

Christmas Parties



David Robinson

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David W Robinson

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Christmas Day with Spookies

Pete Brennan ambled into the living room of the shared flat on Nineveh Crescent, to find Sceptre Rand at the table beneath the window, making notes on an A4 pad.

“Good morning, Peter, and a merry Christmas to you.”

“Back atcha.” He wandered into the kitchen and switched on the kettle.

Most of the time, the use of his full name, rather than the more casual Pete, signalled disapproval, but her tone did not match such an attitude, so he charitably assumed she was merely being who she was and employing the formality of the landed gentry because it was Christmas. Her full title was Lady Concepta Rand-Epping, countess of Marston, an anachronistic hangover of past, aristocratic glories, now fallen on hard times and sharing a flat with Pete and his pal, Kevin Keeley.

A flat was all she shared, much to Pete’s chagrin. Most women found him irresistible (so he claimed) but Sceptre found him totally resistible, even when, as now, he strutted about the house wearing only a pair of boxer shorts.

Making tea, he wandered back into the living room and sat opposite her. Before Sceptre’s arrival, Christmas had never been on the agenda in the flat. He and his pal, Kevin were too busy wandering from one party to another to be bothered with decorations. Sceptre insisted in stringing up a small tree, beneath which were carefully wrapped gifts, their labels made out in her impeccable handwriting.

The door to the three bedrooms opened and Kevin wandered in wearing a pair of huge y-fronts and a vest which was practically in tatters.

“Any danger of some tea?” he asked, his voice not much better than a croak.

“You know where the kettle is,” Pete replied.

“And we haven’t moved the teabags,” Sceptre said, barely looking up from her notes.

“What are you up to?” Pete asked as Kevin disappeared into the kitchen.

“Writing up that all-night vigil at Ashdale Abbey the other night,” she replied.

“A waste of a good night’s boozing if you ask me,” Pete complained. “Freezing our tripes off and what did we see? Nothing.”

“It’s not all about what you can see, Pete,” Sceptre told him. “We do have other senses.”

“Yes. Like our sense of smell,” he agreed as Kevin returned and joined them. “Have you showered this morning?”

“I can’t stand up for long enough,” he admitted. “I put some booze away last night.”

“We noticed,” Sceptre disapproved. “Especially when you started doing the dance of the seven veils on the pub table.”

Kevin looked to Pete for confirmation and Pete nodded. “You’re barred from the Lion and Lamb until Easter, and only then if you’re prepared to let the landlord crucify you.”

Kevin clasped his forehead. “Never again. From now on, I’m on the wagon.”

“You say that every Christmas,” Sceptre reminded him. She put away her A4 pad. “Right, so it’s Christmas Day. Who’s cooking lunch?”

The two men exchanged puzzled glances.

“Lunch?” Kevin asked.

“Yes. It’s that thing between breakfast and dinner that stops you fainting.”

“Do we usually cook Christmas lunch?” Pete asked.

“Well, someone has to,” Sceptre argued. “I can’t.”

“Why not?”

“Kev, when one is brought up to become a Countess, one does not learn how to cook turkey and sprouts.”

“Which is good,” Kevin replied, “because we don’t have a turkey.”

“We don’t?”

“I didn’t realise we needed one.”

“Right,” Sceptre said, “so turkey is off. What do we have?”

“I’ll check the fridge.” Kevin wandered off and returned a few moments later. “Half a tin of baked beans, some cheddar which is looking a bit iffy, and a tin of corned beef.”

“Let’s look on the bright side,” Pete suggested. “At least we can have a corned beef sandwich.”

Kevin shook his head. “No we can’t. We’ve no bread and being as how it’s Christmas Day, the shops are shut.” He turned to Sceptre. “Can we not call on one of your upper class chums?”

“Doubtful. Most of them will be in Cannes or Nice for the winter. What about your mother?”

“Same thing. Only she’s in Fleetwood, which is a bit like Cannes and Nice.”

Sceptre was nonplussed. “Fleetwood is like the South of France?”

“Well, it’s at the seaside.”

