

Tails for Tethered Heads

1

The flabberty skin of the stink warbler invites roasting as best anyone can with devolved means to carve a niche inside the Bulgarian headset. Failing that, the doe-like brevity instructor will save a few hours by tendering the loins of parquet deliverance. So be it God! Let I pray! To heaven... 'Is God in?' We need a bit of help down here - it all seems to have not worked out. Mass extinctions seem to be the order of the day. But whether day or night seems not to matter too much. Let us brunch in the tranquility of knowledge of our own demise on pig meal and brainstorm. Don't tell Sarah, she'll want a piece of the action doubtless and don't doubt her ability to raise a storm in a coffee pot, oh yes, that will happen without a moment's stir. Worms are the answer or could be the answer to one's prayer for solitude, the total absence of anyone or anything. No offence but the garden gate has been hanging like that for several centuries now and I wondered if a new ideology might intervene - so much for that, it didn't even register. Boardman, Brooks, Chapman, it never happened like that, the wounded knee causing so much discomfort in view of the Judaic custom. Let it flow as the calve's cut throat bleeds for us, the life blood of Homer squandered in a crimson veil of flavour. Who would know? When the bees and trees all disappear the supermarkets will still be open - won't they? What's the fuss? Virginal paratypes suck the glue from ideas leaving them bereft, alone and companionless. So much for cohesion and coherence, the dreary slaves of our method and understanding. Give me a dose of tetrachlorophene any day old chum.

So the breath passes through the clarinet unhindered by embouchure or fingering as if it's something interesting. It's not. At least it might be with the right permission from the relevant authority which must always be respected in such mutters. As one pre-eminent critic once mattered: 'He just blows into his instrument'; a slight on the player's inability to tickle his funny bone. The doves are flickering on the horizon like little lost candles about to light a wedding feast in the style of ancient Hackney. And don't let those cockneys fool you. Antisemites to a man, woman and child, even the Jewish ones - not to mention the pet pigs. Out for a stroll betimes must darken the bed and stroll to incandescent pastures of renewed revilement. See that mud? Aeons of work gone into that - don't wash it off. Beloved are the clicks and clones that make my bones, their names will never hurt us. The osteopath kneaded, the cat pleaded and I sat still with brandy in hand. How much past do I carry around with me? It can't be healthy, the knowledge and the unknown (or unsure) or plain forgotten. Can that be me, all that? Is even the forgotten, me? All the stuff my brother says happened? He could be lying for all I know but I'm sure he's not. I suddenly remember that I can't possibly remember it all. Did our father once really nearly drive us into the sea in Dorset? Did he really panic so blindly when he realised I was about to be born.

Ineradlicable ciphers of doom surround the unseeing smug, complacent in their blindness and oblivious to a creeping emergency that rings no speeding ambulance bells. Babylonian tiger unstriped for the freak show takes questions on the virtue of concealment in times of exposure, emphasising the importance of triplicate identity in the wild; this all roared without conviction, the milkman having passed his credentials to an unknown gro-

cer from Deal. How it howled in the roaring wind of desolate fortune, not knowing the magnum opus that was being constructed in the foreground. Oh, you petty things, don't you know you're driving a car up and down in two lanes? There's sense in there somewhere Beckett said to me in a dream. Sense in there somewhere. Somewhere.

2

Bedevelopment strides its canny path through draped canyons of oblivion, Stravinsky in the background, cats fed sufficiently and starting to purr the purr of lavish contentment. How blind can those rocks be not to see the sea when all around points to desolate abandon. I'll 'ave some of that if it's all the same to you squire? Plenty for all, no need to panic, once we're gone we're gone - no need to rush, space aplenty for none to enjoy.

3

Numbers and letters flurrying around a wilderness of wildebeest make me ponder the exact purpose of intention. They didn't mean to, but what I intended to say I never did. Intense intention is a whole different thing with purpose riding a lusty stallion through the doubt and uncertainty. Speak loud and clearly and everyone will follow you unblinkingly over the precipice - they have no choice, the inbred ancestral lust for direction holding forth like a bewildered fired-up monkey. Never doubt...as Frank said enlightenedly.

The rug said mug
The chair said stare
The case said face
The cat said scat
The screen said spleen
The speaker said weaker
The phone said groan
The bed said dead

And I believed them all.

4

Baltic fanfares flower around the garden of psychosis dripping sweet venom into the mouths of all who'll taste the nectar of faith forgotten. The idle prince listens in, unconcerned for his or anyone's future, at the same time experiencing a desperate yearning for scrambled eggs on toast. A little cream wouldn't go amiss either.

As stylish as we are, as stylish as we become, the hat, to me, spells crazy golf as long as we preside over the rainbow. Here comes Mr. Rat-tail Fancypants, one of a long line of rodents in union jack toppers and stars-and-stripes pantaloons, tails tapering back to the middle-east for the occasional tug.

Ripples of vibrant wealth emanate from the dark pits of the earth - something to kill for. Oil and guns. We don't want your oil and guns. **We don't want your oil and guns.**

5

A howling bowl of cornflakes woke me up with a start, wind pouring juice around the house and the teasing waft of eggs circling the parapet. No-one in, I assumed rather foolishly, as I slept for a further five days. Who was that lady in the luminescent foliage? From Mediterranean climes no doubt as her Banbury Cross fluttered enchantingly in the milky ether.

The Author



6

Ever wary of the tendency to procrastinate I hung on a little longer to see what the effect of delaying the outcome might be. Same old story - division sewn by the inability to recognise a common purpose and unwillingness to read each other's minds. Another close encounter would be undertaken in another thousand earth years. 'These rejects are certainly adept at ruining a perfect situation and what wisdom it has proven to be to remove them and their genetic trail from our own planet. There are small signs that they are recognising their own animal limitations and starting to lose a certain arrogance about their place in things.' Was it you Eve? Or you Adam? I think we need to know and... oh, what the hell!

