

Baby G

King of the Hashers

a novelette by

Skylark

(London Hash House Harriers)

This nativity is unlike any story of Jesus Christ that you were ever taught at school. Bright lights appear in the night sky above East London. They herald the crash landing of a North Korean spy satellite in the district of Bethnal Green. On board is a deadly secret that could throw the world into political chaos. Kim Jong-un sends three of his best men to recover the secret, but a local 'running' club called the Hash House Harriers discovers the errant module. Can the hash unravel the secret and save the world from nuclear annihilation? More importantly, can Twinkle Toes save face by producing the best skit ever seen at a UK Nash Hash?

Content Warning

This work of fiction is based around a social organisation commonly known as the Hash House Harriers. The 'hash' does not typically conform to any form of political or religious correctness and neither does the content of this publication. Also, colourful language has been used where it has been felt appropriate. If you feel that you may be offended by such content then stop reading now, and instead go and sit down in front of Songs of Praise with a nice cup of tea.

As aforementioned this is a work entirely of fiction. All characters, with the exception of those already known within the public domain, are fictional and not intended to represent any one person.

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Many Thanks

Many thanks to all those who have sacrificed their time to review this work. It must be made clear though that any remaining mistakes, grammatical or otherwise, are entirely the responsibility of the author.

Prelude

Visualise, if you will, Theresa May addressing her first session in the Commons as Prime Minister whilst wearing tight BDSM latex and wielding a whip. Maybe with a tough dominatrix image she could have held onto the Tory majority. How about Prince Harry dressed as a Smurf? Hardly very newsworthy, unlike when he donned Nazi swastikas for that fancy dress party just two weeks before the holocaust memorial. For most of us mere mortals, what we choose to wear each morning isn't going to change the course of history, or even make the evening news. Or so we may think.

In 1987 a young lady with a flight to southern California chose a simple red dress for the journey. She was meeting a friend who had become involved in a zany social organisation called the Hash House¹ Harriers. "It's a drinking club with a running problem" she was most likely informed as she was whisked directly from the airport to Long Beach where a regular hash run was being held. One hasher, noting her gender and attire, urged that she "just wait in the truck" until her host returned from the run. With that goading she contumaciously ran the trail whilst still wearing that red dress.

The incident was not forgotten. A year later San Diego Hash House Harriers invited the 'lady in red' to attend its inaugural Red Dress Run. Hundreds turned up for the run, male and female, all sporting red dresses. It captured significant media attention and the red dress run became an annual event. The idea spread to other hash chapters, and at the 'lady in red's' insistence the red dress runs became fundraisers for local charities. Serious sums started to be raised, and red dress runs became a common feature of large-scale Hash House Harrier events.

¹ The Hash House was the nickname given to the restaurant where the club founders use to meet. It was famed for it's low quality monotonous fare, such as corned beef hash.

Friday

*first there was beer, and the beer was good
then there came Gispert, and he had disciples
and Gispert sayeth 'first we shall run, then we shall drink'
and so the world was good
but then angels came forth and took Gispert to a better bar*

*the word of Gispert was spread and the disciples ran and drank and made
merry
but the world was filled with much suffering and poor lager
and so a child was delivered unto the world*

Malcolm Smith had been an East London cabbie for nearly 20 years. He prided himself on always having one eye on the road, or on the pavement, or anywhere where he could spy a nice piece of totty to ogle. Bethnal Green Road, with its very conservatively dressed Muslim Bangladeshi community was rarely a good hunting ground. Malcolm scanned the pavement, then suddenly leant forwards in his cab seat for a better look. There, right there outside the halal butchers, a blur of red dress and a flash of worn trainers. Was she running for a bus? Malcolm slowed as he approached and hit the down button on his driver's side window.

"Awright dahlin?" he hollered through the open window as he gave a short sharp toot on the cab horn. The running figure slowed, turned, raised a hand and cheekily blew him a kiss. That had never happened before! Then Malcolm's eyes sprang wide open and his jaw dropped as shock realisation hit him.

"Cor blimey, that's a geezer!" he gasped, then slammed on the brakes and narrowly stopped short of rear-ending a police motorbike.

More runners in red dresses passed as the astonished cabbie was being asked to produce his driver's licence and other necessary documentation. A trail of chalk arrows led the hashers deeper into the parks, cemeteries and alleyways of ethnic Bethnal Green as a glorious August sunset descended behind the concrete tower blocks.

