good hearty meal, they can go for a month without feeling the least bit hungry.*) He had been forced to feed on a young conservative which, to his mind, was the foulest meat available. Their blood was sort of watery and cold and didn't nourish as well as real humans, which was why his pallor was considerably more pail than usual.

Present times had dictated that beggars couldn't be choosers and if a booze addled vomiting tart was to be his meal of the moment, so be it. He recalled the words of King John I.

Well, whiles I am a beggar, I will rail,
And say there is no sin, but to be rich;
And, being rich, my virtue then shall be
To say there is no vice, but beggary.

He could have gotten away with simply thinking, "the grass is always greener on the other side", but he enjoyed pomp and pretension and mentally patted himself on the back for upping his game a little.

Meanwhile, the girl was busy bouncing off the walls, desperately engaged in not looking too wobbly while hurling violent clouds and streams of vomit

frantically over the alleyway. Every couple of bounces would produce new sprays of intestinal fluid and kebab remnants that would splash on the floor, walls and her tasteless stiletto-ed knee high patent leather boots. This carried on for a while, which felt like a spasm filled eternity for her, but eventually the oral sprays stopped containing food and reduced down to just stomach bile. This is, as most people will know, always a good sign that the heaving is coming to an end but is also the most physically painful part of regurgitation. As the spasms became less and less frequent - yet more and more agonising - and the water that dribbled from her eyes slowed its flow and began to dry up, her wobbling started to become a little more controllable. She managed to traverse a relatively straight line without falling and gave herself an imaginary pat on the back as she gasped for air between dry heaving.

The menacing man kept watch. He floated in the air just above and behind her, waiting for her final gut twisting spasm. Completely unaware that he too was being observed.

There were two other people in the alley, only one of whom had a clear overview of the entire situation and so had a notion as to how many people were engaged in the alleyways activities. The other was a hunter and she'd been tracking the vampire for the last two months, waiting to catch him unawares.

The suspicious alleyway was slightly put out by the extra two people watching the events, as from a suspicious alleyway's point of view, less is most definitely more. The more people you put in a suspicious alleyway the more it

starts turning into a gathering, and gatherings are only suspicious behind closed doors with whispery voices or in ceremonies with rolled up trouser legs and nipples showing.

Alleyways are far happier when events contain smaller numbers of people and as few visible nipples as can be managed.

The girl spewed her last and dropped to her knees wiping the cold clammy sweat from her forehead. After a few gasps mixed with some moans and groans she stumbled to her feet. After the evacuation of food and liquid, she began to feel ever so slightly sobered.

She took a moment to look around at the passage that she'd managed to hobble into. She'd ventured quite deep into it, further than she'd been aware of, it unnerved her a little. It slowly dawned on her that the alleyway she was in was far more suspicious than she had previously realised. It then gradually crept into her mind that being drunk and therefore un-hurttable was probably a tad misguided appraisal of the situation. She felt a bit stupid. She shuddered slightly. The shudder sobered her a little more.

Then something happened that brought her crashing back to the point of near complete sobriety with an almighty thump. A rather sly voice appeared slightly above and behind her saying, "Well hello there!", in an oily tone.

She stood stock still, paralysed with fear until the owner of the voice grabbed her by the hair and whispered slyly in her ear with a slippery voice, "Go on, give me a nice high pitched squeal. The noise excites me."

The alcohol relinquished its grip on the girl and handed all functions over to her almighty terror.

She obliged him his request, letting out a scream that a wild hell-bent banshee would be enormously envious of. He flipped her around expecting his fearsome appearance to strike even further horror into her already fragile mind. He believed himself to be very scary indeed, even in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, instead of appearing menacing he looked, well, frankly quite ridiculous. Most of the people he attacked usually quivered hysterically until they saw him. Then they tended to laugh hysterically. The drunken stupid girl was no exception.

The sight of him made her wonder if the events that she was involved in weren't, in fact, some kind of elaborate practical joke. It even occurred to her to look around the immediate area for hidden video cameras and TV crews.

He had a pale blue-ish almost minty complexion which looked like it had been badly slapped on by a carnival face painter – *this is not the vampires usual skin texture and was due to the young conservative he'd eaten recently* - and, at first glance, seemed to stand about seven feet tall. Further inspection revealed him to be more in the region of five foot eight but was floating above the floor to appear just that little bit taller and imposing. What made this even more ridiculous was the fact that he'd made a cape that was two feet too long so as to cover his feet when he was above the ground. He'd actually gone out of his way to try and fool people into believing that he was really tall. He hadn't made the cape very well though, and his feet stuck out of the front and made him look a bit

like he was on stilts. He had prominent neon white odd looking fangs, like he'd just bought them from a joke shop and covered them in tipex, but the thing that confused her most of all and made her suspect a sick prank, was his hair. He had somehow seen fit to go for the business at the front, party at the back ludicrousness of a mullet. The poor sod looked like a cross between a circus performer and a footballer from the eighties. The frilly white shirt didn't help matters either.

His appearance made her giggle slightly. She felt a little drunk again. Then the mixture of fear and the vampire's ridiculous appearance made something short circuit in the girl's brain. She couldn't help it she just had to laugh. It was the kind of laugh that strikes people when they're really not supposed to laugh. A bit like the kind of hysteria that would take a ten-year-old boy, or any male to be fair, when someone farts in a church.

The menacing man was very sensitive about being laughed at when he was trying his absolute best to be menacing and decided to waste no time in exerting his power. He yanked her head viciously to the side saying

"You're going to regret that old girl. This is going to take far longer than it should."

She began to be worried again and yet couldn't stop her hysterics. She was about to die but all she could think was, "What a *Mullet!*"

He snarled, hissed, screwed his face up in a threatening manner and revealed his razor sharp comical teeth just before a fist came out of nowhere and cracked him squarely in the jaw. It struck him with such force that he would've

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