

The Beast of Titchfield by various authors

Do you know how it ended? I don't know how it ended, but I know how it began. It was just getting dusk yesterday when I went to my dustbin. When I opened it the beast leaped up. I felt its fetid breath on my cheek before I slammed the lid back down. I was really shaken. I don't know what kind of beast it was. It wasn't a fox or a badger or even a chicken, that's for sure. My heart was thumping as I tried to imagine what it could be. I decided that it was some exotic animal which had escaped from a zoo and hidden in my dustbin overnight. Problem was, what to do about it? In the middle of lockdown I didn't think I could get a zoo keeper out. I could hardly leave it to starve. There was only a crust of bread in the bin for it to eat. Imagine the fright of the dust men if it shot out of my bin ravenously hungry when they came to empty it next Friday!

Then I thought I could wheel it outside my gate, put the by on its side, attach a string to the lid, thread it through my gate and open the bin from the relative safety of my garden, and so set it free. But then I thought about the young pregnant woman who walks by my house with a short skirt, and I couldn't face the thought of the beast clamping it's jaws on her inner thigh. This was clearly a problem which required a community solution. So, I called the ever-reliable Peter Wheal, who is a chartered engineer and knows about these things. He kindly agreed to swap dustbins with me. He is now the custodian of the beast and as I write he is sitting in his study considering what to do. No doubt Peter will let you know his decision in due course.

I have before me a dust bin - taken from John Hiatt in a, now regretted, charitable moment. According to John the bin contains some kind of creature - yet to be truly identified, but thought, by John, to be fierce and dangerous - like Welsh rugby players! John has however failed to establish this fully, clearly not being as fierce as he once was. Too many years in England? Gone soft? My job is to identify the creature and get it to a place where it - and therefore us - will be safe. He is hoping that my engineering background - I was raised two miles from Ford Motor Co in Dagenham - will help me. I took the project on, but I'm not up to the task - I am shattered - a shattered engineer you might say! Where to keep it? What to call it? What does it eat? It doesn't eat bread so perhaps it is vegetarian? Grass may be suitable, so I plan to go to the bowls club to see if there is a pile of grass cuttings there.

Later.

Grass cuttings proved to be an ideal food for the creature so it occurs to me that we might keep it - suitably trained of course - to help with green maintenance. However, there is a problem. To feed the grass to the wretched creature I had to open the lid, then stuff in the grass quickly before the creature escaped. Eventually, though, I relaxed my concentration and the creature did escape and ran into the pavilion and into the toilet. The door sprang shut and inexplicably the door catch has operated so the creature is locked in the loo. I haven't a clue how to resolve this problem so will need to refer to a more experienced club member. Perhaps I'll give Joe Domican a ring?

Our friend Peter I would have said was the last person to panic, however there was definitely panic in his voice when he rang to say could I meet him at the bowls club. Of course I went willingly but could never have imagined what he was about to show me. Locked in the toilet was a "thing" he said. I am a sucker for any animal and it was whimpering, so I had to see for myself. Peeping round the door I saw what looked like an ape like creature covered in toilet paper and hugging a broom. I have an idea I said to Peter and rushed out to the car where there was a basket of groceries and in it some bananas. It was worth a try! To cut a long story short the creature loved bananas. Peter waved us goodbye and good riddance, and we set off home with creature in the back. Maggie, who is not as fond as I am so of creatures as I am, threw some old duvets into the shed and said "it is NOT coming indoors". One week later, it must go it has wrecked the shed and we are all out of bananas, but where? Anne Davis works at M&S they must have plenty, I'll give her a ring.....

I got a mysterious call from Joe and Maggie about an animal at theirs. Fluffy, they said his name was, and would I be able to feed and look after him? They know I work for M&S figured I may be able to get some bananas. M&S was closed but Joe and Maggie sounded desperate, so I decided to take the risk. I drove to Hedge End at 2am, when I knew everywhere would be quieter. I sneaked to the back to see what left over food I could find. Hoping bananas weren't still being stockpiled on lockdown! Sadly no bananas. Looking at what food there was, I deduced Fluffy was unlikely to want Coronation Chicken Flatbread or Red Onion & Parmesan Tortilla, I stuck to steaks and chicken breasts, the kind of stuff that would be sure to satisfy the mysterious creature. Twice security asked what I was doing there. Twice I lied. "Sourcing food for the food bank". As soon as I was laden with my swag, I tiptoed out as if I were in some childhood cartoon. Thankfully our security is more Keystone Cops than MI5, so soon I was in my car and on the way to Joe and Maggie's. However, when I arrived to a banana strewn destroyed shed I decided that "Fluffy" was not staying at mine. "That's no Fluffy" I cried, "but I will help you and try and get someone to take it". When you're in need who you gonna call? Dennis of course!