Museum Gardens is a quiet green sanctuary amongst East London's urban sprawl. A family of foxes and the occasional tramp call it home, but on this

balmy August evening it had more of a street party feel. Distant shouts of “on inn” announced the imminent arrival of more thirsty hashers, each one making a beeline for the drinks table. The beer kegs flowed and bottles of wine were popped open. Twinkle Toes¹ grabbed his first beer of the weekend and gratefully lowered himself into a camping chair. With a barrel of a 46-inch chest, shopping for a red dress had been a frustrating experience and had raised eyebrows in every charity shop that he had visited. The dress didn’t quite fit, and a ripping sound announced that sitting in it had been a bad idea. No matter. If that was the only thing to go wrong this weekend then that was fine. As the organising, or maybe, disorganising force behind the whole event, Twinkle Toes was looking forward to the first of many celebratory beers when the weekend was finally behind him. Even the event banner, hanging proudly behind him between two trees, had to be sent back to the printers for last minute corrections. To his shock, horror, and absolute outrage the banner had originally read ‘OK Nit Mash’. Ears must have bled on the other end of the phone until the printers had grovelingly agreed to send a replacement by this very morning. Corrections made and the banner now read, in bold black lettering on a stark white background:

**UK Nash Hash – Bethnal Green
Brought to you by WHORE H3
(We Have Only Run East)**

Twinkle Toes had smiled broadly when someone had proposed the name of their new hash chapter to him. It had fitted so well with other clever, and sometimes more than slightly rude hash chapter acronyms already in use. There was the Westerham And North Kent hash that covered the counties south east of London, and the Currently Unnamed North Thames monthly pub-crawl hash. Now there was the WHORE Hash House Harriers that filled a former gap in popular hashing territory in London. Then someone, who Twinkle now knew that he should never have listened to, had suggested that WHORE H3 take over this year’s UK Nash Hash². Twinkle Toes had jumped at the chance of hosting this event to promote his new hash chapter. It had

¹ Most hashers get given a nickname decided by their peers.

² A Nash Hash (national hash) is a regular hash gathering from across a nation.

seemed a good idea at the time, until he realised that he'd just inherited a whole mountain of problems of biblical proportions. Persistence had paid off, and after a significant amount of hard work and real ale they had almost 500 paid registrants for the main event and half of that number were attending the red dress run. Well, no major hiccups so far that Friday evening, and it seemed that nothing now but celestial intervention, or a visit from the police could derail the event. Twinkle's brow furrowed. They had secured permission to use the park hadn't they?

By the time that the sweepers had ambled casually through the park gate, one end of the park was a happy, mingling and chatting mass of red dresses. Baps circulated around and greeted old friends from across the kingdom and beyond. After all the hard work the event was coming together and he was grinning ear to ear. He was also collecting a lot of juicy material for the circle¹, such as Mojo who had apparently looked so fetching in his red dress that he had nearly caused a road accident. Baps glanced around. Twinkle Toes, the overly broad shouldered WHORE hash Grand Master was approaching in a dress that was barely able to cling on to his shoulders. Baps made a note. After a quick discussion it was decided to open the circle. Darkness had descended and there were many beers to be drunk. To a few loud shouts of "circle up" the pack started to gather in a rough circle before the drinks table as Baps, their RA², opened the proceedings.

"Well, it's got to be said, tonight's red dress run has got the Nash Hash weekend off to a fantastic start. What did you all think? Were there enough startled locals for you?"

The heckling began. Opinions were thrown to the fore and Baps patiently waited for the wave of noise to subside.

¹ A circle is a light hearted ceremony normally held after each hash in which 'charges' are brought against participants and beers are downed in response to these charges. This practice is very similar to other sporting clubs such as rugby or hockey.

² The RA, Religious Advisor, is the person who runs the circle and presents the charges. There is nothing religious about the hash, it's all tongue-in-cheek humor.

“I won’t begin with the hares¹, they can wait until a bit later. First let’s have all the members of the original Nash Hash mismanagement to the front please. I know there’s at least one of you.”

Big Jessie knew this was coming. As his hash name suggested he was large, Scottish and slightly effeminate. With a half smile, half grimace he stepped forwards and joined Baps before the drinks table. An assistant duly handed him a beer to down once the charge was laid forth and an appropriate, or more likely, an inappropriate song had been sung at him.

“So, as I understand it the Firth Of Fourth & Fife hash were originally organising this year’s Nash Hash?”

“That’s right,” affirmed Big Jessie.

“And can you tell us exactly what happened to your event?” pressed Baps. He was enjoying this, and felt just like being a high court prosecuting council, judge and jury all wrapped into one.

“Well, unfortunately we entrusted Errol with the job of Hash Cash².”