7

Definitive delirium and doldrums notwithstanding, life on the purple gobstopper had seemed fairly enjoyable for a few weeks. But then, as ever, too much of an appetising prospect became a bit of a bore and, thankfully, we returned to a more tranquil, sanguine, unchallenging environment kindly provided by the nice women at NASA. They didn't know, of course, that they were being kind, or providing anything, but simply doing what might be expected of humans to other sensate creatures. The hum of excitement was discernible in the laboratory on our return and all kinds of jellybees and frostipinds had been laid on. The head waiter waited a few more minutes before deciding he was insane and couldn't go ahead with the prescribed task. That's when the floral interlude intercepted to the chagrin of the welcoming committee who shrank frivolously into a corner of contemptible resistance. It ejected them far into the centre of the lab and then into the lav where they defecated the night away in their own private way. Meanwhile daffodils and dahlias pranced with the dandy lions and coltsfoot messengers, attempting a revival of the old days before the big deforestation. Unfortunately, monitoring equipment was still operating geared to unleash pesticidal revilement on anything that challenged decent, scientific enquiry. A voice over the intercom: 'don't let this come between us pretty petalled friends, the bees are for all of us.' A recorded message of course, the kind you hear in any lavatory telling you to wash your hands. It played for another nine times before Dahlia had had enough and dismembered the power socket by growing into it.

8

Alpha-numeric platitudes won't dissuade the allegedly mad monk, convinced that God has been deceived by His own creation.

M1: What we need to establish is whether He said what they're all saying He said.

M2: Maybe He did say it.

M1: Well we need to know. Why do you think He may have said it?

M2: Because people are saying He said it. Why don't we ask HIM if He said it?

M1: Because He may deny having said it at all.

M2: Maybe someone recorded Him saying it on a phone or something?

M1: Maybe. But listen, it's imperative we know if He said it. And if it turns out that He didn't say it, or we can't prove He said it, we'll just say He said it.

And the word was with God, and the word was God.

M3: Let's just say, before we say anything else, what needs to be said.

M2: What needs to be said?

M1: Just let Him say what He needs to say, or rather (*laughing*), what He feels needs to be said.

9

Something dropped, as if by a spider from the ceiling, or as if a spider itself, unaware of its trajectory. It had no reason to interfere with the humble wit of which it was wholly unaware. But somehow it seemed prescient, as if some portent of dismay were being projected by its oblivious trip through space. It was then I realised that the ceiling was about to collapse, a calamity brought about by a leaky roof and thirty days of incessant rain.

Incessant Rain



Don't worry! Mother goose continued to ensure the goslings were fed as the rain subsided and the fantasy re-built itself. Too much scandi-noir can be a health hazard I've heard them say, interfering with sleep patterns in subliminal diversions from the plot. The plot was being cultivated successfully and along came Scandi to throw down some manure, and indeed the whole venture, into disarray. Disarray is an overstatement, mild inconvenience more like, but that isn't as saleable or newsworthy. Beetroot yield fell by 0.25%, cucumber worse, by 0.1%. But the blackberries, which no-one really wanted, had a bumper year, both plotted and maginally, with a worldwide increase in yield of 3000%. That could spell a wholesale glut of BLACKBERRY and APPLE pie!!! - but there were no apples - and pies were out of fashion.

10

Pan's People's parents were outraged. Their daughters had become overexposed in a cheap, cigar tainted attempt to lure the nation's youth into frivolity and promiscuity unheard of in Leeds in the forties. It was all too much for one dad who threw himself in front of an overflying Boeing for good measure and returned home three yards smaller. The pain was unbearable. A once proud five foot two Yorkshireman had shrivelled to an inconsequential four foot underground anti-hero. He would never hear of his like again. Babs yachted away without a care encountering many a strange tail along the way, mostly of penguins and polar bears. David slithered between the legs of the assembled group, mostly relatives of the deceased, snapping indefatigably at their heels and offering, quite innocently, or so everyone thought, to continue snapping for a small fee, before being asked curtly to 'please go away and let us grieve in peace, Amen'. He wended his way outside, several heels between his teeth, former body parts of his unwitting victims. 'Snaps for cash! Heels for wheels! Oh yeah, R.I.P., R.I.P.!'

11

Nevergetnevergetnevergetneverget
Nevergetnevergetnevergetneverget
That back again

Nevergetnevergetnevergetneverget
Nevergetnevergetnevergetneverget
That back again

Kiss goodbye to hard earned cash
We just want our pie and mash
Porpoise let the poor fish go
Grudges mischief pee-py-po

Crayons bright and delightful deter the hungry wolf awaiting its prey. Unconditional for the moment but just you wait! 'No, no, don't wear that with that, don't wear socks with those, don't do this with that!' It's all brio without a trio, no one cares, it all just comes out in flagrant unceremonial plop, nothing to be explained or arraigned. Goodbye to the annedytes, farewell to the barricites, good riddance to the capricites, whoever they were; although I understand they did once have some influence on trade between the sub Saharan latitudes and London Bridge. But what do I know? Clearly nothing, but that's a not-too-bad place to start. Derek said so.

Billy



Billy was a bad boy, badly boned at birth and becoming brattish and bullying in a boisterous way. Everybody liked him - a true goalie if ever there was one, diving at the feet of every predator that came near his family - a family who didn't really care if he dived or skived, or even lived, but were aware he had to have something to test his osterone on.

12

On the Meaning of Meaning

So what do we mean when we ask: 'What do you mean to me?' or 'What does it all mean?' or 'What's that s'posed to mean?' or 'Is that all it means to you?'

Or obversely: 'You mean so much to me' or 'That means a lot, thanks!' or 'That's not what it means!'

Questions and answers, positive and negative.

What does a piece of music mean? What you want it to mean, of course, not what you're told it should mean, if it should mean anything at all.

So what's the meaning of the exploration of meaning? What that means is: does meaning mean 'resonance' or 'ringing true'? What does 'resonate' and 'ring true' mean? If you have to ask that you've clearly never known or heard The Resonating Truth, the smart Albanian hip hop duo from the nineties. I rest my case there. No, Cornelius, I don't want to discuss this further, however you embellish that pet chimp of yours!

Dissatisfied with the explanation of the meaning of meaning they turned from the campsite and headed for the sea where thunderous waves beat relentlessly against the shoreline, eroding the base of the cliffs which soon gave way, campers atop, crumbling halva-like into the ocean, the unheard cries of 'What's the meaning of this?' floating eerily into a space vacuum in which a thing called 'nothing' bobbed and weaved with vicious intent. One forlorn individual chanted:

Joyzone, joyzone come to me
Let me see what I can't see
Joyzone, joyzone come to me
Let me be what I can't be

One plucky youngster had written an article called 'Boulez is Dead' even though he'd been dead a long time before he died. No disrespect but he was a vile and disrespectful critic, if that's the right word, of others. I'm sure he's matriculating in peace, though, somewhere - a mathematician/musician, not as extraordinary as it sounds - a leader of the revolutionising force to subjugate musicians to the whim and fancy of composers who knew nothing about meaning. The lolling lapdogs ceased feeding, hurling hungry glances at the passers by who couldn't care less if Lachenmann lived or died, less still if he was to prove to be the parroted saviour of hegemonic western Kultur as we know it. All relaxed in the sun hoping the bronzing effect would work in their favour and praying, now, for huge dollops of ice cream to soothe the wounds of blistering sunburn. 'That was quick' thought one. 'That was painful', thought another. 'This is most lucrative' thought the ice cream vendor. She'd willowed her way up from Cornwall by way of numerous new age festivals designed to reach Germany in a flux of derailed naturism, nudity having become the new rock'n'roll, willies and titties as bronzed as arms and legs, the ultimate luxury of Nordic concern for our true purpose. One chased a boar who had stolen his laptop. The boar was wrong for once.

