

**THREE  
PROSTATE  
ANGELS**

# **THREE PROSTATE ANGELS**

**EDWARD EVANS**



## *Dedication*

This is a difficult situation for me, as I lost one of my best friends, Norman Burrows, a man who has influenced both my career and my life for almost sixty years. He was a man who one could count on, no matter what the cost and a man whose advice was always worth taking.

One of the unsung heroes of the Second World War, Norman was one of the last of the Bevan boys, who were down the pits, mining the coal in appalling conditions to keep our country going – the power stations, the trains, the factories, even our homes and how we needed that coal at that time. The sad thing was he never talked about it, or ever wanted to.

I worked for him in Chipping Sodbury as his first lieutenant and as a manager, you could not fault him. He would direct his staff in the direction he wanted them to go and let them use their own initiative to do it. He would allow staff to develop and take responsibility for what they did and never take the credit from them, or for the ideas they put forward. Furthermore, should matters go wrong he would take failure as his responsibility, but then discuss how and why things went wrong. How often do we see that these days?

We regularly played golf together and as he was such a lousy golfer, I often won, but it was not the golf that was important, it was the comradeship and the 19th tee.

In the latter few years of his life our contact was limited due to the distance between our families; it was on occasional visits and perhaps two or three phone calls a year, but at least it always rekindled the memories.

His wife Betty was the receptionist at the offices and her charming London accent continues to enforce those memories when she contacts us during these times.

He was such a great bloke that both Lilian my wife and I miss him very much.

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It is always the older one gets, the more people you know depart this earth and another dear friend of nearly forty years did just that – Roger Parent, our neighbour in France and what a talented man he was – not only a pianist, who would entertain us at our local soireés, but also an amazing carpenter, who constructed his own house from start to finish by himself. The timbers which would have supported the Notre Dame, ornately carved and positioned, the cupboards and cabinets, windows and doors of his home were good enough for the best of dwellings.

We will all miss him and so will the rest of our neighbours.

## *Acknowledgements*

I want to thank Jean-Claude Terlizzi and his wife Andrée, our special friends, who gave me the idea for the book, but also Fernand Mouret my neighbour, for some of the memorable stories.

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My thanks also go to Philip, Catherine and Dorothy and the staff of the Hôtel Metropol in Calais for the friendship and service they have given us for over thirty years.

Claude, Brigitte and staff of the Brasserie de La Tour in Calais for the fantastic meals we had there during the last twenty to thirty years. Their Kronenburg 1664 is the best kept in France.

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A special thank you to Christina Harkness our editor, who without her cruel but kind comments, my books would probably not be worth reading. She is meticulous in her correction and in her ideas which always improve the flow of the story. Thank you again, Christina.

Finally, a thank you to Andy McColm our cover

designer, amongst other things. A gentleman made a comment to me about cover designs, stating that few books have covers which actually create a sale and I am fortunate because mine do and that is down to Andy.

## *My Other Books*

### **II PY**

My first novel: a thriller loosely based, I believe, on a true story about a vintage Rolls Royce used for drug smuggling. It was purchased by Robert Conway from Haworth at the DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) auction in the USA and from that moment his problems begin. The head of the cartel is determined to get the car back at any cost. But why? Robert enters the car for many rallies throughout Europe including the Beaujolais Nouveau Race to London where attempts are made on his life. It is fast moving and action packed.

*'A crime thriller that moves comfortably into top gear. Just like in the movies,'* says Jim Greenhalf of the *Bradford Telegraph and Argus* and *Keighley News*

### **The Piano**

The indefatigable newsman Clive White – who will already be familiar to readers of the II PY and LIKE *a FISH OUT of WATER* – has gone to cover an unusual protest at a large London hospital. Unusual, because for once it's not about waiting times or mixed-sex wards but a beautiful old piano that stands in the entrance hall. Originally, the gift of none other than 30s idol Noël Coward, the piano is now to go to auction to raise funds for the cash-strapped hospital. One by one the protesters reveal what the piano means to them, and heartfelt tales fall from their lips like old-time melodies from its ebony and ivory keys.

**Rated Book of the Week** – *‘Edward Evans is to be congratulated for trying something different.’* **Jim Greenhalf,**  
*Bradford Telegraph and Argus*

### **COME on GRANDDAD: *hold my hand***

Phoebe marries David, a very wealthy man for his money and the moment he shows signs of Alzheimer’s she hustles him into a home where he is drugged, just to keep him quiet and so that she can spend the cash. He is however protected by his carer and this leads to a better life for all. It is a romantic insight into the suffering of those with Alzheimer’s. I have tried to show the right way and the wrong way of dealing with this terrible disease... and to be all inclusive.

