

## **Monster Man**

It must have been around 1960, as work on the Dartford Tunnel was still in its early stages, when my workmates and I were sent to work on a site nearby.

This was an away job for us as we were based in Winchester and it meant us staying away for three weeks at a time. It was also essential that we had decent digs as winter was approaching fast.

We found a transport cafe, of which there were many at that time offering bed, breakfast and evening meal at a special weekly rate, so we moved in. The food was quite good and plentiful, the beds were clean, although dormitory style, and there was a Telly to help pass the evenings cheaply. Customers were many and varied being mostly Lorry Drivers hauling to and from Tilbury Docks.

This one particular evening, I remember, started much like any other with us returning from work, washing up and going into dinner.

During dinner, however, the door burst open and one of the biggest men, I or any of the others had ever seen, came lurching through.

Lurching as he had to bend both knees and head to clear the doorway height whilst turning his body to clear the width.

He was swarthy with long black hair, a beard to match, and who looked more like a Barn conversion than the proverbial brick lavvy.

The sight stopped any previous conversation that had been going on and a discussion started in lowered tones as to who or what he might be. There was not long to wait as he was known to the proprietor of the cafe (who prefers Guv) who showed great delight at seeing him and greeting him as a friend.

While Monster Man was eating his dinner the rest of us retired to the Telly Lounge, or room, where the Guv informed us that his friend had been a Circus Strong Man in Rumania and was forced to flee the country because of his political beliefs. He obtained asylum here and was working as a lorry driver with apparently better pay and conditions than his previous situation. The Guv also mentioned, in an aside, that Monster Man suffered wide mood swings and could be very vicious at times. He also said that Monster Man was heir to a very large inheritance. At that we all settled back to watch telly in our favourite positions and chairs except, without anything being said, the best chair was left empty.

After a short while Monster Man came in, sat in the best chair, and proceeded to watch telly with us. The evening viewing was pretty lousy so a game of cards was suggested. Monster Man asked quietly if he could join in, so quietly, in fact, that it rattled all the windows and caused the cafe mouser to take off from the fireside like the proverbial scalded one.

The card game chosen was nine card Bragg usually taking longer to achieve a win but building a substantial 'Pot' at sixpence a round. For the uninformed, each player had nine cards and would arrange them into three sets of three hopefully outsmarting the rest of the players and winning all three hands to take the 'Pot'. Most players, from my experience, tended to arrange cards in their hands with the high set to the right. Not much money was won or lost during the evening but I did notice several sets being laid from the left when Monster Man was making the play, mine included.

The evening drew to a close and after cocoas all round we retired to our beds. Being a dormitory changing was in full view of everyone and I can assure you seeing Monster Man stripped was far more frightening than seeing him clothed. His shorts alone, sewn up in the right places and filled with gas, would have shot one of Richard Branson's capsules straight up into the stratosphere. So to bed.

After that there were the usual ribald comments and settling down with shouts of goodnight back and fourth across the room like; Goodnight Joe, goodnight Bill, goodnight John Boy, goodnight Mary. My head had barely hit the pillow when the most God awful sound rent the air. To try and describe it the nearest facsimile would be a very large concrete mixer, revolving very slowly, filled with very large ballast , and no cement or water.

Everyone sat up in their beds, peering into the gloom, to try and see where the noise was coming from. Everyone that is except for Monster Man he lay in his bed presenting a silhouette like the Mendip Hills in an earthquake emitting the said God awful noise. To call it snoring would be a massive understatement.

Nobody said a word as they lay back down and tried to bury their heads under pillows and clothes to avoid the noise. Needless to say it was impossible. After what seemed an age a small Scots lad near me leaped out of bed and rushed across to Monster Man shouting and screaming at him “wake up and turn over” whilst punching and pushing him, “do anything you like but for Gods sake stop snoring you noisy Bastard”.

The movements and noises ceased. We all lay very still trying to anticipate what would happen next. Some of us were probably planning our actions should he become violent. We need not have worried. His huge bulk heaved and turned over and a theatrical whisper boomed out “sorry mate” and he was back to sleep. *Phew!* Relief all round.

The young Scot was away early next morning. Just in case, I suppose.

When I spoke of the incident to the Governor at breakfast he laughed and said "I was only winding you up about him being vicious". I said "I suppose the rest was also a pack of lies about his huge inheritance then".

"Certainly not" said the Guv "You saw how completely calm and amiable he was after being woken up violently by a little Whippet using abusive language. Monster Man is indeed 'meek enough to inherit the earth'".