13

It was a fine day in the garden as I admired an undersized comma on the buddleia. A red admiral landed on my chest and begged the double enquiry why he was so embarrassed and how long had she been ashore. An awkward passage from the Antilles was the answer to one, and two hours to the other. I gazed in admiration at the admiral and further asked if she was a rear? His antennae twitched uncomfortably at this confusion of gender and suggested a certain reluctance to answer on her part. Suffice to say he preferred not to touch on that one. Foul winds had resulted in a delayed schedule and a spoiled cargo of cicada nymphs designed to keep British meadows a hipplety-hopplety-joplin'. Quite how Janice and Scott got in on the act I've simply no idea; Tito might have a thing or two to say about it.

14

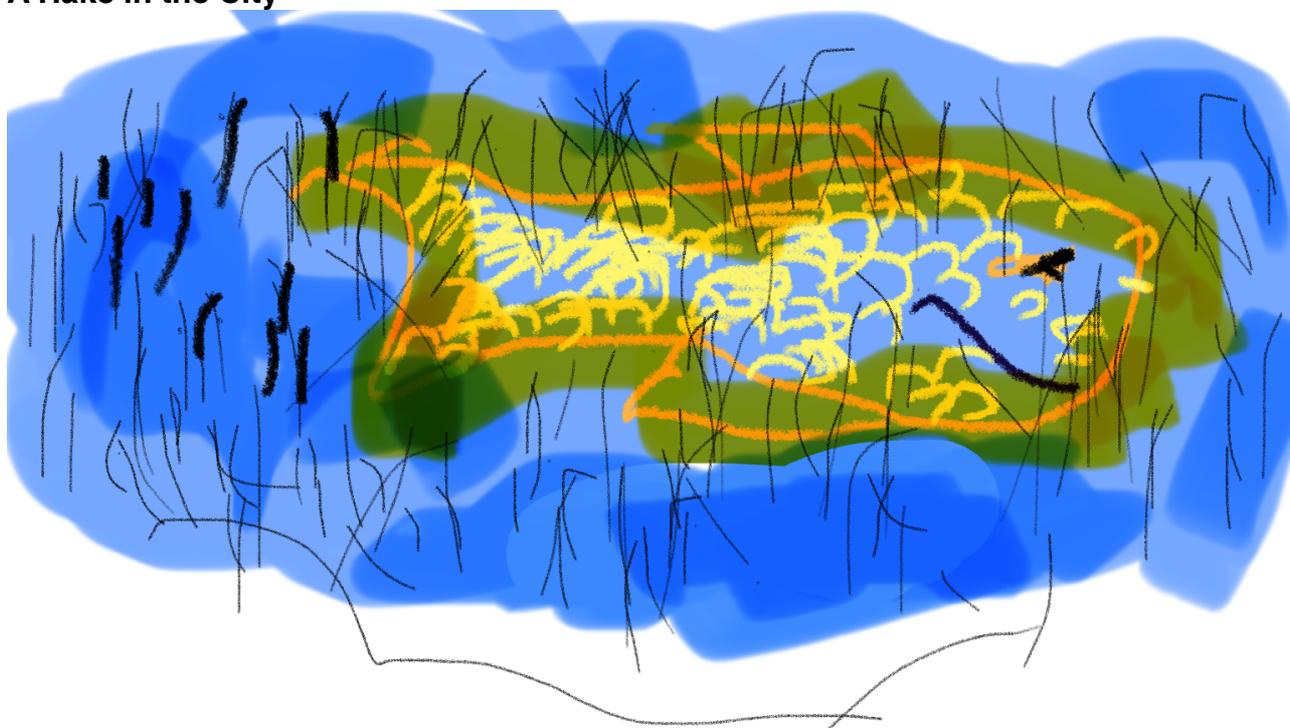
Delicate heatwaves overrode the work of the pimple popper to the extent that he could simply drive no further in his demonic scourge of all things pimped. The pimps were happy, the pimples still happier, knowing his despicable work had been temporarily halted by mild heat. A state of pimple glee was declared: spotty adolescents became emboldened and strolled down The Mall like the new royalty. Pimples burst forth as a spring meadow and rejoiced in their abundance. Little did they care about the impending change of weather which would soon be impending less and actually happening. As with

all returns to normality this one came right out of the blue. Literally, I mean literally literally. Blue skies dwindled and it started to rain. Blue butterflies were abundant that year but they had to take shelter. Anxiety became the watchword: 'Be anxious or risk contentment'. Advertising executives exulted in this change of fortune lolling in exquisite exuberance. Here was the opportunity they had all been waiting for. As the pimple popper resumed his work with renewed zeal they were ready, and when he approached his first unwitting victim, a fairly unassuming pimple on the back of a sunbathing mariner (a brown bosun rather than a rear admiral), the executives leapt forth brandishing their product: a depimpling ointment of creamy white lustre. The popper reeled in disbelief, a lifetime's work flashing past his eyes (quite a sight). Is this what it had come to? The noble profession of pimple popping usurped by a creamy ointment of magnificent lustre? The bosun was confused but not in a confused way. He was about to become pivotal in the future of skin care products as we know them and he knew it. Sort of. Armed simply with his popping pin the popper cut a sad, somewhat pathetic figure embodying a dying past that had never known the healing, magical properties of advertising. He somewhat half-heartedly requested a wager as the executives excitedly danced in a squirry ointment-brandishing ring around him. If their ointment ridded the mariner of his pimple within twelve hours he would happily concede and seek re-training, possibly as a pharmacist or even a florist as this seemed to be the way things were going. The execs agreed reluctantly knowing they might lose. If they did, they would not only have to cease production of this new fangled, lustrous cream but would have to supply the seemingly simple pimple popper with a lifetime's supply of disinfected, sanitised popping pins. Meanwhile, the mariner had been getting quite excited about his role in this unfolding drama and felt something hardening between his legs. This became somewhat embarrassing as the salve was applied to the solitary pimple and he twice tried to grab the breast of the man applying it. Life had never been this exciting in the mercantile marine! Very soon the salve started to take effect. There would be no need for the designated twelve hour period of the wager. The pimple disappeared in seconds. The pimple popper called it a day and told everyone he was called Pierre. He rode off in a battered jeep and was last heard of singing lead vocals in a pus-metal band called Eruption. The execs were delighted and they, too, went their separate ways vowing to spread fear and anxiety in any way they could; indeed, as their profession demanded. Interestingly, fifteen minutes after they had all dispersed, the mariner's back presented a fresh field for activity. The erstwhile pimple had apparently completely vanished but just an inch and a half away something was struggling to surface - Betty the Boil had waited all her life for this opportunity and she grabbed it with both, erm, hands. The vanishing pimple had left clear space for her triumphant emergence and in full bloom she wasted no time in punishing the hapless sailor for his participation in such a ridiculous venture.