There I was. Just after nine o'clock in the evening, half-awake in the armchair, trying to look interested as Jane was skipping through the adverts in the latest downloaded episode of Coronation Street, when suddenly, ping goes my phone. Whatzat? Gmail logo. Who is it now!?

Ann Davis? What's this all about? The Beast of Titchfield? I hit the reply button and I am just about to type, "I know Gary can have his moments but he's a good chap really", when I realise she is talking about Joe & Maggie and some moth-eaten, animal, offloaded to them by Peter Wheal. Talk about know who your friends are!

It's late, so next morning I call Joe and offer to take a look.

To avoid the traffic jams of lockdown victims heading off to the beach from all over Hampshire, I set off on my bike, following the old railway path down to Stokes Bay. You will gather that Maggie & Joe belong to the Alverstocracy.

When I arrive, they are distraught. "Look what Fluffy has done to our shed", Maggie explains. "I'm not sure that bananas would be the answer", I explain. "This animal IS bananas!". Who could help?

This animal clearly has issues. Confined in the darkness of John Hiett's bin, being fed grass cuttings and "close to its sell by date" M&S food hasn't helped but the beast has deep seated problems. Who could I turn to? I know she no longer practises but I'll try Margaret Thompson. I call her. "Margaret".

Dennis called me and asked me for help with a strange deranged beast who was causing havoc down in Alverstoke.

I am not sure what he thought I could do, does he think child psychiatrists can work with animals too?

I drove down to the address I was given quite apprehensive as home visits can be unpredictable!

The beast was rampaging up and down the garden. I thought it was important to give him a name, as if we carry on calling him beast he will continue to stay a beast (at least that is true of children).

I tried a few James, Rory, Amelia. All of a sudden the beast smiled and stopped rampaging, "he" was a girl, and was pleased that that had been recognised.

She was clearly traumatised and so I tried all my trusty techniques, spoke in a low even voice, trying to seem confident, "poor you left in a bin with no one asking you how you are".

How did you end up in a bin, I asked?

I ran away from my horrible parents, ended up in this Village, do not know how, and climbed into a bin to escape from dogs that were chasing me, got stuck inside and could not get out. People shouted at me, gave me horrible food, all I want I some porridge (yes she was a Scot and no one understood her)!

I arranged for her to have some porridge.

Then thought what next? I remembered that David Shields had a new grandchild so might know how to look after this little girl. So I phoned him up.

Well when I got the call from Margaret I was perplexed. You see it was late and 'perplexed' is what I call it at the end of a convivial evening when the red wine has all gone, well it sounds a lot like 'perplexed' when I say it. Margaret is correct though in her assertion; I do indeed have a new grandchild and therefore I am an expert in these sorts of things and so off I went with some vigour and very much looking forward to the task. I took the larger of my two nets with me just in case. I need not have bothered, the beastess was a lot calmer than previous reports had warned, I suspected that hypnosis had been deployed or maybe Scots take their porridge sweetened with single malt? However, there was no time to speculate after all it was late, and I needed to act. Using Margaret's diagnosis of the beastess being of the Scottish persuasion I hailed her heartily with a resounding chorus of 'Scots Wha Hae'; I rolled my 'r' s like a Glaswegian and held tightly onto my wallet like a Fifer. Slowly, very slowly, the dulcet tones of this Scottish classic worked its magic. Very gently the beastess

unwound two of its limbs that it had clasped protectively around itself and peering through a mass of ginger matted hair was a pair of the most blood shot eyes I have seen since I left the Navy. I confess to recoiling very abruptly at this sight which caused the somewhat startled beastess to re-wrap her limbs. This was followed by her emitting a belch of epic loudness (at least I think it was a belch). The beastess clearly needed urgent help. I gently put it to her that a young female, no matter how heavily tattooed, should not be out at night in Titchfield on her own; especially on a Women's Institute night if their sacrifice had not turned up. No, the only solution was some sort of confinement for the beastess' own safety. I could not hope to get her safely to Stubbington with the prospect of there being marauding Women's Institute committee members around. Where to confine her though that was the problem. Somewhere that the WI would never suspect, perhaps under their very eyes, hmm, of course, it was obvious. Who has the real experience to keep Beastess under lock and key safely away from harm and with lashings of porridge on tap? Of course! Iain Windebank! it had to be. I hastily fashioned a nametag from some random decking that I found and scratched 'Beastess' onto it. Then once it was hanging fetchingly around her head secured by the bowling club gate chain I sat her at Iain's door, I knocked vigorously and immediately set out at a capital rate for home before he answered. She will be in the safest of hands.