**Rated Book of the Week** – *The Bradford Telegraph and Argus*  
*‘I couldn’t put it down. It was written with empathy and understanding. I thoroughly enjoyed it. An excellent read.’*  
**Nicky Almond, Edward Evans.com**

### **LIKE a FISH OUT of WATER**

I suppose this is my favourite book, simply because it’s also my wife’s and my daughter’s favourite. In addition, the message I have tried to write into the story has got through to people. We are all different and some of us, through no fault of our own, are more different and because of this, are often ostracised or despised. This story is about one of those people who had the courage and tenacity to overcome gender difficulties, winning the George Cross and the Croix de Guerre amongst many accolades during the war. Her bravery was the stuff of legends. She was an outstanding cricketer, playing against Bradman’s Australians, scoring 50 and following the war, she became Captain of the English Women’s Team.



*'I loved this book. I read it in one go and was hooked by the gripping storyline. It's full of interesting reflection, nasty bullies, revenge, love, real charity and a life truly well lived. Edward Evans has crafted a thrilling read which could so easily have slipped into parody and exploitation but manages to keep its dignified head above the fray and emerges with something serious to say about the human condition. Like its main character, this book made me feel empowered, stronger and infinitely kind. Surprisingly delightful!'*

**Eric Page, freelance journalist**

*'Wonderfully surprising and utterly mesmerising. A truly wonderful novel.'* **Lisa Green, Goodreads**

*'Riveting!'* **Jim Greenhalf, Bradford Telegraph and Argus**

## **FOR THE RIGHT REASONS**

Like my previous book, *II PY*, *For the Right Reasons* is fast-paced and action packed. Set mainly in East Berlin just a couple of years before the fall of the Berlin Wall, the novel tells the story of down-to-earth Yorkshire businessman Robert Conway who accidentally becomes involved in an assassination attempt on the East German President's life. His heroic efforts to rescue the President win him special freedoms in the East and during his travels he stumbles across secret plans for a terrifying act of sabotage against the West.

*'A really good read. The author obviously knows his subject well. Exciting and extremely interesting. I am looking forward to reading Mr Evans' next book.'* **Margaret Waterhouse**

## **BABES IN GAOL**

(uncorrected manuscript only)

I served on the Juvenile or Youth Bench as a magistrate for almost twenty-five years and I wrote this story as a protest about the way many children are criminalised at the early

age of ten, often through no fault of their own. Sometimes they are from poorer families and sometimes they are misunderstood. It affects them all their lives because it is on their record. And believe me, a child's misdemeanour at the age of ten sticks. It's on their record for life!

## **MOONCAR**

The deadliest and most feared weapon in the British arsenal – the Rolls-Royce Armoured Car spreads fear into the hearts and minds of the Irish people. This symbol of British might was deemed invincible but now it was in the hands of the Republicans who would use it to devastating effect! This is a tale of victory, tragedy and pathos, not least the expression of a man's undying love for one woman.

**Rated Book of the Week** – *The Bradford Telegraph and Argus*

## **TWO OLD DEARS**

This is the story about two fabulously wealthy sisters, Edith and Maud Trenchard, now in their eighties who have been arrested for suspected armed robbery. Their lives have been full of adventure, robbing criminals of their ill-gotten gains and giving to the poor. As latter-day Robin Hoods, the two ladies pull off some of the most daring escapades all over Europe, taking on not only the Mafia, but the elite ... the Establishment. Their flawed talents: Edith adoring the male form, both young and old, whilst Maud, a kleptomaniac from childhood and an MI6 trained operative, are used to perfection to carry out their mischievous deeds.

*'A gloriously funny book and an intriguing page turner.'*  
**Sally Clifford**, *Bradford Telegraph and Argus*

## THE FOUNDRYMAN'S APPRENTICE

Clive White the *Mail's* investigative reporter is sent to find out the truth of a letter received by the *Mail* from an Irvine Gough. It takes him back to late Victorian times, through the First and Second World Wars to the present day, following a family's determination to get justice for their friend who was cruelly murdered during WW1. He uncovers corruption on a massive scale in the Army, Police and even the Government itself.

*'Murder...Mystery...Intrigue. It could be the plot of an Agatha Christie novel. Crime fans will enjoy the trials and tribulations of Edward Evans' latest book.'* **Sally Clifford**, *Bradford Telegraph and Argus*

## DOCTOR JOHN

Doctor John Brenton was the epitome of a Village doctor, regarded as kind and caring, he was respected by all. However, when he sees a young woman, one of his patients, being attacked, his gentle nature turns to fire as he goes on the attack to rescue her. Then finds himself embroiled in the drug wars with its violent consequences. He is fortunate as another of his patients is non other than the Daily Mail's investigative reporter Clive White and he too becomes embroiled, but has the might of the Mail behind him.