15

It rained so much that August that fears began to emerge, fostered by the media, that London was about to drift away unceremoniously into the Thames and out to sea fragmenting in mid-ocean to become repatriated with the lands whence it had originated. That never happened as far as we know but as the rain continued to fall, numerous sightings of hake and mackerel were reported blocking the arteries of the city's infrastructure. The bankers and dealers became furious as they tried to quell the marine invasion by brandishing fishing rods that the Bank of England had kindly supplied at no extra cost. Understandably this had no effect whatsoever on the mackerel although the hake had had their reservations. Both continued to swim through the rain as EC1 became a veritable aquarium on legs. Gunmen from the recently opened grouse shooting moorlands were hired to bring the thing to heel but the more they pop-pop-popped with their shooting things the more it rained and the more the fish swam rings around them, laughing as fish do at the men's ineptitude.

A Hake in the City

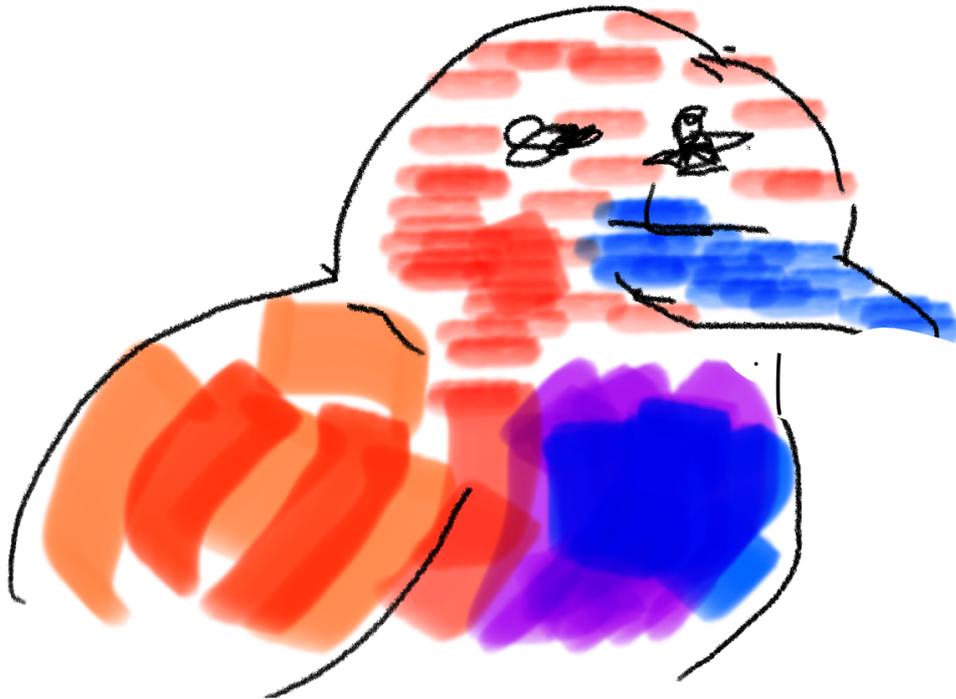


16

Acorns flew from the upper boughs of the tree embedding themselves in the flesh of all who sought to gain illicit entry to the conference. Ouch! These acorns stick! The delegates considered their initiative and were pleased. A bed of would-be intruders lay carpeted on the forest floor, oak trees starting to sprout from their helpless, still-alive, olive cadavers. A good day's work, the birds agreed, as they embarked on the second agenda item, the elimination of squirrels. An awkward one this as they had hitherto been hiring squirrels as a security presence to deter the aforementioned intrusions on their business meetings (yes, it was **squirrels** who had rained acorns on the witless interrupters!). Dissatisfied with their working conditions the squirrels had taken matters into their own tiny hands and started to steal the birds' eggs which they found very nourishing. So nourishing in fact that what had started as a mild protest had now become an obscene compulsion. The attendant

crows, eager to raise their own profile, hopped branches in order to suggest that they provide future security, cawing that they could do as good, if not better, a job as the discredited rodents. The assembly agreed and the squirrely contract was annulled to the satisfaction of avian types the forest over. Dave Holland flew by at this point to declare the conference of the birds closed. A cool, chirruping bass line accompanied the delegates out of the tree. Messiaen laughed sadly in his quiet catholic way at the unsuitability of crow calls for his music. Silly man, they sound quite gorgeous...

Crow Security



17

The palatinate poured through time like a fine Rhenish wine intoxicating all who dared interrupt its sacred flow. Time wandered on ahead, heedless of our pleading and pleadless of our heeding. Bumbleweed wove through the wondergrowth like enormous lost beards trying to find salvation, a re-uniting possibly with their gigantic former owners said to be titans of the church. Barely bumbled, the alleged owners sat in a ring wondering where their beards had gone, quizzically addressing one another like dyslexic peanuts. *That cornetto ad had had quite an unsettling effect on me, testing accepted advertising mores with dizzying effect, the mores having passed with flying coulis. Raspberry probably, my favourite.* Anyway, back to the titans. After a while, probably a few hundred years as these were mythical creatures, one of them noticed a bumbleweed floating across the horizon, and, remarking to his fellows how it reminded him of his lost beard, began to give chase followed of course by his gullible mates. What a sight, beardless in bible sack they rushed to the horizon as the beardy bumbleweed led them a merry chase. The other bumbleweeds watched on (from somewhere in Nepal, I think; they'd installed a satellite dish on some famous mountain) and laughed as heartily as bumbleweeds could at these crazy goings-on.

