

The uninhibited, drunken madness of the Halloween party still rang in my ears as I made my way home, cursing with annoyance at the lack of taxi cabs and having to bloody walk the three miles home from the town.

The heavy black October sky made me feel so small and insignificant as I continued my lonely journey along the deserted stretch of the Woodend Road that led to Artigarvan. To my right there were towering, leafless trees with twisting and stretching branches like silhouetted veins over the creamy coloured moon, a moon that gave sympathetic comfort by lighting the way ahead.

I began to feel a bit stupid as all these weird ghostly thoughts began to creep into my mind, thoughts of ghouls and assorted strange creatures watching me from the thick woodland either side of the deserted road. I smiled as I cursed myself for watching too many horror films on TV, then I thought that it was funny how your mind would throw up these horror thoughts when you were out alone on a cold dark night. I mean, until that very night, I certainly didn't believe that strange creatures existed, but now I can definitely state that they do.

Now, I know you're probably thinking to yourself that I'm smoking a funny fag or taking some kind of wacky powder, but believe me, I'm not and on the 6<sup>th</sup> hour of the 6<sup>th</sup> day of the 6<sup>th</sup> month, my cold, lifeless body will be found and my soul will have been taking by the shadows from the depths of hell.

Until that very night, I'd always imagined that the most scariest or hideous thing that you could ever meet would be an Income Tax inspector or even a traffic warden. Oh no, believe me, there are worse creatures out there.

As I said, I was walking up the Woodend Road, hearing nothing in the icy darkness except for my panting breath as I struggled with the steep hill, then, deciding to light myself a cigarette, I stopped for a minute to light my lighter. Just then, as the flame flickered my eyes caught sight of something in the bushes. At first I thought that it might be one of the night's wee creatures, you know, like a

badger or a hedgehog or something like that. But as I slowly moved closer to it, I got the biggest fright of my life when I leaned forwards and discovered that it was staring back at, and began to snarl ferociously. As I stepped back, there was a strange mist that twirled and swayed right where the strange wee creature had been. Now, being the proud coward that I am, I didn't hesitate in running like blue thunder up the road, not waiting, or wishing to find out what the strange thing was. My heart pounded and my lings ached as I continued to run, then, I groaned with pain as I tripped over something and fell face down onto the cold tarmac.

The strangest thing then happened as I wiped the blood from the deep cut on my forehead with my handkerchief. As I sat there on the edge of the road, I noticed this wee elderly woman shuffling down the road towards me, trying her best to carry what looked like a large bag of firewood. I mean, at first I thought she must be crazy collecting wood for the fire at that time of the night. So, holding the sodden handkerchief to my head, the strange experience now forgotten as all I could think about was to help this wee woman, well, I couldn't help it, it was the way in which I was raised.

Anyway, I began to walk towards the woman, offering to carry the bag for her, which, she seemed to be grateful for. She told me that she lived in the house just at the corner. So, I gripped the bag and threw it up onto my shoulder, not giving a damn about the good jacket either.

'Oh dear, you've an accident have you?' The wee woman said, gripping then onto my arm. 'I'll fix that up for you.'

'Is it not a bit late to be out collecting sticks?' I asked her.

'I prefer to do things at night when there's nobody about,' she replied with a smile.

Now that wee sentence from the woman should have given me a bit of clue that she just wasn't normal, but I ignored it and continued to carry the bag of sticks into

the kitchen of the woman's house.

'Here, let me stop that juice from escaping,' the woman smiled, immediately touching a damp cloth to my bloodied forehead. Then, she handed me a strange looking coin, telling me to keep it for her, so I slipped it into my pocket.

Now, I mean, when she called my blood juice, surely that should've given me the go ahead to run like hell, but, no, I sat there on the chair allowing her to clean the blood from my face and stick a thick plaster on my head. Anyway, the wee woman offered to make some tea, which, by the way, I could never refuse.

'I see that you're all dressed up as a Wizard\_\_ do you like Wizards?'

'Aye, I suppose. It would be awesome right enough to have power like that. I mean, imagine being to do a spell and get whatever you want\_\_ amazing.'

'So, do you work for a living?'

'Jesus no, there's nothing out there nowadays. Besides, I injured my back and can't work anymore,' I told the woman as she set out the cups and teapot on the kitchen table. 'I really that I could work, I miss it like.'

'A bit of hard work never killed anybody,'

'Aye, true enough. I wouldn't mind being one of those Wizards right enough. Christ, the things I could with that all the power.'

'Christ, he wouldn't allow you such powers, he's such a goodie-goodie little shit.'

I couldn't stop myself from laughing at the woman's unexpected comment. I mean, it was so unreal, you don't normally old people saying things like that about the big guy, and they're usually all running to church or chapel, aren't they?

'So, do you believe in this Jesus then?' The woman asked with a rather cheeky glint in her eye as she poured out the tea. 'Do you believe he done all that miracle stuff and healed all those cripples?'

'Well, I suppose he was about all those years back. I mean, we really can't

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