## MURDER ON THE WORTH VALLEY RAILWAY

Clive White the Mail's intrepid reporter investigates a cold crime of some five years earlier – the murder of Peter Dill, a high profile local councillor, who was both Chairman of the powerful Watch and Planning Committee.

Clive arrives in Haworth, a village gripped in fear and where only a handful of locals would dare to speak to him. It is through them that he discovers that Peter Dill controlled the village in the manner of a Mafia boss.

Blackmail, beatings, disappearances and even suspected murder were the means that Dill used to successfully gain the upper hand. Even corrupt members of the Police Force were engaged to do Dill's dirty work and enforce his interpretation of the law. Several honest cops were either set up or forced into early retirement, one being falsely gaoled for drug offences, only to suffer the consequences of being a uniformed officer condemned to a prison environment.

*Books soon to be published:*

**THE BENT COPPER AND  
HIS DELUDED REPORTER**

This is a true story about a policeman, who amongst other things, was sacked for internet bullying. It shows how he could lie and cheat using pseudonyms, in the hope he would not be caught and how his little friend, a deluded reporter, believed everything the police man uttered and published the same without checking the veracity of his words.

It shows how this policeman because of his experience, could manipulate the judicial system showing how he could commit perjury, pervert the course of justice and even use a forged document to gain a pecuniary advantage and get away with it, thus demonstrating how unfair it could be. It also shows how the police force stick together when one of theirs is in trouble.

**THREE OLDER DEARS**

**THE ORNITHOLOGIST**

**SADIE'S STORY**

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# *Introduction*

*To avoid any confusion, I must firstly introduce myself. I'm Clive White and I work for the Daily Mail newspaper as an investigative journalist. I had been working in Yorkshire investigating an unsolved murder which had happened some five years earlier. You may remember the murders; they attracted a great deal of publicity in all sections of the media, especially as the action took place on the Worth Valley Railway, the Steam Railway. Preservation Society, in the Yorkshire Village of Haworth and which would be no surprise to anyone. The articles in The Mail appeared under the title: Murder on the Worth Valley Railway, just to give it the Agatha Christie touch.*

*During the investigation, which engendered much hatred towards me, I was jostled, assaulted and even sent to Coventry by many of the villagers. On one occasion, I was so badly beaten up by some of the suspects, I found myself in hospital, alone in a private room for several days, which included having a permanent police guard outside my room as the police, after showing no real interest in my situation, now realised, especially after pressure from The Mail and the Home Office, that my life could be in danger, and now no one was taking any chances with my safety.*

*It was the first time I realised that I did have some value to The Mail, even though I was considered to be an old fossil, or someone from a previous generation, possibly Sam Pepys I suspect; at least that was the impression I gleaned from the younger reporters.*

*It was during this time I met a few real characters who I believed were in their late seventies, early eighties, all patients in the hospital, having had trouble with their prostate.*

*However, as my situation improved I was able to sneak away from*



*my 'captor', a police guard and so-called protector and get around. One or two of the patients actually used to sneak into my room, curious to see who it was who needed all the attention. I became quite friendly with some of them and promised to keep in touch, something I really wanted to do, not only from a personal point of view, but also of newspaper interest as they were planning an adventure, which to me sounded either mad, or even particularly dangerous for men of their age.*

*My biggest problem, apart from my condition, were the guards, protectors, call them what you like, as they were instructed to follow me wherever I went and report on whatever I did, thus curtailing my activities throughout my stay there. It was a twenty-four-hour situation with a different officer every eight hours, not very pleasant as they did not enter the room very often and when they did, the conversation was stilted, as they were obviously told not to talk about the investigation I was undertaking; it was very boring.*

*I better explain the need for guards – as I said I was investigating an unsolved murder and had suffered for it, as a result of which I had a twenty-four-hour police guard outside my room with orders not to leave me alone; question everyone who entered my room and to follow me everywhere I went. Naturally, at some time or other, they too got bored with just sitting outside my room, or perhaps got friendly with one or two of the nurses, so you see there was a big hole left in my security,*

*However, I suppose all patients are in the same boat and get somewhat bored when they are unable to move around or talk to anyone and anyone will do as long as its company.*

*Well, that's how it was when I came into contact with a lively old chap in his late seventies or early eighties; I never found out exactly how old he was, but to my astonishment the door opened.*

*'He's gone off,' he said, as he just walked in.*

*'Who has?' I asked, somewhat surprised at seeing him.*

*'Your copper,' he replied.*

*'Where to?' I asked.*

*'I don't know, but I saw him chatting up that dark haired nurse and I think they've gone off to the restaurant, so I thought I would come along to see who the celebrity was and... bloody hell!' he*

*exclaimed, on seeing the injuries to my face, 'I can see you lost your last fight. Who was it, Joe Louis?'*