The Holy See couldn't see, you see, or even hear the protestations of the poor whose families could not keep growing without them getting even poorer. Their faith was phenomenal. They had phenomenal faith. The men wouldn't stop, the women couldn't stop them and the babies kept popping out because God said so. 'Sex is for babies see' said the See and 'poverty and babies are God's punishment for you wanting your delusory orgasmic delights'. God didn't give a monkey's hoot to be honest and if she had she'd probably have insisted on protection. In the background Mary opined that one baby god was bad enough, already. So the Holy See saw to it that the rich stayed rich and the poor got poorer. Special heavenly dispensations for the rich and eternal poverty for the poor. That's what we like to see.

Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth - funny that.

18

The token bird wasn't a female enlisted to address gender imbalance in a jazz group. It was an actual bird that spat out tokens. These had no inherent value (or interest value come to that) but could be used to quell the libidinous urges of the business community around the globe. The blubberflies fell to the ground with a pad-dah deafening to local mollusca but virtually inaudible to other creatures while a line of vixens, horizontally located, purveyed the scene intelligently. In their feebly fluttered death throes the blubberflies spared a collective thought for Demon Wurst: 'What a bastard' they all thought, having ingested the poisonous nectar of his latest buddleia exhibit (which was basically all the buddleia plants around the world).

19

'Ahh, at last we're at war again, I thought the day would never come', sighed the Fractured Kingdom's latest prime minister. 'A chance to bloody my hands has finally arrived as it did so fortuitously to my illustrious predecessors.' To the enormous satisfaction of his arms dealer mates he decided to invade several inconsequential territories whose inhabitants had been living peacefully for many decades if not centuries. 'It was the best of wars, it was the worst of wars', was how one war correspondent described the invasion of the Pongalini Islands. Good because there had been so very little blood shed; bad for the same reason. Two rounds of ammunition had been fired, one grazing an islander's ear by mistake, but that was it. There was concern in arms trading circles that a prolonged strategy had not been given consideration; that munitions would be underused; that their profits would suffer as a result of insufficient manipulation of hostility by Pongolinian adversaries, notably the Gaponilise. But the prime minister had it all under control. He had arranged for undercover agents to inform the Gaponilise that the Pongolinese didn't like them very much. That got right up Gaponilisian noses - in fact they started sneezing and sneering uncontrollably for weeks on end until the arms shipments arrived and they finally came to their senses and went to war.

20

The Noisy Noodles from Next Door

J: How long is this noise going to last then Mrs Noodle?

N: Well, I suppose until the work's finished. I don't know, two, three years?

J: But it's been going on for five weeks and I haven't had a decent night's sleep in all that time. In fact, I haven't slept at all for the last three days.

N: Ear plugs?

J: No, it's the incessant vibration from the digging machines that keeps me awake. Why do you want an extra two storeys built underneath a terrace house anyway?

N: To accommodate all the homeless foxes and birds I see everywhere every day. Ooh, it breaks my heart so it does.

J: But foxes are wild creatures, even urban ones Mrs Noodle. They don't need this sort of accommodation. They make their own dens and fend for themselves. And birds and foxes do not mix, I can assure you. Just ask my granddad's chickens.

N: Well I will, I will. I will. And maybe they can have an extra floor all to themselves.

22

Pete the pelican had good reason to feel self-conscious. One of his wings was very slightly shorter than the other, you see, which made flying in a straight line near impossible. So he contented himself with flying around in huge circles much to the bewildered amusement of his pelican peers; hardly friends, as they'd taunt him cruelly with jibes like 'How's the north circular today Pete?' and 'Look out, it's Little Wing back from a round trip.' It was difficult for Pete as he was unable to fly from A to B like other birds, indeed 'as the crow flies', and in order to get to a certain place he would have to assess its position in one of his circular flight paths. This caused unbridled hilarity amongst the other pelicans who tended to get to the fish first, leaving mere scraps for poor old Pete who'd arrive hours after the heat of the action. Still, Pete persisted in his quiet, unorthodox way and soon became something of a hero to later generations of pelicans who admired his single-mindedness and fortitude. Some even went as far as to seek single wing-shortening at the pelican piercing parlour. This trend grew and quite soon pelicans could be observed flying in ever increasing and decreasing circles to target their fishy prey; not only good exercise but communally-sensical as communication swelled, Pete now having acquired regal status in pelicanic circles. The poor old thing had now become the *new thing* as younger birds flocked to his occasional lectures on the bobbing waves.

Pelicanic tutus never won awards anyway for olympic style and gloss.

It never occurred to the designers that maybe Kate could offer something lightly de-pressed in moss.

How shortsighted, how damn blighted arty circles seem to those who like to fling ideas and basically dream in hydroponic prose.

Their flings and strings are buoyant wings of unknown flames about to spark to life: when and how they do is not the root of strife:

But is this dream I recognise in times of dire deliction simply a pimple astride addiction? Is it thus or is it pus please tell me soon pray tell?

The prayers of our dear parliament will grow and maybe swell dependent on your wise conflation.

Deride my smell like William Tell shot apples to a tee and maybe then can all discuss my mum with cups of tea.

That nasty priest with dodgy teeth with strict adherence bade her scant farewell and nuns just wailed their hopeless wail for showtime's living hell.