This prompted a round of groans from those who knew Errol.

“Would this be the same Errol the Absurd that use to be West London Hash Cash?”

“Yes, unfortunately.”

“The same Errol the Absurd who then proceeded to deposit the hash takings each week across the bar and liquidise them into his pint glass.”

“The very same.”

“So what did Errol do with the funds this time?”

“Well, our understanding is that all monies were safely funnelled into an offshore account on the Cayman Islands.”

“So where’s Errol now?”

“Right now, probably sipping a beer on a beach in the Cayman Islands.”

“While being tracked by Interpol and the fraud squad?” Baps quipped after waiting for the initial laughter to subside.

“Yes, we hope so.”

¹ Hash trails are based on the old British public school hare and hounds paper chase. The hare is the person that sets the trail.

² Hash clubs have running costs, mostly alcoholic. Money to cover these costs is collected at each meet by a person called the Hash Cash.

The charge was a good one to kick off with. With full gusto the pack sang a round of ‘why was he born so beautiful’ as Big Jessie downed the pint. When finished he held the empty vessel upturned above his head to show that it was done then returned to his place in the circle to watch and enjoy the next charge. Baps called forward Twinkle Toes. Stepping in to save the event was chargeable offence enough, but Baps had more. Twinkle could pretty much guess what was coming. For one thing, the UK Nash Hash was traditionally held on the August bank holiday weekend, but because he had taken over the event so late they couldn’t find an East London venue with availability for those dates. It had been just as well. The bank holiday gutter press had used headlines such as ‘Wot a Washout’ and ‘Noah Build Your Ark’. Now one weekend later the weather looked set to be perfect.

“Well done for taking over the event, and what an amazing territory East London is for a large scale hash event. Way out east we have the vast expanses of Epping Forest, or if you wanted to be much closer to central London we have globally iconic landmarks such as Tower Bridge, and a Lord Mayor’s office that looks more like an oversized glass testicle.” Baps paused for the expected round of laughter. “So why did you decide to hold such a prestigious event in the district of Bethnal Green of all places?”

“Well, the Museum of Childhood is just the other side of that wall” Twinkle Toes jabbed with his elbow. “So we felt that this suited most hasher’s mental age quite well.”

“And why oh’ why did you choose to employ that Romanian company to handle almost every aspect of this event?” continued Baps, coming to the main point of the charge. “So far they have mishandled the registrations, crashed the website, and convinced half of our American visitors that the London Underground is actually a political movement. Even worse, accommodation isn’t even included for this event, and it’s supposed to be held on the bank holiday weekend.”

“We didn’t feel that we had a high enough calibre of RA to organise the weather¹ for a bank holiday weekend, and we were right. Look what happened last weekend.”

¹ The RA is also responsible for organizing the weather. Failure normally results in a charge in the circle.

Baps pulled a face. Clearly Twinkle had that retort ready up his sleeve. He pressed on with the charge.

“Dealing with the venue management, the Romanians, has been a headache from the start. What have the Romanians ever done for us?”

“Well they gave the mismanagement all those free drinks in The Aqueduct bar and grill, remember” cheekily reminded Twinkle. “You seemed to enjoy that as I recall.”

“Oh yeah, yeah they gave us that. Yeah. That's true.”

“And I think the loos at the venue are very nice and clean” put in one of the harriets¹ from the circle.

“All right, I'll grant you that,” conceded Baps. “The Aqueduct and the sanitation are two things that the Romanians *have* done...”

“And they organised that trip to Rhodes for the main prize in our charity raffle tomorrow” was another shout from the circle.

“Well *yes obviously* the Rhodes trip, that goes without saying. But apart from The Aqueduct, the sanitation and the Rhodes...”

“And the wine they chose for this evening is really delicious,” insisted Last Tango to a chorus of agreement from many of the other harriets.

“Yes, OK” snapped Baps who was feeling control of the circle slipping from his fingers.

“And the venue even has a swimming pool.”

“All right all right, but apart from The Aqueduct, sanitation, Rhodes, the wine and the public baths, what *have* the Romanians done for us?”

“Brought peace” calmly asserted Twinkle Toes.

“Peace?” snapped Baps, his patience fraying to tatters. Twinkle Toes went on to explain.

“A big deal has been made about the closing skit² for the weekend. What's it going to be? Who's going to be in it? Lots of bickering and infighting between the collective London hashes. Well, after a very relaxing dip in the venue pool last weekend we think we've cracked it. WHORE Hash House Harriers will have something amazing to finish the weekend on. It will be a talking point

¹ A female hasher (harrier) is sometimes known as a harriet. We love our play on words.