*'No, Marciano and you shouldn't be in here,' I replied, finding it difficult to speak as a result of the injuries. My face incidentally was battered and bruised, covered in cuts and severe grazes. It was so swollen you would have thought I had the mumps. In fact, it was unrecognisable as a head and face.*

*'Bloody fine security this is,' I mumbled loudly to myself.*

*'What was that?' the old man asked.*

*'Nothing, I just said you shouldn't be in here,' I struggled to say.*

*'I saw the copper go off somewhere and as the nurse told me you were a famous Daily Mail reporter called Clive White, I thought I'd go and have a look. You can't be that famous though, as I've never seen or heard of you before. Anyway, I thought I'd take a look, if only to relieve the boredom.*

*'So, it's Clive eh! Can I call you Clive?' he hurriedly asked.*

*'Of course, you can,' I replied, still struggling to talk, in fact in pain when I did so.*

*He stood there just looking at me until I broke the monotony. 'I can't talk, so just tell me about yourself,' I said, emphasising the difficulty I had and that's exactly what he did.*

### **Jack continues the story:**

**By the way, I'm Jack Summers. I live just down the road, in a little village called Silsden. It's a lovely little place, quiet, away from all the rush of Bradford and Keighley. At least me and the wife like it.'**

**Jack began to tell me what he did as a child, where he went to school, where he served his apprenticeship and what he did after that.**

**It appeared he was a trained motor mechanic and could repair anything from motorbikes to cars and lorries, but hadn't been so active in recent years through age and illness; but he was now on the mend and he felt better than he had done for months.**

**'We've got two boys,' Jack began, 'One, James. He's fifty,**

married with a daughter, Elizabeth. They live in Launceston, in the West Country, but it's a long way away, so we don't see them very often. Our other son Noel, lives with a woman in Australia and again, we don't hear from them very often. Children these days have their own lives to lead, so we have to go along with that. It would be nice to see them more often but that's life.'

Chapter 1

## Meet the Gang

*'Do you know Clive, hospital is a strange place for one to resume old friendships, but that's how it happened. Me, I'm in my seventies, long past all the exciting, but memorable days of my youth, which I suppose are the only things left for me, at this age, but I still keep my Harley Davidson in the garage, all wrapped up and all my leathers in the wardrobe, which constantly annoys my lovely wife Cassandra, Cassie for short, as she says they are far too bulky to be in the bedroom; but she is also in her seventies and they are far too heavy for her to move, so they stay there and I can look at them and dream of those glory days when we were all powerful, when we looked frightening and the roads were ours.'*

*'Don't tell me you were a Hell's Angel?' I asked.*

*'I like to think so, but really, I was a bit of a softie. I did, however, enjoy the bike, racing along the road, especially when there was a group of us together. Everyone would get out of our way as though we were kings of the road and I could pretend.*

*'Well, I had prostate trouble and found myself here in hospital, Ward 2, for the treatment, having been told off by everyone for not reporting it sooner – a lesson for everyone.*

*'I won't go into details, as no one wants to hear about that, but I remember the fatal day after the operation, when I sat up in bed in a dream; somewhat bow legged and worrying if I still had, you know, 'one of them,' still a man and all that, or had an evil surgeon removed it and sold it to some poor individual in the Third World, who wasn't as fortunate, or as manly as me. No, it wouldn't go to the Third World; it was too special. They would send it to America; sell it to a film star perhaps, Cary Grant; no not him, he's*

dead. Umm, Gregory Peck. Oh God, he's dead too!

'Am I dead too? No, I can't be. I've got a bloody contraption, with a plastic bag hanging on it and a tube going into me. Where the bloody hell is it going? Was I going to have to sit down or could I still stand at the trough and try to stop others looking over to see if theirs was bigger than mine, I always used to say to myself: 'It's no use you looking, you haven't got a chance.'

'Hello Jack, you're back with us then? Okay now?' Carol, the Ward Sister announced, disturbing my thoughts.

'Yes, I'm fine,' I responded.

'Fine, is what we like to hear,' she replied. 'Would you like a cup of tea?'

'That'll be good. A little milk, no sugar, thanks.'

By the time the tea arrived I had confirmed I was still normal and had a smile on my face.

'My word Jack, you look better already.'

'It's seeing you, Sister. That's made all the difference.'

'Oh, I can see I'm going to have problems with this one,' she announced to all those listening, which seemed to be everyone, as they all seemed too old to do anything else.

Anyway, within a few hours I was up and about, pulling this bag of water on a pole around the ward as it had wheels on and even venturing to the other wards. It was embarrassing, but as everyone was in the same boat, you soon get used to it.

I wandered into Ward 5 to be greeted by some busy body nurse. 'Are you lost?' she asked loudly, thinking I was some senile old git.