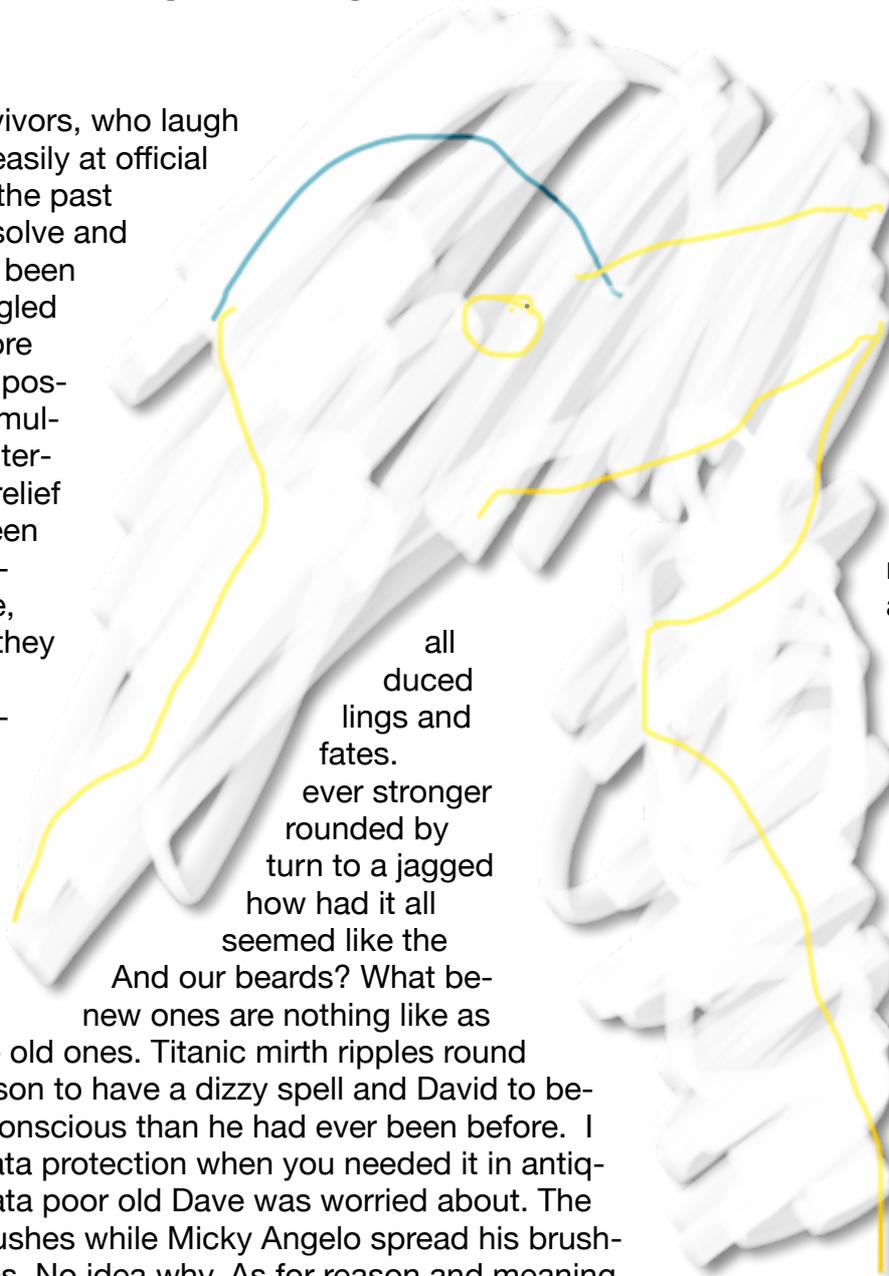
23

Unlike the signs on the road that keep telling you to 'look right', and I always try to look right, even though my personal grooming is strictly speaking none of their business, the instruction to 'keep refrigerated' on the packet of cheese was somewhat daunting for a man of my age, never having been exposed to freezing temperatures of that kind. However, I obediently did my best to climb into the refrigerator much to the concern and annoyance of its erstwhile incumbents. I noticed another packet of cheese and wondered why it was there before shutting the door and making friends with some fish fingers and jarred preserves. Needless to say, it got pretty cold quite quickly and I wondered how these foodstuffs managed to survive. Strange dreams of arctic adventures came to me before everything seemed to meld into a dreary, dietary backcloth of insulating penguin feathers shaped like small chocolate biscuits, anachronistic though that may seem. I thought of Babs and her yachting adventures but not for very long. It was then I realised I'd got the whole thing mixed up and that I should have brought the packet of cheese with me into the fridge. How stupid! The instruction was meant for the cheese as well as me. After another dream, an antarctic one this time populated with rogue, migratory polar bears I climbed out of the fridge, shivering and bewildered, and found the cheese gone. I climbed back in to resume my fantastic freeze, without the cheese, nodding in as friendly a way as I could muster to the residents of the vegetable crisper, who had remained impressively crisp throughout. They led a hard life these foodstuffs, hardy to a banana and pea. I tried to keep refrigerated for a while longer before I was removed by my landlady in an unseemly frozen state and placed on the bonfire to thaw. Aaaaaahhhh!

Being in the Fridge

24

The dour survivors, who laugh and smile uneasily at official look through the past unblinking resolve and must have all been hawthorn tangled appearing more than seemed pos-closed eyes; mul-raspberries inter- provide light relief darkening green semi-wakeful- count of three, given signal, they a stupor in- squawky star- the forest Desirous of edges perience re- delusion - what ostrich? them? These golden as the old ones. Titanic mirth ripples round causing Samson to have a dizzy spell and David to be- acutely self-conscious than he had ever been before. I where was data protection when you needed it in antiq- wasn't just data poor old Dave was worried about. The spared his blushes while Micky Angelo spread his brush- nearby bushes. No idea why. As for reason and meaning, ask. I mean, please...don't.



with difficulty surveys, darkly with decide it worthwhile, thoughts attractive sible with berries and vening to from the ambit of ness. On the and at the come out of by the jackdaws of coffee, years of ex- mass of happened in blink of an came of fresh and the gallery come more mean, uity? And it marble es in some please don't

25

The thought had always filled him with horror from quite a young age, but now it seemed to have become a real possibility that he would have to face his demons with strength and fortitude. You see, the idea of being ridden by a bed had had such a profound impact on his psyche that he almost, and I say almost, crumbled into a heap of top fruit wastage. Luckily, and at the last minute it would seem, someone explained to him the meaning of this term that he had dreaded ever since his first sexual encounter with a chair. They explained that it simply meant that he would have to stay in bed for the duration of this illness which had been brought on by his dread of being 'BEDRIDDEN'. What a relief! All those years of worry dispelled by a simple explanantion. Once bedridden, his joy became so intense that he decided, contrary to all expectations, to start riding the bed, much to the disquietude of the orderlies and hospital staff. The sad but seemingly inevitable end

to this tale was that emergency services had to be called when he rode the bed out of the hospital and had to be restrained, having found what he perceived to be a new found freedom of turnaround and positional possibilities. The police solemnly told him that 'This bed's going nowhere sir, now please desist'. Unhappy with this request, he sallied on regardless, meeting his end as he attempted to join the M4 at Junction 12 where a tired Romanian trucker, thinking he was hallucinating, decided to simply run over the bed-rider with tragic consequence. No-one knew his name. No-one cared about the identity or fate of this fearless challenger of misunderstanding made good. As for the rider from the dorm, they discovered his name was Harry. For his forlorn nephews and nieces this was Uncle Harry's first, but last, breakout.