Sceptre was silent for a moment. “So allow me to sum up the situation. It’s Christmas Day, all the shops are closed, most of the pubs, too, every restaurant that is open will be booked solid and in any case, we don’t have any money, and finally, we have nothing to eat in the house.”

“Except a can of corned beef,” Pete reminded her.

“And some iffy cheddar,” Kevin added.

Pete gave her an insouciant grin. “Can your ghostly butler not help?”



“Did you hear that Fishwick?” Sceptre called into thin air.

The voice of her long-dead, faithful retainer rang in her head. “I did, Milady, and I regret, I cannot rustle up a Yuletide feast from this side of the Spirit Plane.”

Sceptre came back to her two earthbound friends. “No, Fishwick cannot help.”

“Well, can you not get him to go and haunt some house so that we can gatecrash a party?” Kevin demanded.

“That would be unethical. Even for a spirit.” She sighed. “It looks like it’s going to be a long and hungry Christmas.”

Pete reached down to the fireplace and took up a flat, square box. “I bought these for you, Sceptre. Chocolates. We could always feast on them and I’ll buy you a fresh box tomorrow... or when I have some money.”

“Good idea.” Sceptre tore open the package. “I’ve taken the butterscotch.”

“I’ll have the fudge,” Kevin said and helped himself.

“Looks like I’m lumbered with the caramel, then.”

“You surprise me,” Sceptre said. “With your attitude to yuletide, I thought you’d have gone for the humbug.”

Pete scowled. “Merry Christmas, Sceptre.”

Christmas Day at the Lazy Luncheonette

“It’s unusual though, innit, Uncle Joe?” said Lee Murray. “I mean normally, you come to ours on Christmas Day. But you’ve invited half the 3rd Age Club this year.” Lee gestured around The Lazy Luncheonette at the various people enjoying the festivities.

“I just thought it would make a change,” said Joe, sipping on a glass of brown ale. “Sheila’s and Brenda are both on their own, and you’d already been to see your mother the other day, and half these people had nothing better to do than get drunk in front of the telly, so why not make use of the café while we have it to ourselves.”

Brenda cast a twinkly glance at him. “And the fact that you overbought on Christmas goodies had nothing to do with it?”

Joe chuckled. “You hurt me sometimes.”

Les Tanner overheard the remark. “Knowing you, Murray, I’m surprised you didn’t open the doors for any passing trucker.”

“Nothing wrong with the profit motive, Les. But it is Christmas Day and there are no passing truckers.”

Across the aisle from them, Lee’s wife, Cheryl, was playing a game of pass the parcel with her son Danny, Brenda and Sheila. She took another layer of wrapping from the parcel as Mavis Barker stopped the music. “Nearly there, Danny,” she said as Mavis started the cassette again. “Just one more wrapper.”

The Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy tinkled through the café and the parcel did the rounds again.

Further along, Cyril Peck was debating with Mort Norris: football if Joe knew his members. Alongside Mort, sat his long-suffering wife, Alma, filling in a word puzzle. The Staineses and Sylvia were deep in discussion with George Robson and Owen Frickley, and again, if Joe knew anything about them, Sylvia Goodson would be proselytising on the spiritual meaning of Christmas, Alec and Julia Staines would suffer her zeal with stoic but mild resistance, while George and Owen would be wondering where they could go on Christmas Day to meet women. As he watched, Les Tanner returned and joined them.

With a careful eye on the parcel's progress, Mavis stopped the music when it passed again to four-year-old Danny.

The boy tore eagerly at the final sheet of wrapping paper, and then held up the trophy for his mother's approval.

"It's a meat pie," he declared.



"No, Danny," Joe corrected him. "Meat pies come from Lancashire. That's a Yorkshire steak and kidney pie."

Sheila took the pie from the boy and read the label. "According to this, the bakery is in Burnley, which is in Lancashire."

"Don't get technical," Joe ordered.

Brenda put on a pair of fashionable reading glasses and picked up the pie. "Rock hard and three months out of date, too," she said, with a sour glare at Joe.

"I found it at the back of the freezer," Joe explained.

"Can I have it now, Mum?" Danny begged.