I heard the loud knocking on the front door, with vigour, I approached the door cautiously living on a main street in the village just from the corner of the junction with Coach hill we are often caught out with teenagers playing "ginger knock". I looked through the spy hole and could see nothing so I went to see what I could see from the kitchen window, opening the shutters slowly and with care I saw this creature with a plank of decking around its neck with the word "Beastess". So the beast that I had heard about from John Hiatt had been returned to the village to my house!

What to do? I couldn't let it into the house, nowhere near enough room, no sense in putting it in the garden shed as I had heard that it had trashed Maggie's shed. I hit on a plan after securing it in the garden as the evening turned to night I snuck across the road to the funeral parlour and purloined a coffin from one of their outbuildings, I'm sure John Freemantle won't mind, drilled some communication/breathing/feeding holes in the lid stood it on its end close to the fence so the neighbours couldn't see it and placed the beastess inside securing the lid, security achieved.

I tried to see she was a scot, being a half scot myself, I asked it to repeat after me "It's a Braw bricht, moonlicht nicht the nicht", because it was, and also "Auchtermuchty" these were the words my Scottish Uncles used to make me say to prove that I was worthy of being half Scot and not being a Sassenach, however the beastess failed the test so I'm not sure about her Scottishness. The next morning after I had breakfasted with my bowl of porridge I made some for her and passed it through the feeding hatch, I didn't have any bananas, never got any thanks just a grunt. This continued for a few days till I ran out of porridge. What should I do? I could place the coffin in the Church which was currently closed because of the awful pandemic, I had the keys, a coffin wouldn't look out of place in the village Church and could pray that the beastess would be fed by "manna from heaven" but I quickly dismissed this idea no miracles in Titchfield. After a few days I wasn't getting anywhere with the Beastess, what to do?

Then I had an idea what if she wasn't from these sceptred isles who did I know that was well travelled, then it came to me the master mariner Jim Chubb and Helen, they live in the nautical part of Warsash, part of the ancient parish of Titchfield, they live among a merchant fleet of Sampans, Schooners, Briganteens and other vessels. So I hatched a plan to deliver

the Beastess to them as a surprise. After much pleading John Freemantle lent me a hearse, I loaded the coffin with the Beastess inside into the back of the hearse and put on my best suit collar and tie, I didn't want to raise any suspicions and placed a wreath on top inscribed with the words "Please look after me". Late in the afternoon booted and suited I drove towards the Chubb's residence as I drove up Coach Hill and along Common Lane towards Warsash the bystanders on the pavements paid their respects some stood still as I passed the men doffed their caps and others bowed their heads, if only they knew what was in the coffin.

As I turned the corner into their road I spied a notice on their front door I stopped the hearse at a distance and took out my telescope to read the notice it said "Shielding", foiled, there was no way that they could look after the Beastess, so I slowly reversed the hearse round the corner and began to gather my thoughts, what to do? Who else did I know that had sailed the seven seas and new about foreign parts then came a flash of inspiration of course Chris Blackburn and surely Lesley would be a great help, they would have heard of the Beastess from their near neighbour Margaret.

I retraced my route going back down Common Lane and Coach Hill turning into Garstons, the people that I had previously passed gazed in astonishment and open mouthed at the hearse as it passed them by yet again going in the other direction, I gave them a regal wave to try and pacify them.

It was just turning to dusk as I drew up outside Chris's I turned the hearse round for a quick getaway, with difficulty I managed to manoeuvred the coffin to their front door and rang the bell, when a bewildered looking Chris opened the door. I quickly said "Please help her" and beat a hasty retreat before he could answer, getting quickly into the hearse I drove away and returned the hearse to the Freemantle's yard.