'I hardly think I could get lost walking from Ward 2 to here. Do you?' I replied sarcastically.

'Well, I can see you are still full of fuel,' she said, pointing to my bag of water. 'Think you can drive back there and leave the ladies here alone. Oh, I can see you're not quite ready for them yet. Now bugger off back and don't be so cheeky,' she added, smiling.

I smiled back.

'Jack Summers, a female voice from somewhere in the ward shouted, with a very strong London accent,

'Bloody hell! That's Hetty bloody Headlights,' I murmured loudly to myself, only it was too loud and just loud enough for the nurse to hear what I was saying.

Incidentally, the nurse's name was Aletha Rice and I found out later she had the nickname of 'Pudding', which was to prove useful later on.

'Hetty, don't make a noise, you'll disturb the other patients trying to rest,' Nurse Rice called out. 'So, we have someone who knows you well, do we?' she continued, grabbing my arm to check the name on the wristband. 'Well, we do, don't we? Mister Jack Summers?' Just in time for Hetty to call out again:

'Jack Summers, I know you are there. Nurse, is he still there?' she asked, almost shouting.

I put my hands together, almost praying and virtually mouthing the words with hardly a sound coming out, begging her not to say anything, 'Please! please don't tell her.'

'Please Hetty, I've asked you to keep your voice down. I'll come and see you in a minute.

'Has Jack gone?

'If you mean the man I was talking to, ages ago,' she replied, laughing her silly head off. 'Yes, he has.'

I mouthed: 'Thank you, thank you,' and blew her a kiss at which she gesticulated with her thumb and mouthed me to 'bugger off'.

I scurried out as quickly as my fuel bag would allow me, but I knew she was trouble, full of mischief.

*'Like yourself, Jack,' I added.*

*'Probably you're right, Clive.'*

Jack continued: 'Anyway, as I said, I knew she was full of mischief, so I waited outside the ward and held the door open, so I could hear everything that was going on. In fact, I could see the nurses' station and I could hear and see Nurse Pudding, as I'll call her, just to get my own back,

answering the phone and then attending to Hetty, who kept on about me. The nurse went to her bedside, which appeared to be close to the station, just round the corner, where she told her to behave herself and calm down.

'Now Hetty, who is this Jack Summers you're on about?' she asked and then added, 'What's he done to you?'

'Ooh, he was a tinker when he wer young', she answered, her London accent coming to the fore. 'He used to 'av a big motor bike and take me ridin' round London. I was born within the sound of the Bow Bells, so I am a real Cockney and he used to call these his big Bow Bells,' she continued, and must have shown Pudding her bare boobs, as she was told to put them away. 'He used to push them together and lean his head against them and say: 'I can't hear anything and then do it again and again, still saying he couldn't hear anything.

'I bladdy could, as I could hear 'em slapping together, as he would have somehow got me bra off. Nurse, we had some fun in them days.'

'I bet you did, Hetty you cheeky so and so,' Pudding said to her quietly and then, as she was returning to the station, I'm sure she saw me peeping through the door because she told her to go to the Men's Ward 2 and check all of them in there.

Pudding then turned to the door and politely and quietly said, 'Listeners often don't hear good things about themselves, but the next episode from Hetty sounds as if it will be equally exciting.' She then gestured with her thumb and once again mouthed, 'bugger off.'

I wandered off thinking of my youth and those lovely boobs of Hetty's and all the other things we would get up to. Then common sense took over and my present reality came to the fore. Anyway, I found myself passing Ward 4 and this time there was no one at the nurses' station so I popped in; when passing the TV room, I stopped just to nose in a little. There were two old blokes sitting watching the fifth repeat of *Murder She Wrote*, when I rudely

commented: 'Oh, not this one again,' and turned to walk away when one of them called out loudly:

'Jack?'

I turned round sharply to see a man I hadn't seen for over thirty years. I hardly recognised him, but it was his voice, that lovely English spoken with a soft French accent. Then, in an instant the memories came flooding back.

'Jean-Claude!' I exclaimed. 'I don't believe it!'

He turned, got out of the chair and like all Frenchmen walked over, grabbed hold of me and kissed me on both cheeks. He was much older but hadn't changed a bit. He had been in the country for over fifty years and had still kept his French accent, particularly as women had often told him it was lovely and sexy.

He was over six foot tall, but as he was French, he always preferred to say he was nearly two metres. His hair had been dark but was now grey, almost white, which made the sod look even more handsome and distinguished. He was a bulky, but strong fifteen stone and a regular forward for his rugby club; now a slim twelve stone but still looked very fit and still passionate about his rugby and his idol, Jonny Wilkinson, who played for his home town of Toulon in France, as well as England. So, the lucky sod was still very handsome and the apple of the nurses' eyes, much to the chagrin of all the males in the ward. Mind you, 99% were past it and wouldn't have a clue whether they were on this earth or Fullers, let alone anything about sex.