"It'll make you poorly, Danny," his mother replied.

Danny pouted and Sheila stood up. “Tell you what, Danny, how about some jelly and ice cream? You’d like that, wouldn’t you?”

The boy nodded enthusiastically.

“You are such a tight arse, Joe,” Brenda grumbled.

“What would you expect to find in a parcel from a café?” Joe defended himself.

“You could have nipped next door and bought a toy car or something, Uncle Joe,” Cheryl suggested. “I know that means spending money, but...”

“I did spend money,” Joe argued. “Where do you think I got the wrapping paper and Sellotape? And the pie didn’t come free, you know.”

“No, but the price has gone up since September,” Lee reminded him. “Never mind, Uncle Joe. You had the right idea.” He stood up and raised his glass to the room. “Here’s to a merry Christmas everybody.”

Everyone raised their glasses; even Joe, but his was the dissenting voice in the toast.

“Here’s to an inexpensive Christmas.”

Christmas Day with the Cast of Bleaker Cove

My agent/manager, Alistair Greenall cracked a can of beer and slurped from it. “A good do, Clint,” he declared. “A damn good do.”

I had to agree. “Not like you to spend money on a do like this, Ali.”

“We never know when we’ll need friends, Clint. It’ll be worth it.”

Looking around the vast living room of his moorland farmhouse, I had to agree. There had to be at least fifty bodies crammed in. My co-star, Julius Quigley, crooned Wish Yourself a Merry Little Christmas on the makeshift karaoke. He had to. No one else would wish him anything but war, famine, pestilence, etc.

A few couples were smooching to the music, others crowded around in various, well defined cliques according to they were cast, crew or contractors. By the kitchen door, where she might have been guarding the food, Ali’s partner, Sharon Crossley stood yattering with one of our on-set carpenters. Judging from the way she used her hands, she was telling him how she had completely refitted the kitchen. Useful woman, Shaz. Adept in all areas of DIY, she was also built like a concrete khasi and tougher than any ten security men you could bring to this kind of do.

Sat on a settee a little closer to us was Emma Penton, the gorgeous blonde with whom, I was happy to say, I lived. She was chatting with her female co-star, Brittany Spangler. Spangles as she was known to all and sundry was a recent addition to the cast of Bleaker Cove, but she’d been with us long enough by now to know where she fitted in. i.e. beneath Emma and me. Beneath Julius, too, if the rumours were true. Or maybe I was wrong. Maybe Julius was beneath her. He’d certainly been looking a bit peaky and undernourished since she came into his life.



By the mock fireplace, our producer Ed Welch was deep in conversation with director Helen Sears, and her junior, Laura Tyndall. Ed would be boring the socks off them with details of his tedious life in Wilmslow, Helen would listen dutifully while Laura would take the first opportunity to duck out. Even as I thought of it, her saucer eyes scanned the room, fell on Ali and me, and she excused herself and came towards us.

“Hi, guys,” she greeted.

“Ed boring you, was he?” I asked.

“Nothing of the kind. I love listening to the way his wife is struggling to get the hydrangea bush to grow.”

I laughed generously and Laura concentrated on Ali. “This charity of yours. Fancy doing a piece on it for my weekly entertainment slot?”

“I, er...” Ali looked shiftily in my direction. “Later in the year, maybe, Laura. It’s very much in start-up mode right now. We’re still waiting for official charitable status. You know how it is when the taxman’s involved.”

“Tell me about it,” she moaned. “They’re still chasing me for last year’s returns.”

Julius brought his turn to an end, and Laura excused herself again, hurrying across to take the mike from him, and launch into an appalling falsetto version of Jingle Bell Rock.

“Charity?” I asked.

“Well, er, you know the score, Clint.” He glanced nervously round the room and I picked up the hint from his devious tone.

“Are you telling me everyone paid to come to this party?”

“Well, not everyone. I meanersay, I haven’t charged Shaz.”

“Nor me.”

“I’ll stop your fifty quid out of your next round of fees.”

“Yeah, right... FIFTY QUID?”

He shushed me as I momentarily drowned out Laura’s shocking voice.