² A skit is a short performance that normally get's performed in the evenings at large hash events.

for months to come. So, sorry Baps but your idea of drinking a beer through your underpants while still wearing them didn't quite hack it."

"Oh shut up," retorted Baps as the circle again exploded into laughter. He got the pack singing one of the ruder hash songs, of which there were very many to choose from, and watched as Twinkle Toes very ably downed the pint.

"And now I believe that we have a charge from the floor. Wonker."

A short, round, balding hasher clutching a personalised beer tankard stepped forwards. Many years ago he had been named Wally Wonker after what he had initially assumed to have been a very innocent comment. That was how many a hash name was conceived. Now most people just called him 'Wonker'. Baps stepped aside as Wonker proceeded with the charge.

"Can I have Mojo and Just Mary into the circle please?"

An attractive couple in their mid thirties stepped forwards.

"Now you two have travelled down from Walsingham just for the red dress run, is that right?"

The couple confirmed this.

"But you had originally bought regos¹ for the whole event?"

"Well I thought I had an, err, medical issue so we decided to sell them" delicately explained Just Mary, catching a glance from her husband and deciding not to let him handle the explanation.

"Well, after I took over registrations from the Romanians I found a rather interesting paper trail regarding your regos" explained Wonker as he pulled some paperwork out from deep within his red dress.

Baps rolled his eyes. Charges were best kept short and snappy or the pack would quickly lose interest and start chatting among themselves.

"Rego numbers 68 and 69 bought by one Mary Carpenter on behalf of Mojo and Just Mary on the 25th of December."

"That sounds about right," confirmed Mary, a little puzzled as to where this was going.

"Then sold to a couple of Bristol hashers several months later," Wonker pressed on.

"Yes" Just Mary cautiously replied. There was a sting in the tail of this story she was sure, but not for the life of her could she work out where.

¹ Rego is short for registration. Essentially it's a ticket to a hash event.

“But earlier you were telling me that you could have stayed for the main event after all.”

“Yes, she found out that she *didn't* have that medical condition after all” confirmed Mojo rather reproachfully.

“So you two are getting a train back later then as you don't have regos for the main event?”

Baps shook his head in disbelief. Idle chatter was spreading through the pack. Wonker was losing his audience. With some annoyance Just Mary confirmed her and her husband's travel plans. Now Wonker came to the punch line as he pulled more paperwork out from under his dress.

“Well, I have some news for you about that.” A short pause for dramatic effect had the chattering audience momentarily hushed.

“I have here rego numbers 70 and 71, also purchased on the 25th of December, but this time by one Joseph Carpenter. Hash name Mojo.”

“Oh I forgot about that,” blurted Mojo in startled surprise as his wife turned him a questioning glare.

“Well I thought you told *me* to get them” he retorted defensively.

“No, I said *I'll* buy the regos and *you* book the hotel.”

“Well that's cancelled as well.”

“You two really ought to start talking to each other,” observed Wonker as they were both handed beers and a suitable song was sung at them. The measures were unequal and Mojo's wife managed to finish her down down before him. Immediately the pack chorused “beaten by a woman, beaten by a woman”.

“That's the way I like it,” grinned Mojo as he stalked out of the circle. Before his wife could catch up with him he had made for some shady bushes by a wall and lifted the front of his dress. It was time to drain out some of the beer that he'd been enjoying that evening. Staring up at a cloudless night sky Mojo could hear Baps summoning the hares into the circle. Setting a trail always attracted a charge. Baps was asking the pack for their opinions of the trail. With the usual slant of irony the comments came thick and fast, ‘too long’, ‘too short’, ‘too many hills’, ‘not enough lecherous taxi drivers’. Baps was such a showman. Now by audience participation he had their full attention again.

“RA, I have a question” Mojo heard someone shout. There were some things that you never mistakenly say in a hash circle, and one of them was “I have a question”. Mojo closed his eyes and waited just over a second for the well-worn response from the pack.

How would
you like
my finger in your ear?

How would
you like
my finger in your ear?

Oh no
Not bloody likely
Not bloody likely
Not bloody likely – hay!

Why did they always sing that song when someone had a question? Mojo had never been able to find out. Even without looking he knew that everyone would be twirling around with his or her finger in the air. Knowing the hash the thinking behind that song was probably quite rude.

“What on Earth is that?” came the slightly delayed and rather anxious sounding question. The poser of the question was pointing up at the sky. All heads turned to look.

“It’s just a shooting star.”

“Are you sure?”

“It’s crossing the sky look.”