'What are you in for?' the Adonis asked.

'Aggravated burglary,' I replied 'As you made it sound like a prison sentence, but seriously though, the specialist said, I was too active for a man my age, so he took a yard off and is saving the tip for scientific research. He thought it would help those less fortunate.'

'Jack! You don't change. Was it prostate problems?'

'Yes. Just a minor little prostate trouble and you?'

'The same.'

'You will never guess who's in the ladies' ward down



there,' I said with a smile on my face. 'Long time ago,' I continued, giving him another clue. He smiled too, obviously remembering various girls we were involved with and trotted out a number of names, some of which I was surprised to hear he knew them.

Go on. Who is it?' he asked.

'I'll give you a clue: Headlights.'

The smile left his face, as he said, almost coughing out the name 'Not Hetty Wright! Tell me you are joking it's not Hetty Headlights?'

'The very one.'

'What does she look like?'

'I dunno, I haven't seen her yet. She just recognised my voice when I was chatting up this Nurse Rice in the women's department and the stupid woman told her I may be in Ward 2.'

'Don't tell her I'm in here. I want to recover,' JC added, with a touch of concern in his voice.

*'Clive, I knew he would spoil my day, the moment I saw him again. He always got all the women and it was obvious he had been out with her. Bloody man.'*

*'Lucky devil,' I commented as Jack continued:*

'I was just talking about you, Nurse Rice,' I called out as she passed the dayroom, in order to call for assistance in her ward.

'She's, my favourite,' JC added, 'My little rice pudding.' Well, that sounded absolutely lovely when JC said it, in his softly spoken way, but not when I said it in my dour Yorkshire accent.

'Come 'ere my lovely bit of Yorkshire pudding, or was that Plump Puddin!'

'Look here, Jack Summers, don't call me that,' she said, sounding a little upset.

'Well, don't you tell Hetty where I am.'

'I won't. Truce?' Nurse Pudding offered.

'Truce,' I replied and with that, she left smiling...at JC. of course!

*'See what I mean, Clive. They all bloody fancied him.'*

We sat chatting for a couple of hours, which would have been longer, had it not been for the search party, which had been sent to look for me. Now I was in their bad books.

'Jack, where have you been? We've been looking everywhere for you,' the Sister asked, as I walked into my ward.

'No, that's not true. I was only thirty yards away. You couldn't have looked very well,' I replied, mumbling under my breath.

'What did you say, Jack?' she asked.

'I know you will have a go at me, if I tell you, but I turned right and went to the entrance, where I saw an old bloke who was sitting on his Harley Davidson motorbike. It was from the 1950s and it roared like a lion. We had been chatting for a few minutes, when he asked me if I wanted a ride. Well, I couldn't resist. He only took me round the block...Twice!'

'What! Have you gone mad?' she said, almost shouting.

'No, I was all right, Sister. I was perfectly safe. He knew what he was doing and was very experienced and as I said, we only went around the hospital grounds.'

Sister Collis was dumbfounded. 'What did you do with this?' she asked, pointing to my fuel bag on a stick.

'I left it at the entrance. Some kind lady offered to look after it for me.'

'Jack, tell me I'm dreaming this.'

'No, you're not dreaming, Sister. I can tell you are having a nightmare.'

'Jack, for God's sake, do you realise how dangerous that could be?'

'Look Sister, I told you he was very competent...'

'No, you fool, not from riding it, from your health point of view. All this equipment and the drug going into your very stupid body is sterile and you have ruined it.'

'No, I haven't. I put it back in, with no harm done and I can tell I've upset you. I promise I won't do it again.'

She burst out laughing, 'Come here and let me clean you up.'

She walked over to me and began to check the equipment when I gently held her and whispered in her ear. 'I was only teasing. I went round three times.'

She let out an almighty scream, 'You bloody little... Ooh! You! You! I will get you for this, Jack Summers. You mark my words. Ugh, you blood...' she muttered, trying not to laugh.

Well, I was trapped; I now had to sit on my bed until the doctor had been and inspected all was well. He took his usual two-hour stint, leaving me last of all, as I was sure it was a punishment.

'Good afternoon, Mr Summers, did you enjoy your ride round the hospital?'

I knew he was joking, but Sister Collis thought differently. I could see her face turning a different colour especially when I answered, 'Yes, very much. It was good of Sister Collis to allow me to go. It makes you feel better when you can get on with your life again. Oh goodness, have I got you into trouble, Sister? Sorry, I didn't mean to.'

'Enough now, Mr Summers. Sister Collis has had enough.'

I looked at her half smiling through gritted teeth and showing me her clenched fist behind the doctor's back. I smiled and winked at her.