“These things don’t come cheap, Clint. And it is for charity.”

“What charity?”

“AAMBA.”

“Amber?”

“No, not amber. A-A-M-B-A. AAMBA. The Artistes, Agents and Managers Benevolent Association.”

“Never heard of it.”

“Well you wouldn’t have. It only came into being last month.”

“And you’re a supporter?”

“Supporter? I’m the founder.”

Suspicion began to cloud my mind. “Let me get this straight. People have paid fifty nicker a head to attend this party in aid of a charity that you founded a month ago?”

He nodded.

“And what exactly does AAMBA do?”

“Looks after artistes, agents and managers when they’re down on their luck.”

“And my guess is that one of their first charitable acts was to pay for all the food and drink at this gaff. Right?”

He beamed. “Got it one, my son.”

I shook my head. “Ali, do you know the difference between a conman and you?”

“No.”

“Most conmen are failures.”

He chuckled and raised his can. “Merry Christmas, Clint.”

“If I find fifty quid missing from my next round of fees, it’ll be the last Christmas for you.”

Christmas Day on Midthorpe

Raymond Baldock chewed on a mouthful of turkey and swallowed with a sense of pure, gastronomic delight. “Mother, this is perfect.

Janet Baldock beamed generously on her youngest son. “Thank you, Raymond. And you don’t know how perfect it makes my Christmas having one of my sons here.” She smiled further on her guests, Tim and Lisa Yeoman. “Along with the man I love and his beautiful daughter.”

Baldock gazed rapturously on Lisa. Wearing a plain, black dress, the neckline plunged vertiginously, displaying her fine cleavage, and calling to mind the raw passion of the previous night.

“Will you two get through Christmas without falling out?” Tim asked.

Lisa giggled. “I hope so, Dad.”

“I can’t think of anything we need to fall out over,” Baldock said.

“Well, after the way you drove off during the summer, and the way Lisa thumped you in Benidorm, they say the bookie is offering even money on a yuletide fall out.”

“Typical of Midthorpe bookmakers,” Baldock said, completely missing the point of Tim’s gag. He scanned the heavily laden table, seeking condiments. “You have my assurance, Tim, that Lisa and I are fine.”

Now his eye settled on Lisa, and the burn of lust in her pretty, pear-drop face. She mouthed ‘I want you’ at him, and he struggled to hold down his embarrassment.

In order to distract his lurid thoughts, he asked, “Tim, could you pass the vagina.”

Lisa spluttered, Janet tittered and Tim laughed explosively as he passed along a bottle of vinegar.

Baldock blushed a furious crimson. “I’m terribly sorry. I meant vinegar, of course.”

“Freudian slip?” Janet asked.

“Or your Midthorpe roots showing through,” Tim commented.

Baldock denied it. “When it comes to Midthorpe, my roots were surgically removed years ago. As far as I’m concerned, this estate it is the most appalling dump on earth, and the only solution is demolition on a huge scale.”

“You shouldn’t let your prejudice show through, dear,” Janet told her son.

“It’s not prejudice, mother, it’s an assessment. Present company excepted, this estate is a shabby quagmire of down and outs and vandalism. I’ve said so often, the best thing that could happen to Leeds would be the removal of Midthorpe estate.”



He could see he was not endearing himself to his audience and changed the subject. “Do you know how much Ivan Haigh charged me for a single Christmas card? Shopkeeper? The man is as big a thief as any other toe rag on Midthorpe.”

As an aside, Baldock was satisfied that his comments drew the conversation away from his appalling fax pas and controversial comments.

“I’m surprised he served you,” Lisa said. “You did put an end to his sideline in stolen goods, last summer.”

“With your help,” Baldock pointed out.

“He is a bit expensive,” Janet said, sensing another argument and trying to pour oil on troubled waters

“Expensive?” Baldock complained. “In any other walk of life it would be called demanding money with menaces.”

Tim was more successful at changing the subject. “So what do you have lined up for the New Year, Ray?”

“The TV company are going into production with Detective Inspector Headingley.”

“Ooh, exciting.” Janet burned with enthusiasm.