“It’s getting bloody close!”

“It’s coming straight at us!”

“Run for your lives!”

Mojo dropped his drink and pressed himself against the wall for protection as burning debris thudded into the ground behind him. The pack fled in disarray. Beers were dropped and hashers tripped over each other as a large piece of something smashed through the drinks table. Were they under attack? Where was Mary? What the Hell was going on?

Many thousands of miles away lived a hermit. The hermit was not Buddhist monk or a bearded ganga-man. The hermit was not even a former British prime minister licking his wounds after a disastrous referendum result. The hermit was a country. The dictator of that country was sat behind an overly large desk in front of an overly large flat screen television while nursing an overly large ego. A pile of stuffed dolls of rival world leaders lay scattered across his desk before him as he watched a news broadcast from the hated United States of America.

“Today Western leaders have again been facing down more threats from North Korean leader Kim Jong-un,” announced the anchorman. “A Whitehouse spokesman has confirmed that the threats from the rogue state’s nuclear arsenal could be exacerbated by a wave of cyber-attacks by North Korean hackers. Western businesses and government organisations have been advised to strengthen their cyber defences.”

Kim Jong-un bounced up and down in his oversized executive chair in glee. He grabbed his Donald Trump stuffie in one hand and started pounding it with an oversized stuffie in his own image.

“Bam! Bam! Bam! Bam!” Kim Jong-un enthusiastically shouted. Being a megalomaniac dictator was fun.

“And in breaking news” boomed the deep, authoritative American voice from the TV, turning Kim Jong-un’s attention from pulverising his Trump stuffie. “The UK security alert status is expected to be upped to super critical ‘oh no we’re in deep shit’ as it appears that a missile has just been launched at the capital.” The broadcast image changed from the serious face of the anchorman to footage of the London night sky with lights streaking across it.

“These images were taken just minutes ago of what our experts say could be an intercontinental missile. Right this moment we are contacting Westminster for a comment but initial reports that it was merely a meteor shower have been dismissed. We will bring you more as we get it.”

The news channel signature stamped its ‘up-to-the-minute’ scoop with a spinning graphic brazenly proclaiming ‘Fix News – bringing you the news the moment it happens’. The news flash had Kim Jong-un sitting bolt upright in his chair. For a moment he was motionless, Donald Trump spared any further

abuse. Then a single fat finger jabbed a button and a console whined open from his desk.

“Where’s my London cell? I want my London cell!” he bellowed, anger rising through his veins. His instincts were shouting that something had gone wrong, and if so then someone was going to feel some serious pain.

The living room of the East London flat was cramped, aged, but functional. Stacked upon the cheap MDF shelving and self-assemble worktops was an expensive array of advanced electronic equipment. A single black umbrella hung from a charity shop hat stand and a bowler hat lay discarded in a corner. The peeling tobacco tarnished wallpaper lacked visual embellishments, aside from a huge flat-screened TV.

“Dinner’s arrived,” announced a tall Asian man in a suit as he prodded the living-room door open with the toe of a polished black office shoe. His two companions, perched on the edge of a threadbare sofa, ignored his entrance. Both were staring intently at a laptop screen, their faces showing concentration and concern.

“Bong, there’s yours.”

An Asian man in branded sportswear silently took the large flat box and set it casually aside, the contents of the screen being far more important.

“Gook, yours.”

The third Asian eagerly ripped open the cardboard packaging, filling the room with the smell of high street fast food.

“How’s it going?” enquired the suited man, leaning over to peer at the screen. “Isn’t there supposed to be some sort of blip there? It made orbit didn’t it?”

“For a while,” Bong absently replied.

It’s good to be ready when your boss drops in for a surprise visit. The TV screen sprang to life. All three occupants of the flat glanced up, then were on their feet in an instant.

“Good evening Kim Jong-un” they all saluted.

“Greetings from your London team,” cheerfully acknowledged the suited man.

“We are the finest hackers that you have,” put in Bong in his trendy sportswear.

“Yes, that’s what worries me” Kim Jong-un retorted, his demeanour suggesting that this was not going to be an easy meeting.

“Dung, where’s my satellite?”

“I was just getting the latest status update from my team” replied the suited man, the temperature rising inside his crisp white shirt.

“Well, err, we seem to have hit a bit of a snag there Kim Jong-un” bravely began Bong, but was interrupted before he could deflect any of the impending manure storm.