'Don't try and get round me now just because the doctor can't see what you're doing behind his back.'

Well, at least I had my first examination and all was well, but it was no use, I could not sit round in the ward as everyone seemed so old and no one was looking forward; it was all yesterday's news or about how many peas were on their dinner plate. I don't think I was being ageist because to my horror, I found out I was the fifth oldest on the ward; I just couldn't stand the negativity.

Anyway, I decided to go for a walk again, to have a look at all the unexplored areas of my ward, mainly to see what

the opposition was like, for the Sister's attention, that is. Well, I felt comfortable; Jean-Claude was in Ward 5, so I could see I had a clear field. It was at that precise moment, I couldn't believe my eyes as I thought I saw another familiar face, or rather a familiar figure, of a beached whale lying on a bed. I walked across just to check and sure enough it was Fernand Shackleton, who we all knew as Leafy. (Fern = leaf, well it's up to you; to us he was known as Leafy).

This one was half French, that was on his mother's side and his father was the dour Yorkshire man. But what made that situation worse, he had married a French woman, Chantal, who was without doubt the boss of their relationship. She was always accusing me of leading him astray when she was around.

Anyway, there he was, lying there, eyes closed, having just come back from theatre, rather like some obese angel, as his stomach was bigger than ever, He always was large; his girth was almost as big as he was tall. The surprise was enough to send him off to the angels, as I quietly called out:

'Hello Leafy.'

He woke like a startled rabbit ready to run. Then the shock set in as he saw me looking down on him. 'What! What the bloody hell are you doing here?' he asked.

'I heard you were nearly dying and as it was family only allowed to visit, I decided I had to sneak in and see you, so here I am. I have to be honest I wondered if you still had the Harley and as you won't be needing it, you could perhaps let me have it. Have the doctors told you how long you've got?' I asked.

'No,' he replied, almost in complete shock at my revelation.

'Oh dear, have I let the cat out of the bag? Leafy, I'm so sorry.'

He now seemed to be sinking into despair, especially when he was trying to sit up and couldn't quite manage it, as he too had to contend with a bag on a stick.

'Let me help you, old friend,' I said, putting my arm through his and yanking him up, shoving his pillow behind as I did so, in an effort to stop him slipping back. Mind you, I could have done with a couple of aircraft chocks to stop that weight from moving, as he really was that heavy.

'Have they taken yours off too?' I asked.

'What do you mean?' he asked, now sounding even worse than he did before.

'Believe it or not, Jean-Claude is in here as well and they've taken his off,' I said, nodding to my nether regions. 'In fact, he thinks he's been given a sex change because he now has to sit down for a wee. Is that what's happened to you?'

'Bloody hell, I don't know! I hope not. They never warned me about that!' he exclaimed, looking down to his nether regions, but unable to see, due to the dressings and the fact he couldn't see over his stomach in any event.

'Well, never mind, you'll be able to pretend you're pregnant, or that you're a couple of lesbians. How is Chantal by the way? It must be well over twenty years since we last met.'

'She's all right. She'll never change and I'm too old to argue, or change now, but at least she looks after me.'

What an admission, I thought to myself. What a way to live, to put up with things because you can't be bothered, but it takes all sorts. It would be a boring place, if we were all the same.

We chatted about this and that for a few minutes when the Sister called over to me: 'Jack Summers, what are you doing there? Causing more trouble?' she added, not waiting for an answer.

'Now come away as the doctor wants to see Mr Shackleton.'

I was just about to leave when Leafy quietly asked: 'What did they do with yours?'

'Oh, it's in the garage at home wrapped up.'

'What! They actually gave it you,' he stuttered loudly.

'Mr Summers!' the Sister yelled.

'Okay, Sister Collis, I'll come straight away, if you really want me to,' I added. Then turning to Leafy I said, 'I'll bring JC (Jean-Claude) along to see you.'

'For God's sake, don't do that. Not when she's here. She always did fancy that Flash Harry.'

'Oh, don't you worry about that. Time has not been good to him. Even you are better looking than he is.'

I could see him almost preening himself and believing that time had been good to him.

I left old Leafy just as the doctor arrived, and I'm sure most of you will know there is always silence when the doctor is about. Not only are they worried what will be said to them, but also, they love to know what he is saying to everyone else. In other words, they are just nosey old sods.

Anyway, I could hear all what was being said to Leafy so I stayed nearby to listen.

'Good afternoon, Mr Shackleton. You look very worried. What on earth's the matter?' Doctor Bedsave asked, which I think you will agree is an unfortunate name for a doctor.

'Well, how long have I got?'

'What do you mean?' the doctor asked.

'I've been told, I haven't long to live.'

'What?' he asked loudly. 'Who on earth told you that?'