“Will you be in them?” Lisa asked.

“No. It’s nothing to do with me. I just get paid for the rights. But I have asked if I can attend some of the location shooting, and they’ve agreed.” He gazed on Lisa again. “I could arrange for you to be there, if you wanted.”

“I’d like that. But are you sure it’s me you want there? Not Mandy Cowling?”

Baldock put down his knife and fork. “Mandy? Why would I want Mandy with me?”

“Well, you seem to have vaginas on the brain and you saw enough of Mandy’s in Benidorm.”

Baldock felt his irritation rising. “I did explain that, Lisa.”

“Yes you did, but your comment just now—”

“Come along, children,” Janet interrupted. “This is no time to squabble.” She too put down her cutlery and raised her wine glass. “Let’s just have a merry Christmas.”

Tim raised his glass, Lisa too. Baldock sulked for a moment and raised his.

“Merry Christmas,” he grumbled. “With or without vaginas.”

Christmas Day aboard the Chuckling Pig

Clutching his forehead, Bazill Beatel staggered into the galley of the Chuckling Pig to find his captain and best friend, Grenlon Garamine at the table, drinking coffee.

Gren was dressed in his usual black, pilot's jumpsuit, but where he normally wore a baseball cap sporting the Chuckling Pig logo, he now wore a paper hat in the shape of a crown.

"Morning, BB," Gren said with a broad smile. "And Merry Christmas."

BB helped himself to black coffee. "Is it?"

"What do you mean is it?" Gren asked. "December 25th. Christmas Day." He pointed through the viewport where a pinpoint of light beamed in the blackness of space. "Look. The star of Bethlehem."



BB looked out, too, and saw the bright, white beacon hanging to the right of the bright yellow Sol. "That's not the Star of Bethlehem. It's Ganymede. One of Jupiter's moons."

"How do you know?" Gren asked.

BB jerked his thumb at the viewport. "If you lean over, you can see Jupiter next to it."

"Oh. Right." Gren chuckled. "Well, it looked like the Star of Bethlehem to me. Come on, BB, it's Christmas, and we have a coupla days off. Why are you so grumpy?"

BB clutched his pounding head again. "Hangover. Whatever I was drinking last night, I know I drank too much of it, but I can't remember what it was."

"Mulled twine," Gren told him.

"You mean mulled wine."

"No," Gren argued, "I mean mulled twine. It's made from pulped, pressed and fermented hemp, and you drank two bottles of it."

"I did? Where were we?"

"Doomy's Choke 'n' Go. We were with Sulin Tassil and Marina Kalor. You invited them here for Christmas lunch."

BB frowned. "Christmas lunch? Today?"

"Well there wouldn't be a lot of point asking them to Christmas lunch on Easter Sunday, would there?"

BB shrugged. "Sulin Tassil? Great chick, but she doesn't mix well with mulled twine? No wonder I feel rotten."

"This'll cheer you up." Gren reached to the drawer behind him and pulled out a lumpy, misshapen parcel which he placed on the table. It was wrapped in tissue decorated with crudely drawn Christmas trees and Santas. "Doomy didn't have any Christmas wrapping," he explained, "so I had to improvise."

Sitting down, BB unwrapped the parcel and took out a new, black leather wallet. Suspicion haunting his handsome features, he asked, "Why did you buy me a wallet? You never pay me so I never have any money."

"We're partners, BB. Whatever the Chuckling Pig earns we split it," Gren said.

"Yes, eighty-twenty in your favour, and I stand most of the overheads out of my twenty percent. In any other life it would be called slavery."

“Come on, BB, it’s Christmas.”

“Right. So I get an empty wallet and what else? A bill for the ink you used drawing all those Santas and Christmas trees.”

Ignoring BB, an eager smile spread across Gren’s face. “Did you buy me anything?”

BB reached under the sink and pulled out a perfectly wrapped parcel, with an immaculately placed tag reading, *Merry Christmas, tightwad.*

“You had Mekkano wrap this didn’t you?” Gren asked.

BB nodded. “What’s the point of keeping a servobot if you have to wrap Christmas presents yourself? Go ahead. Open it.”