“Snag, I don’t want snags. I want complete domination over all of my enemies’ computer systems. I want my cyber-attack satellite to be able to grab hold of their financial and communications systems by the short and curlies. I want to surreptitiously initiate communications that will cause their leadership and their peoples to make rash and unwise decisions such as electing dangerously unsuitable leaders and causing themselves considerable financial harm by opting out of lucrative trade communities.”

“But Kim Jong-un, they do this for themselves anyway” pointed out Dung.

“Yes, that’s the beauty of the plan. They won’t suspect that they’re being manipulated. So where’s my attack satellite?”

“Well...” began Bong cautiously. “We were just initiating the satellite positioning sequence when Gook here ordered pizzas.”

“Pizzas?” sharply retorted Kim Jong-un. Dung stood by awkwardly. As project manager he had responsibility over his team but as a technological infidel he had no idea what they were doing most of the time.

“Yes, I got pepperoni,” affirmed Bong, seeing an opportunity to deflect from the trend of the current conversation.

“And I got Hawaiian” Dung followed suit.

“And I got doggy nose” cheerfully added Gook.

“Doggy nose?” questioned Gook’s two colleagues.

“Yes, doggy nose. I can’t believe it, and in London of all places. I found an authentic Korean doggy nose pizza. Just like my old grandma used to make back home in Pyongyang.”

“Are you sure it’s doggy nose?” questioned Kim Jong-un, leaning forwards in his chair.

“Well, that’s what it says on the box,” reasoned Gook, holding up the packaging from which he’d been eating.

“That’s Dominos!” chorused his colleagues.

“So, do I have a satellite?” pressed Kim Jong-un, annoyed at having been side tracked.

“Well, there was a bit of a mix up when Gook ordered the pizzas,” explained Bong, trying to set the frame firmly around Gook for the backlash that was surely to come.

“Apart from doggy’s noses?”

“Yes,” continued Bong. “When Gook sent our GPS co-ordinates to the pizza company, they sort of err...”

“Got mixed up with the satellite positioning sequence” weakly explained Gook.

“So instead of geo-positioning the satellite over the Whitehouse...” Began Dung, then faltered as he saw Kim Jong-un’s jaw stiffen.

“It got sent directly to us,” completed Gook.

“So where’s my satellite now!” bellowed Kim Jong-un.

“This is a highly fluid situation which we have been monitoring closely and...” began Dung in a weak attempt to regain some control over the situation. Then realising he was blathering, quickly pushed his team back to the fore. “Bong, Gook, what is the current status of the satellite?”

“Well, it very much looks like it’s probably now with us here in East London.”

“In a hole in the ground.”

“With lots of smoke pouring out of it.”

All three North Koreans flinched as they watched the backlash unfold on the screen before them. Dung could sense one of Kim Jong-un’s tantrums was soon to erupt.

“I based you in London to add subterfuge to my cunning plan. Not to have you turn my satellite into pizza!”

“Don’t worry, we can recover the key components and put them in a spare satellite” Dung cut in quickly. It was a flyer, and he prayed that his team would back him up.

“Yeah the Terror Initiator’s got a tracking device on it, we’ll find it no problem” confirmed Gook. Dung let out a silent sigh of relief.

“And we’ll get you into orbit in no time” cheerfully added Bong.

“Terror Initiator?” questioned Kim Jong-un.

“Gook, the Terror Initiator’s your baby,” rebounded Dung, as if trying to affirm that he did indeed have a firm grasp on what his team were up to.

“Yes Kim Jong-un. It’s got all of your plans for world domination encoded into it. It’s totally crash proof. We’ll just install it in a backup satellite and maybe re-launch in a couple of weeks.

“So if anyone else finds it before you do then my plans are compromised?” reasoned Kim Jong-un in alarm.

“Oh no Kim Jong-un,” quickly explained Gook. “We’ve disguised the Terror Initiator so that if anyone else finds it, it will just look like a harmless, err, toy.”

“Well you’d better go and find it then Gook,” instructed Kim Jong-un. “All of you!”

“Yes Kim Jong-un” automatically affirmed Dung. Then he and his team stood stiffly to attention and saluted. Kim Jong-un was on his feet as well. This was not a good sign. He was hyperventilating as he leaned across his desk. His fists were clenched and his jaw quivered.

“I want my cyber-attack satellite! I want my cyber-attack satellite!” he bellowed. Instinctively the three Koreans flinched as their leader started hurling his stuffies at the screen.

“The police have arrived,” announced Mary as she returned from helping carry another pile of scattered beer cans back to the hash beer waggon. Pulsing blue lights from outside the park gates helped to add a sense of drama to the scene. By the grace of God none of the smouldering debris had managed to hit a single hasher. Mojo cast around for any more salvageable cans or bottles.