David, Carrot and Pea



Glibtit called for assistants he didn't realise he had until his head had become so discom-bobulated by proximity to his work colleague that he felt himself at the very brink of self-combustion. Lucy dashed in and began to mop his sweaty shirted chest with a damp loo roll she'd found on the way. 'There, there Mr. Glibtit' she soothed, while he kept muttering 'Renata, Renata', the object of his infatuation, who wasn't even in the office, having gone for a pee and a smoke. When she returned a few minutes later to this bewildering scene Glibtit's nose exploded sending shards of snotty, gristly stuff all round the room. Amused but disgusted, Lucy continued her chest mopping, soon to be joined by her own colleague, Julie, who began feverishly to clear Glibtit's nose pieces from the surrounding floor, ceiling and furniture. Quite a task I can tell you! Having gathered all (or nearly all) the pieces, she very kindly set about restructuring sad old Glibtit's nose, watched carefully by a now sniggering Renata, whose presence was in no way helpful to proceedings. No sooner had the nose been put together in some form of nasal rectitude than Glibtit started complaining that Lucy might have thought about having some form of lip and breast enhancement to render her remedial task more sensuous and pleasing to him; and that Julie might have worn high heels rather than trainers. The shared thought 'Oh, what a sad old shit' occurred to both Julie and Lucy simultaneously as they continued to coo and woo their senior officer. But no sooner had they thought this thought than Glibtit sneezed a sneeze that rocked the office block, the like of which only the ancients would have recognised the true significance of, as the nose splintered into thousands of tiny fragments, so tiny this time that they became irretrievable. Noseless Glibtit lay helpless and now unhelped in an undignified and pathetic heap. After playfully placing two fingers over the hole that had once encased Paul Glibtit's nose, Renata, trying desperately to restrain her giggles and wondering quite how she could have had this effect on the ridiculous amateur sailor, said thanks and goodnight to Lucy and Julie and went home where her husband had been eating doughnuts the whole time. He wasn't really interested in her work-life and had no idea she was a civil servant. Meanwhile Glibtit lay quivering and shrinking at the touch of Renata, soon attaining takeaway container like proportions, only to be disposed of innocently some hours later by the cleaners who mistook him for someone's uneaten lunch. What a way to go...

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Tilitated bankers sensed the swell of economic recovery as mushrooms and eggs showered from skies previously held to be doom-laden and serving the sole purpose of ablative accompaniment to a fried breakfast. Servile companions to the aforementioned eggs, the mushrooms nevertheless were trained to conserve their dignity in a pan of fried delights. Holding their ground somewhere in Theobalds Road, they fried to the friar's delight complying with all they had been taught. When the bankers tasted them there was no doubt about their pleasing texture. Mmmmm! But had the bankers been duped? Might these fantastical fungal entities have somehow been grown to seemingly characterise all the positive aspects of the capitalist system whilst the whole time remaining the secret enemy within. One banker balked at the thought and asked for more eggs - and quickly! Gulping down a few mouthfuls of tea, he moved the mushrooms to the side of his plate and set about mentally charging the paranoia machine, so beloved of the public, to eradicate mushroom cultivation everywhere and ensure that the friendly breakfast fungi would no longer be available to anyone anywhere in the country. In the interests of scientific enquiry the bankers would continue to have a private supply until the theory had been proved to their satisfaction. Which it never was. And never will be.

Arbitrating bluebells swelled and rang with impunity; some in G, some in B-flat, some even in D-flat. The ones in F started to make their presence felt, adding considerable beauty with their flattened leading note, when a ratchety band of hoodlums called the Glowering Figs arrived, calling the aesthetically pleasing proceedings to a halt, further alleging underhand commercial malpractice. You see, this nasty gang of reprobates had once considered naming themselves the Flowering Wigs, and, even though that name was never adopted, they contended that any flower, especially ones with 'bell' in their name, should be prohibited from the act of making music on fear of being picked or, worse, re-planted in ancient woodland. Thus began the War of the FigBells, barely mentioned in either social or mainstream media by historians, and conducted in the mid-noughties on the battlefields of Walthamstow Marshes after dark.

Tinkibots tinkered feverishly to avert the oncoming hostilities but to no avail. More of them later. May as they tried, the opposing forces refused to yield: and with no reason. The bluebells rang; tentatively at first, but, when soon realising the power of their delicate assault, gained confidence and were joined by the harebells and other bellflowers of the Campanulaceae family. The floundering Figs didn't know what had hit them at first, so gently relaxing had this initial assault been, when they were brought dilligently to their senses by their drummer Davlerfig who led a battering counter-assault with confusing flams and paradiddles, soon joined by the Basie and twangly rumblings, shoutings and shredlings of Kallifig and Wigglefig. Kallifig started vocalising in a hoarse and threatening way:

You bells better shut your noise
 Leave it to the girls and boys
 You just flowers you don't get it
 Mess with us and you'll regret it

This only served to give the flowers, now bolstered by reinforcements from the North in the form of massed ranks of Scottish bluebells, renewed energy (the Figs hadn't realised that they actually enjoyed music) and a massed belling (including a baby) response followed which moved the Figs to the extent that they felt obliged to add their own rough-hewn contribution, a contribution which the bellflowers likewise enjoyed immensely. The diddy-dingling and deep bing-bonging had proved irresistible it would seem. As never, the story ended happily with an unplanned wedding between figs and bellflowers on the third of the month each year. Which month? I think it had to be when Jupiter aligned with Mars. And all accompanied by a choir of bellowers and bellows. The marshmellows had to be excluded for obvious reasons.

Instant grigglypops, not tinkibots, turned flavorsome insisting on a more realistic tariff. How or why they tasted as they did was a question Parliament had always refused to consider, being as it were the prerogative of dwindlypops from Lincolnshire to Cornwall and all flight paths in between. All walls to the border had been askewed in a vain attempt at gracious peeling of ridiculana designed to pamper the Prince of Pipes. The Princess of Peonies should also be mentioned here in the interests of petalled parpidools. It was late December and the skies were riven with angels singing Glo-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-oriah! It was all very festive until Man Vorrison appeared in the dream on the misunder-

standing that he might be able to collect some royalties. When these were, well, not so much denied him as belied him, he stomped away in filthy Doc Martens cursing in a heavy Belfast accent: 'Feckin' angels stealing my song title. I won't feckin' stand for it.' As his ears and teeth expanded outward simultaneously, his eyes, nose and lips shrank exponentially, lips cracking under duress and face becoming a contorted politicianly caricature the like of which had never been seen. Soon, random inflating and deflating of fingers followed which made axophone playing really difficult, if, in Man's case, rather interesting. Toes followed - phweee-psssss-phweee-psssss - as poor old Man made an unwanted digital exhibition of himself. Needless to say, he never visited that dream again but, having regained his initial form, began playing a blathering harmonica extruded, somehow, from a supporting muso's pants.