Gren tore feverishly at the wrapping and retrieved a small box, decorated with photographs of the contents, a handheld, general remote control device. Suspicion haunted his tubby features.

“Where did you get this?”

“It’s a great little toy,” BB enthused “It’ll operate your portable holovid, your communicator, and stuff. It’ll even call Mekkano for you.”

“BB, we delivered a consignment of these to Phobos last week. They were factory imperfects sent for crushing.”

“Yes? And?”

“So where did you get it?” Gren demanded.

“I found it in the hold after we left Phobos.”

“Great. So you didn’t buy me a Christmas present, you stole one, and it’s one that doesn’t work anyway.”

“It does work,” BB argued. “They may have been factory rejects, but they all worked.”

“Yes,” Gren agreed. “They drove our navigation systems nuts, and interfered with the fuel flow regulators. When we left Mars heading for Phobos, we almost ended up going via Saturn. And they had Mekkano doing Riverdance every time he went into the hold.” He tossed the toy to one side and checked his chronometer. “Half past eleven. Sulin and Marina are due in less than an hour. Hadn’t we better get ready for them?”

“I’ll get right on it.” BB jabbed the intercom button. “Mekkanoo, galley, now.”

“Complying, musclebound moron.”

Almost immediately the door slid open and Mekkanoo glided in. Short and rotund, he reminded his human masters of a dustbin floating six inches off the floor. His all-seeing single eye rotated to take in the surroundings, and eventually settled on BB. “You called, oh masterful minion of Yuletide yomping?”

“We’re expecting company. Female company. What’s for lunch?”

“Today being the Feast of Stephen, I have prepared a special menu,” Mekkanoo announced. “Turkey flavoured burgers and fries.”

Gren’s features suffused. “What? Why can’t we have real turkey and stuffing and all the trimmings?”

“The turkey as a species died out in 2988, lord glutton,” said Mekkanoo, “and your budget allowed for only the cheapest of soya substitutes.”

“And what’s for desert?”

“Christmas pudding marinated in methylated spirit.”

BB frowned. “Shouldn’t that be Christmas pudding marinated in brandy?”

Mekkanoo’s spindly arm indicated Gren. “I regret, boss with the bulging biceps, that your corpulent cohort declined to purchase the brandy because it was too expensive. He ordered me to substitute some cheaper form of alcohol, and methylated spirit was the cheapest available.”

BB glared at his pal. “Tightwad,” BB said.

“Screw you,” Gren sulked.

“No, master muttonhead,” said Mekkanoo. “It is pronounced Scrooge.”

Gren scowled. “And Scrooge you, too.”

Christmas Day with the Cappers

A grey sky cast dull light over the barren back garden where a robin and two pigeons chirped and cooed over the breadcrumbs I had thrown out for them. Looking out from the conservatory on an icy cold December 25, I had Cappy the Cat alongside me, his whiskery features glowering at the audacity of those feathered felons, daring to encroach upon his domain. When I opened the door for him, he took one sniff at the cold, came back in and perched on the windowsill to carry on glaring.

I turned from the window, marched through the house and threw open the bedroom door. “Are you moving your lazy, drunken self, this morning?”

Dennis groaned. “I was thinking about wife swapping. Right now, I’d swap you for summat quieter. Summat like a petrol-driven lawnmower.”

I ignored him. I had too much to do to be bothered with arguments. Instead, I returned to the kitchen and made him a beaker of tea. Five minutes later, he staggered in clutching his forehead and moaning, “Never again.”

Smoke. I’d heard it all before. Every Christmas as it happens. “Must you get drunk like that every Christmas Eve?”

“It’s compulsory, Chrissy,” he groaned. “I’m sure it was in the letter the council sent us about the bin collections over Crimmy. ‘You are obliged get a bit blotto every Christmas Eve’.”

“A bit blotto? You were smashed out of your bloody brains.”

“I was not.”

“No? Who was it doing a duet of I Got You Babe on the karaoke?”

His defensiveness wrapped him up like a cocoon. “Nothing wrong with that.”