I had been studying the insides of my eyelids when our Big Ben like doorbell rang its mellifluous tune to summon me to the front door. On opening the door I was somewhat bewildered and surprised at the scene playing out before my eyes where Ian, in his best suit and black tie looking like a deranged pall bearer, was legging it as fast as he possibly could down our drive to get into a hearse and drive away down the hill in a cloud of smoke. In my addled state of mind, I did not quite get what he shouted out as he departed but then looked down to see a pristine coffin, albeit with numerous holes drilled in the lid, lying at my doorstep. As I viewed the coffin, eerily and silently lying there, for whom the bells toll came instantly and ominously to mind whilst the chimes of Big Ben faded away in the background. The bells of St Peters then started to sombrely announce the 6th hour of the afternoon.

As the last chime echoed around the village my laser like inquisitive mind quickly surmised that the coffin must surely be connected to the rumours circulating around on the ever-trilling Titchfield grapevine. The story of a strange beast that had mysteriously arrived in the village which was particularly attracted to the playing members of that august Titchfield institution, the village bowling club.

Well, what a Titchfield riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma this was turning out to be. Perhaps there is a key, perhaps I had the key to solving this puzzling, inexplicable phenomenon that was exercising the brilliant minds of the club membership, but I'd be bugged if I knew the answer.

So, what to do? As the coffin lay there, the late afternoon light began to fade and a chilled mist started to swirl around the drive as in a Hammer horror movie and it reminded me of the

many occasions I had sailed through the damp and dank approaches to Portsmouth Harbour. Methinks, what would a good naval officer do in a similar situation – that was it; pass the buck as fast as possible. But how, especially as I had a coffin on the drive that would no doubt start arousing the inquisitive minds of our neighbours soon enough.

That was it, “think laterally” I said to myself and who better to find the answer to the conundrum I had set than our intrepid and deviously minded quiz mistress Norma.

A quick, mist occluded, glance up and down the road told me that our neighbours’ curiosity had not yet been piqued so I quickly turned my back on the bizarre scene unfolding on my doorstep and dialled Fareham 310218

Hi Norma.....

Early one evening in the 14th week of lockdown I had a disturbing phone call from Chris Blackburn. I say disturbing because this usually laid back eloquent man was burbling like an idiot. Had he gone mad in lockdown or had he had too much of the Navys’ staple diet, “the Woods”?

I managed to pick up a few words...beastie, lan and coffin and putting two and two together I realised that the beast of Titchfield must have arrived at Garston’s Close. I came to this conclusion as Mike Dalzell had phoned Dave to say he was worried about his close neighbour lan ,who was driving around Titchfield in a hearse dressed as an undertaker. His first thought had also been Covid madness, but had quickly realised that this could be a good cover for transporting the beast around the village. We reassured Mike that lan was unlikely to pass the beast on to him as it was a bit close to home and he wouldn’t want to run the risk of it returning.

Once Chris had calmed down a bit he spurted out the reason for the call. Could we help him move the coffin? He had heard that we had a large storage area in the back of the motor home and he was hoping that as members of the T.B.C. brotherhood we would help him out by moving it off his front drive and together we could dump it off miles away. What could we do? According to the constitution it is bad form to snub a fellow member.

While Dave cleared a space in the van I told Chris to disguise the coffin as a raised flower bed by putting plants and pots around it and hope the neighbours didn’t look too closely.

Mind you for someone who loved to collect Rodney’s’ old bed pans as planters a coffin might not have appeared so out of the ordinary.

It wasn’t hard to find the house. The badly raised bed still said ‘coffin’ to us. The beast was snoring soundly having been drip fed “the woods” at great sacrifice by Chris, and while we loaded the coffin into the van he nipped indoors to get the rest of the bottle for us to take, as it certainly kept the beast quiet.

We soon grasped the fact that Chris was not going to part with his booze or help us with the job in hand. How was that for thinking out of the box! He had now managed to get the beast moved to the other side of Fareham and completely off his hands. What a nerve! And he thought I was devious. I had been totally out foxed.

We had also gathered from Mike that various members of T.B.C. had been playing pass the parcel with this poor malnourished beast of questionable gender and nationality, with a voracious appetite. What would we find when we released it from the coffin?

What a site this poor creature was. A sallow complexion from eating too many bananas and green around the gills from all the grass cuttings which had also caused a huge growth

spurt, as the green had recently been fertilised. And, not to mention the bloated paunch from a surfeit of porridge. (Dave immediately put his oats under lock and key, muttering "mine...mine").