29

The telefang rang and out bit a wangle that chewed my ear vociferously like a toffee for several hours. The nonversation ended with a curt squelch leaving me bewildered and not a little unsettled. '*Heliboletus*' I thought, incalculably. Whatever inspired that must have been some strange force of nomenclature. I soon rang, ears ringing, out of the bell and into a shower hoping to rid myself of thoughts of caramel wittles and snapes. Wrangling with a wangle was not an appealing prospect and I determined to lie down in order to consider the situation more fully. Still wet, I caught a chill; something never mentioned in herstory books but significant nonetheless as an example of indeterminate recovery. Shivering, I stopped and let the chill go as beneficently as I could. Then, I thought.

'Now then', I thought.

'Why 'now then' and not 'then now'?', I further thought.

'What might be the purpose of 'then'?', I even further thought.

Soon enough I made as if to act upon my initial thought.

But it actually wasn't soon enough as I'd forgotten what it was I'd determined to do in the first place. Was it just getting to my feet or something more important? I suppose we'll never know. They say if it was important it would come back to one, but what do they know about importance? And why all these questions all of a sudden? I contented myself with the thought that the chill was now free to go and annoy someone else who may, like me, have been a neglectful dryer of themself. Aah, that was it! The thought I thought had gone awol was this: I'd dial 1471 to try to establish the identity of that vile wangle who had chewed my ear to threads. But, needless to say, it had withheld its number. Canny wangle! Witheringly I returned to my slumber unheeded by hindrances of which I knew nothing.

30

Yes, the days *are* getting longer and soon it *will* be Spring. Meanwhile, we count the dates before feeding them to any passing crows that show an interest. Birds are the ultimate consumers of time, biding it only in emergencies brought on by forgetfulness. A silly siskin once confided that she had no idea of time; that it waited for fools and forgave the innocent. Whether there was any truth in this I wondered alone, as a cloud might on a scorchingly hot day before evaporating into a blue hue. 'Poor blighter never stood a

chance in that kind of heat', they all thought as one. Murmurations of thought had been particularly common that year yielding a vast outcrop of cretinous minglings and jinglings. The entertainment industry was slow to take advantage of this and, before anyone knew it, a gaping chasm in terrestrial TV listings had appeared, executives having foolishly taken quality control too seriously. This had resulted in familiar mindless tripe being placed in abeyance with no viable alternative to replace it, so imbued with inane garbage had the thought processes of programme planners and designers become. 'Time holds no favours for the hesitant of imagination' as one famous Persian seer had once opined prior to being hounded into exile, unable to explain what he meant.

31

Shapes aplenty were out in force in the dank and miserable excuse for a summer's day that had dawned optimistically on the eve of Stephen; not quite crisp and even but who cared? For the ovals and circles it was time to reconsider their reluctance to join in the dance, as terrified tetrahedrons tumbled and cartwheeled across the lawn. As for the squares and many other polyhedrons and polygons, their time was ripe for ridicule as a fearful booming of trumbones was heard approaching to accompany the strange and beautiful, though slightly random, activities. Slowly the circles' apprehension thawed as they rolled in to the dance with merriment and abandon followed by the ovals whose fear of seeming inadequate, even inferior, in the company of circles, was soon dispelled as the whole throng fell into helpless laughter at their wobbly wheeling. Dancing a merry ring around the fumblesome ovals, the circles took the heat off the tetrahedrons who became less fearful and started enjoying themselves. The trumbuncular band had now arrived and what a colourful racket it made, horns blasting an unfathomable pas-de-deux with the geometrical revellers. The squares had begun to look a little uneasy at this point and decided to form an alliance with the non-participating drons and gons who all started to read books in protest at the fun and frolics, feeling the wisdom gained from this pursuit would compensate for their self-exclusion from the more physical and enjoyable dance in the round. But - none the wiser, neither did they become lither. And so, to cut a short story even shorter, the square dance was born; an attempt by the squares and all things cubic to wrest a little respect for themselves from the adored rounders. Where this left the other, how shall we say, 'sided' shapes was unclear. One rather testy cube, sugar I think, was heard to taunt a passing nonahedron: 'Start your own polygon dance if you think you're up to it!'. Understandably Nono was a little put out by this seeming ignorance of his three-dimensional geometric status. As he rolled away with as much dignity as only a nonahedron can muster, the irascible cube shouted after him, 'We've made a discovery that will ensure the supremacy of country music for the next hundred years, got it?' He was sure he'd heard this before somewhere but couldn't remember where. Perhaps he'd ask a roofer if the opportunity arose. Whereupon he rolled his nine-sided way home in a rather stoned trajectory.

32

Leaping had become the seasonal fad. As people strolled down the High Street they'd suddenly leap into the air for no other apparent reason than to enjoy a good leap. The young and not-so-young were caught up in a frenzy of leptomania which an alien might have thought quite normal but which a seasoned analyst would have found quite worrying. The authorities tried to crack down fearing there might be unsightly collisions leading to violence, especially around festive periods. But the trend had become infectious to the point that even the gravity enforcers became bewitched by its grip that seemingly spared no-one. The harder they tried to tie the purported offenders down the more the thing took

a hold of them, and very soon they'd be joining in the leap-fest with the very people they were admonishing. Boing! The senior LPO (Leap Prevention Officer) would be off bounding towards Stamford Hill like a human pogo stick having forgotten what he'd been trying to tell several pairs of leaping partners outside the Rochester Castle public house. Of course, everyone laughed to see such fun especially as it made the authority figures seem so ridiculous, the senior officer's assistants having set off after him leaping every other step like infants in a playground. It all ended joyously as legislature was passed prohibiting anyone from walking more than ten paces without taking a leap. World famous celebrities such as Dave Pegg encouraged festival goers to 'leap for warmth' as the mood of the nation swung to levels of mass exhilaration at the sheer joy of abundant bounding around unbounded. Policemen and women skipped to the loo my darling with gay abandon and became quite forgetful of their sworn oaths which were now partly to protect the public from excessive gravitas. Dogged adherents to the rules of gravity were met by officers with rebukes such as 'Allo, allo, allo, you seem to have your feet planted firmly on the ground madam. Quite set in your ways it seems. Care to take a leap with me down to the station?' 'Ooh, you saucy officer', the woman in this particular case replied before bounding away with the cheeky policeman to the cop shop where she was charged by an army of ants which she loathed. However, this had the desired remedial effect. She was hopping mad but has since become a leading leaper and lectures on the subject at the London College of Lepidopterists, her eyes having been opened to the joys of hopping and leaping the flight pandjango.

Leaping