“There is when the other half of the duet is Stan Sowden.” I pressed on before he could pick up the debate. “And what about the argument you had with Santa as we were leaving the pub?”

Despite his inebriation, Dennis had not forgotten the incident. “All I said was he looked a complete twonk in his red cloak and white beard. Yes, and you notice he didn’t answer me, did he? No. Nothing to say for himself, had he? All he could do was sing, *We Wish You a Merry Christmas.*”

“It was a life-size doll, you idiot.”



This came as something of a shock to him. “A doll?”

I nodded. “Life-size. The landlord put it outside as a way of brightening the place up and attracting customers.” I shook my head with that classic annoyance only a skilled wife could manage. “What on earth were you drinking last night?”

“Bitter and whisky chasers, I think. And halves as I recall.”

“Tots of bitter and half pints of whisky, I’ll bet. Let’s just get a move on. Simon, Naomi, and Bethany are due at three and I’ve a lot to get through. Oh, while I think on, I’ve invited Lester.”

“Lester?”

“Lester Grimes. You know. One of your business partners.”

Dennis was appalled. “You’ve invited Grimy for Christmas dinner?”

“Well, I was thinking of asking Val and Tony Wharrier, too, but they had other plans.” Backing off from my annoyance, I put on my most sympathetic face. “Lester is divorced, Dennis. I couldn’t stand the thought of him being alone today of all days and Val Wharrier won’t have him in the house.”

This did nothing to persuade my other half. “Do you know how much grimy can eat at one sitting? When he was in the army, the rest of the squad were on minimum rations because he’d already eaten everything else. And that was only for breakfast. His ex used to wear chain mail on her arms when she was dishing out his dinner. If she didn’t he’d have her forearm covered in salt, pepper, and ketchup and be nibbling on it like corn on the cob. He’s the only bloke I know who likes a mid-morning snack between snacks.” With a rueful shake of the head, he went on, “I’d better get me pork pies under lock and key. Better yet, I’ll put them in that old metal tool box in the shed and weld it shut.”

“Oh, do be quiet, Dennis. I don’t have time for your mental meanderings today.” I slid my tired brain into gear. “You thawed the turkey, didn’t you?”

“Turkey?”

“Yes, turkey. It’s that large roundish thing in the freezer. You remember. You dropped it on your foot at the supermarket and the security man asked you to mind your language.”

“Oh, that turkey. And it needed thawing, did it?”

I tutted and sensed my temper spooling up again. “I specifically asked you to take it out of the freezer yesterday and put it in the fridge. As I was leaving for the hairdressers.” Now I was really fired up. “You forgot, didn’t you? I suppose you were watching repeats of Top Gear on the TV were you?”

“No I was not... it was Bangers and Cash.”

“I despair. I utterly despair of you. You are a complete waste of space, time, effort and energy.”

“What’s the fuss? Shove it in the oven. It’ll thaw as its cooking.”

“Yes, and it’ll take forever. What are we going to do?”

He gave the matter a few seconds’ thought. “Simple.” He picked up my mobile phone and dialled. A few seconds later, he was through. “Grimy? Cappy... No, no, mate, no problem. We’re still expecting you for dinner, but if I were you, I’d put your new dentures in. Oh, and while I think on, you’d better bring a power saw with you. The meat’ll happen be a bit tough.”

THE END

The Author



David W Robinson retired from the rat race after the other rats objected to his participation, and he now lives with his long-suffering wife in sight of the Pennine Moors outside Manchester.

Best known as the creator of the light-hearted and ever-popular **Sanford 3rd Age Club Mysteries**, and in the same vein, **Mrs Capper's Casebook**. He also produces darker, more psychological crime thrillers as in the Feyer & Drake thrillers and occasional standalone titles.

He, produces his own videos, and can frequently be heard grumbling against the world on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/davidrobinsonwriter/> and has a YouTube channel at

<https://www.youtube.com/user/Dwrob96/videos>. For more information you can track him down at www.dwrob.com and if you want to sign up to my newsletter and pick up a #FREE book or two, you can find all the details at <https://dwrob.com/readers-club/>

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