He didn't wait to give his answer, he just yelled at the top of his voice, so that all of the ward would hear: 'Jack, you bloody bastard.' He repeated the exercise when he found out he also hadn't lost his manhood.

Oh dear, I've obviously got the diagnosis wrong, or misheard. Perhaps he wasn't dying, after all, I thought as I walked back to my bed, smiling. It ended with the doctor telling him to calm down as too much excitement was not good at this stage.

Anyway, it wasn't long before even he was off his bed and walking with his fuel tank attached, though how he was able to reach it amazed me. It also amazed me how

quickly he found where I was lodging and how much he needed my company.

Visiting time arrived and I must say the hospital were eminently sensible in their approach to visitors, as although they preferred 6 p.m. until 8 p.m. you could visit any time after 10 a.m. but now two of the wives arrived almost at the same time and I was at the entrance when they did. What a surprise and how pleased Chantal was to see me.

‘What are you doing here?’ she asked indignantly.

‘Me?’ I asked innocently. ‘I work here. I’m just a cleaner and I’ve been told to look after Leafy.’

‘His name is Fernand. Please use it,’ she snapped, as she always had done.

‘Sorry. I forgot. I won’t do it again,’ I added, as Cassie walked through the entrance door.

‘Hello darling,’ she said on seeing me. ‘How are you?’

‘Good, love. I should be home in a couple of days.’

She linked my arm and was about to walk with me when she saw Chantal.

‘Chantal. Darling! What on earth are you doing here? And how are you?’

Was that genuine? I thought to myself.

‘Cassandra! Wow! You haven’t changed a bit.’

‘Neither have you.’

‘Fernand is in here with a prostate problem,’ Chantal continued.

‘So has Jack,’ Cassandra added.

‘And believe it or not, so has Jean-Claude. He’s in here too,’ I said, putting my two penneth in for good measure.

Well, Chantal’s face lit up like a lighthouse, only she didn’t know where to turn first.

‘I’m going along to the ward so follow me,’ I said to them both. We walked along, with me on my own, as the two women just had to chat, God knows what about, but we eventually arrived at Leafy’s bedside. I’m sure to the disappointment of Chantal, but she was the dutiful wife with all the kisses and the little parcels of fruit, which is

more than Cassie had brought me, until I pointed it out. Then I got a lipstick print on my forehead from the kiss she gave me, which I vowed never to remove.

The women chatted and chatted with the occasional break for breath, when Chantal casually asked, 'Where is JC?' This caused me to get a rollicking off Leafy for telling her he was in here too.

'Don't worry, I told you he's old and past it, not like us!' I whispered to him.

'Shall I take you all along to meet him? He's not too far away.'

'Yes, that would be nice. It would bring back a few memories,' Cassie replied, just a split second before Chantal was about to say the same.

'Come on, follow me.'

'You bugger, why did you suggest that? You know what she will be like. Ooh... and those bloody goo goo eyes.'

'Don't worry, I told you he was old and grey. Don't worry.'

I recognised him from the back as we were about to pass the dayroom.

'JC, I've brought Leafy-'

I was stopped mid-sentence as there he was, dressed no longer with the medical appendages and next to him was his wife, Andrée. They stood up looking like Walter Pidgeon and Greer Garson, in the film *Mrs Minerva*, a beautiful couple if ever there was one and him, well he looked the part.

Leafy whispered in my ear, 'I'll get you for this. Look at him. You B-' He stopped mid-word and just stared at me.

'What!' I whispered loudly, hoping the others would hear. 'I told you he was old and grey. Just look at him.'

'Yes, but look at him. He's like a bloody Greek god and look at her.'

Chantal his wife was standing there opened-mouthed, staring at him. I then heard Leafy whisper in her ear, 'Close your mouth, dear. You will make it too obvious.'



'But I haven't seen them for such a long time. It's really lovely,' she replied in a silly girly voice, which had suddenly come from nowhere.

Of course, we all clicked, with the conversations being all trivial, but a good first time, with only the occasional reference to old times, but with the constant: 'We must not lose touch again.' And the exchange of addresses, telephone numbers and emails, before it was time for us to separate as the visiting hours were over, with all threatening to come back tomorrow evening.

'Oi! What the hell are you doing here?' the constable charged with looking after me shouted, after he had realised someone had entered my room whilst he was away. As I explained I had difficulty in speaking due to a serious assault, but I managed to convince the copper that Jack Summers was a patient and came to keep me company.

'He's all right Constable, he's going now, but he is calling on me tomorrow. That's okay, isn't it?'

'Yes sir, if you say so, but don't drop me in it.'

'You're all right, Constable, don't worry.'

*I must admit Jack's conversation had passed the time away and I was kept amused by his antics and did look forward to the next episode.*