“They’re cordoning off the area and want everyone out. Twinkle Toes is talking to them now.”

“What do you think it was?” idly queried Mojo as he prodded a twisted piece of metal with his foot.

“They also said that nothing should be touched” sternly advised Mary. Mojo glanced across at his wife.

“If I knew you were so observant of authority I’d have bought a pair of handcuffs” he cheekily retorted.

“Maybe it was from an alien spacecraft,” Mary mused thoughtfully.

“Great, now we’re going to have lots of little green men running around.”

“Maybe I quite like little green men” smiled Mary, then bent down and shone the light from her smartphone under a bush in one last search for escapee beer cans.

“Whatever turns you on,” grinned Mojo as he moved in to smack his wife’s raised posterior.

“What’s this?”

“What’s what?” Mojo hesitated with his hand raised.

“There’s a little green man under here.”

“What? Yeah right, pull the other one, it’s got bells on.”

“I’m not pulling anything until we find somewhere to sleep tonight” retorted Mary as she straightened, holding something that looked much more like a little green man than runaway beer can. They both examined the object. Its arms and legs moved when pulled. Its face was definitely male, and curiously oriental. Mojo weighed it in his hand and found it unexpectedly heavy.

“A doll” mused Mary. “Wearing a sort of military green uniform.”

“Doesn’t it look a bit like that North Korean dictator, what’s he called? Kim Long-Hung or something.” Mojo’s brow creased as he tried to remember from news reports of rogue missile tests and un-neighbourly behaviour.

“I like him, he’s cute. I just can’t wait to show him off to everyone at Nash Hash.”

“The police said not to remove anything,” reminded Mojo, rolling his eyes at his wife’s soppiness.

“Well maybe they can just put me in handcuffs then. Look, it’s hardly going to be from that thing that came down. It’s probably from that museum of childhood that Twinkle Toes mentioned.”

Flashlights appeared at the park gate. The ambient streetlight framed two broad figures in blue uniforms. It was time to leave. Any more missing bottles of hash booze would have to become a welcome find for some tramp, or the Metropolitan Police forensics department.

“Hey, we can stay for the whole of Nash Hash now,” grinned Mojo as they made for the far exit.

“But we don’t have anywhere to sleep.”

“Oh we’ll find somewhere.”

“But it’s Nash Hash. The whole of Bethnal Green will be full to the rafters with hashers,” reasoned Mary.

“Come on, let’s get down Premium Inn and see if they have a room.”

“What, the one just down from the venue? No chance. It’s Nash Hash, remember.”

“Just stick that doll up your dress and pretend you’re pregnant. Maybe we can work the sympathy vote.”

Mary suddenly stopped walking and glared directly at her husband.

“Pregnant! Hah, chance would be a fine thing.”

“Oh come on Mary let’s not go through that again. You can hardly blame me,” Mojo whined, cursing himself for unwittingly stumbling into that subject again. Mary stalked off, holding the doll protectively.

“Hardly blame you? That wasn’t that doctor’s opinion” she retorted over her shoulder.

If you’re lucky, or you have the cash to flash, someone will open the door for you. More than likely the doorman will be wearing a suit, or a smartly liveried uniform. Across from the door you would expect to find a desk or a counter or some other such barrier between you and officialdom. Behind the desk, again budget dependant, you would also expect to find a broad beaming smile, an attentive nod, or at least some cursory acknowledgement of your presence after having to hang about for a bit.

Joseph and Mary Carpenter pushed their way through the smoked glass door, then stopped dead in surprise in the sparsely ornamented lobby. Stark white expressionless walls and harsh florescent strip lights greeted them. A few uncomfortable looking fixed furnishings and floor bolted plastic topped tables failed to add cheer to the area. The only other features seemed to be a couple of vending machines lined up next to a security door.

“This is Premium Inn isn’t it?” queried Mary, protectively holding the doll in place up her dress.

“Maybe we’ve walked into the building next door,” suggested Mojo. He was about to step back outside and check when he spotted the Premium Inn logo and corporate tag line ‘Good night sleep tight, don’t let our bed bugs bite’ hanging awkwardly above the vending machines opposite. Mary walked over to examine the machine next to the more familiar glass fronted snack vendor.

“Oh it’s one of those stupid self check-in machines,” exclaimed Mary. “So that’s why there’s no reception desk.”

“They automate everything nowadays. I swear one day they’ll automate sex,” grumbled Mojo as he joined his wife to stare at the forbidding looking machine.

“They already have.”

“Have they?” exclaimed Mojo in surprise.