We decided to keep the beast, who was now taking on a humanoid appearance, in the shed overnight. It seemed to be comfortable and quiet on an old Z bed. We left it with some old tinned food from the van. 10 year old Spanish pate, a rusty tin of French cassoulet, some flat beer and a pot of strawberry jam. The fungus on the top of that might be a cure for all its ills.

Now! How to disguise the beast and make it presentable to pass on to the next unsuspecting member. I'm a bit of a dab hand on the sewing machine so my mind went into overdrive. The beast needed to be covered from head to toe so I ran up a long skirt from all the scrap material I had and gathered together a few other old bits and pieces.

The next morning we unlatched the shed and were almost knocked off our feet by the stench from inside. Thank goodness no one was near with a light otherwise the problem of the beast would have been solved there and then. The varied menu of the last few days had produced a new entry for the periodic table. I waited for the air to clear and led the beast off to be dressed.

Taking my cue from Joan Collins I dressed it in my long pantomime wig, a floppy hat and dark glasses and a floaty scarf. A long sleeved blouse and must have gloves covered its hairy arms and gnarled knuckles. The long skirt from the night before covered the knotty pine legs and last, but not least, the fashion statement of 2020.....The mask!

Not much of the sallow, green tinged, warty flesh was on view and doused in a shower spray of eau de toilette I left my project preening itself and slid away to find the next plonk..., pleasant person to lend a hand.

Ah yes! Dennis seemed to have very quickly relieved himself of the responsibility of the beast a few days previously, and as we needed to return it nearer to the village I thought he might be able to come up with some inspiration a second time round.

We parked well away from his front door and while no one was about I tiptoed along the road leaving a trail of bananas and oats right up to Dennis's front door. We released the beast, waited to see if it took the bait and then in true army fashion, beat a hasty retreat.

Jane is a light sleeper, whilst I am the complete opposite. I even managed to sleep through the great storm of 1987 until the alarm clock awakened me to the devastation all around. Much the same was true of that eventful evening. I was suddenly aware that Jane was digging me in the ribs saying, "Wake up, there is something at the door". Reluctantly I made my way slowly down the stairs and cautiously opened the door as far as the security chain would allow. I peered through the small gap between the door and the wall. I couldn't believe my eyes. There on the ramp, much to my surprise, was the beast(ess) munching on a banana.

My first thought was to slam the door shut, but something deep down in my conscience was saying to me, "you can't let this poor, wee creature down again", yet what could I do? This young lady was not a part of my extended family bubble, nor was the government COVID advice on allowing female, tattooed, Scottish beasties into your home desperately clear. Indeed, would she be covered by English or Scottish rules?

What to do? Then it came to me. The Bowling Club clubhouse. Yes, good idea. During the lockdown it has been closed to both the members and, hopefully, Korby. The combination has been changed and being a Thursday, it would be several days before Dave Jones opened up again. There was no way

Jane would allow this beast into our house, so the clubhouse would be the creature's temporary home while I planned the next move.

I divested myself of my pyjamas, put on some warm clothes, opened the front door fully and, holding the beast's hand, we set off on foot for Bridge Street. It felt as if we were replaying a scene from *Every Which Way but Loose*; I have always fancied myself as a Clint Eastwood type and although recreating a scene from *Dirty Harry* might have proved more useful, I quickly dismissed the idea. That apart, the only Magnum I am liable to come across would be made by Walls!

It took us just over a half an hour to walk the mile or so along the Titchfield Road to the club's entrance.

It was still dark when we reached the gate. Our neighbour Phil, from across the road, is a light sleeper so I got the beast to hold my torch as I gently opened the gate, taking great care not to awaken him, else the game would be up.

Once safely inside the building I showed the young lady where she could sleep. I explained where I had stowed the bananas that Norma had thoughtfully left on my drive and the whereabouts of the MornFlake Oats that Pete Taylor had kindly given me. I explained that I would return just before dawn on Saturday morning and then we could figure out what to do next. "de ye ken whaa i'me tellin eie"? "Aye", she said and with that I retraced my steps back to Stubbington, hitching a ride on the Fareham BC dustcart on the stretch from Hollam House to the outskirts of Stubbington.

What now? John Hiett, you have a lot to answer for!

At Christmas Cottage, Jan Davies had just brought out a cup of tea and a bacon sarnie for the Southern Water lorry driver.

Drut Retfihs had arrived in England from Poland several years ago and had settled on the eastern side of Southampton. Life was a struggle for Drut to start with, but he had secured a job with Southern Water and since that time things had really looked up for the young Pole.

He first became acquainted with Jan and Gordon around Christmas time, whilst a torrent of Titchfield's effluent came streaming through their garden. An armada of Southern Water tankers had been ferrying the sewage for many weeks till a repair could be put in place. The frequency of this odorous convoy had been gradually reducing but Drut was still visiting several times a week and had got to know Jan and Gordon as the weeks rolled by.

This Saturday morning it was an early visit. Drut had carefully driven his tanker along the hard-standing, taking care not to make too much noise as the sun was not yet up. Whilst he waited for his unpleasant load to be pumped into the tanker, Jan took pity on the young Drut and offered him an "on the hoof" breakfast. Drut had developed a liking for HP sauce and the brown sticky liquid was oozing out between his fingers as he tucked into this most English of working mans' breakfast delicacies.

Suitably refreshed, Drut waved farewell and set off north into Posbrook Lane, then right and down Coach Hill.

It was still dark when I reached the Bowling Club that Saturday morning.

In order to reduce the noise, I had decided to bike down to Titchfield as time was limited. I quietly put in the combination and opened the gate very slightly so that I could get in with the bike, yet not arouse suspicion. Round at the entrance to the clubhouse I peered in through the window. All seemed well but no sign of the beast yet. Quietly, I undid the lock and opened the door. The motion-sensitive switch suddenly brought on the overhead lighting with a flash, which startled both me and the beast. All looked clean and tidy. Thank heaven the beast appeared to be potty-trained!

Realising it was me, she leaped up and wrapped her long gangly arms around me in a warm embrace. "DENECE" she exclaimed. I was amazed. "How did you know my name?" I exclaimed. She scampered over to the committee photos and pointed at my picture. "You can read.", I uttered, "Amazing".

She nodded then scampered over to the bowls' rack, picked up a wood, then moved swiftly to the Rules of the Game on the noticeboard, pointed and then exclaimed "we play". I couldn't believe what I was witnessing. The beast can read English and wants to play. Why not, I thought to myself. Is it against the rules to play in your birthday suit? There is nothing to say you can't but it's not really in the spirit of the game, is it? On the other hand, beasts don't naturally wear clothes and it is not very PC to dress animals in human clothes these days.

But wait. The constitution clearly states that "*Members and guests must wear flat soled shoes at all times to protect the turf*". So that's it. No chance. The beast's huge flat feet would require the sort of footwear suitable for a circus clown. Sorry old thing; would love to do it but "rules is rules".

The beast was distraught. Clearly she had been practicing and couldn't wait to give the game a try. I was torn. As the Secretary and former chairman, I couldn't sanction a blatant disregard of the rules, yet beneath my outwardly trenchant appearance I was inwardly in turmoil. This beast had been so misunderstood and mistreated, surely there must be something that I could do. And then it came to me. The car park. It's empty, recently cut; we shall play in the car park. I felt a warm glow as the beast's eyes suddenly brightened and a look of excitement came across her face.

We grabbed some woods and rushed off into the car park. The sun was just beginning to peep above the willow trees. The conditions were ideal, and the beast quickly demonstrated that she was a natural at this game. Equally good on the forehand and backhand; excellent judgement of length. This beast had it all. Could we find a yellow Exiles' shirt to fit her I wondered to myself?

So, preoccupied with thinking of the future, I put too much effort into throwing the jack from the far end of the car park and it rolled agonisingly across the gravel and into Bridge Street. Without a moment to spare the beast was off to retrieve my wayward jack. Out through the gate she ran in hot pursuit.

At the bottom of Coach Hill, Drut Retfihs swung his tanker sharp right into Bridge Street. The sun was shining into his eyes as the sun was coming up over the trees ahead. He reached up for the sun visor and as he did so he thought he noticed something move up ahead by the pinch-point in the road but he couldn't be sure. At that instant the sun rose critically above the trees; it was as if a laser beam had suddenly been directed towards the tanker's cab. It was dazzling.

By the time Drut had successfully lowered the visor he was aghast to see a strange, hairy, tattooed creature staring and pointing at the cab. Panic-stricken Drut stood on the brake pedal.

The beast had picked up the jack and was about to dash back to continue its newfound sport when it heard the rumbling sound of the approaching tanker. She looked up at the shiny silver badge mounted on the front of the vehicle. Suddenly the beast's eyes brightened in recognition.

She pointed at the badge and uttered in her gruff, Caledonian tone - "DENNIS".