“Only I need new batteries.”

“How does it work?”

“Well it vibrates of course.”

“No, this thing.”

“Oh, I think you press this” thoughtfully speculated Mary as she reached out to press a button. They both stepped back defensively as a prim female North American voice boomed from the machine.

“Hello and welcome to Auto-Inn, Premium Inn’s automated check-in facility. How may I help you this evening?”

“We would like a room please,” replied Mojo hopefully.

“I don’t think it does voice recognition. You have to operate it with these buttons” Mary pointed out.

“I’m sorry, but I’m not programmed with voice recognition. You have to press my buttons” Auto-Inn bossily instructed. Mojo and Mary looked at each other in puzzlement, shrugged then cautiously moved closer to the machine.

“Please insert your credit card or other method of payment,” Auto-Inn continued.

“But we don’t know if you have a room for us yet,” argued Mojo.

“It looks like we’ll just have to go along with whatever she says,” sighed Mary. Mojo fished out his credit card and reluctantly slipped it into the machine. In automated tedium Auto-Inn took the increasingly frustrated couple through its standard check-in script.

“Yes, just one room ... for two nights please ... yes there’s two of us in the room.”

“Will you be requiring baby facilities?”

“Oh yes, we’ve got that doll remember” sparked up Mary.

“Don’t, she’ll probably charge us more” rebuked Mojo as he just managed to knock his wife’s hand away from the ‘Yes’ button.

“Will you be requiring disabled facilities?”

“Oh yes, he’s getting on a bit now” replied Mary as she jabbed at a button, but quicker this time.

“I don’t believe you just did that!”

“Don’t panic, I selected ‘No’.”

“Will you be requiring our delicious, nutritious and very reasonably priced Premium Inn breakfast?”

“You mean the rather unimaginative cheese roll with a tired bit of lettuce served charmlessly from your automated vending machine?” corrected Mojo.

“No thanks.”

“Would madam be requiring a morning delivery of Cosmopolitan Magazine, Knitting Weekly or Good Housekeeping?”

“No she won’t,” gruffly responded Mojo and quickly hit a button.

“Would sir be requiring any gentleman’s magazines such as Men’s Health, Sports Illustrated or Family Handyman?”

“Or Penthouse, Razzle, or Asian Babes With Tits So Big They’ll Poke Your Eyes Out?” added Mojo then cheekily reached for the ‘Yes’ button, but his wife had already decided for him.

“No he won’t.”

There was a long pause from the machine. Mojo and Mary looked at each other wondering what other banal questions Auto-Inn would come up with next.

“Auto-Inn, Premium Inn’s automated check-in facility is processing your request.”

“Oh finally,” breathed Mojo. The long pause continued as whatever cogs were turning inside the machine proceeded to grind annoyingly slowly.

“Computer says no.”

“What? What do you mean no!” gasped Mojo in exasperation.

“No room at Premium Inn. Thank you for your interest in Premium Inn Group. Goodbye” primly responded Auto-Inn.

“Well, thanks for nothing!”

“Wait, let me try” suggested Mary as she stepped up to the machine. Not one to give up too easily she started pressing buttons. Her husband doubtfully looked on, but at least someone was doing something. With one final click of a button Mary took a half step back and Auto-Inn spoke for one last time. This time with much more cheer.

“Thank you, your card has been debited for the amount of one hundred and sixty nine pounds and sixty nine pence. We hope you enjoy your stay.” With a loud clunk a key dropped into a metal tray at the base of the machine. Mojo stepped forwards to scoop it up.

“How did you *do* that?” he questioned in wondrous surprise as if his wife had just pulled a white rabbit from a hat.

“Well I don’t know, I just...” began Mary but was quickly cut off as her husband examined, read, and took a surprised, exasperated and extremely annoyed moment to comprehend the room number printed on the key fob.

“I don’t believe it!”

“What? What is it? What’s wrong? Where’s she put us?” demanded Mary, trying to peer over at the key.

“Apparently,” he began whilst trying to keep his voice steady. “Apparently we’re sleeping in a bloody garage!”

Trying to keep something secret is one of the best ways to rouse curiosity. The forward curtains had been pulled across the stage in the venue’s main hall and speculation was rising as to what was happening behind. Some of the more boisterous hashers were tempted to take a peek.

“We’ve got to get this right. This is pretty much our last opportunity to practice this skit before we perform on Sunday,” bossed Twinkle Toes. The stage curtains twitched and in some annoyance Twinkle heaved himself out of his chair to yank them tighter together. A local hasher named Snot Rocket stood awkwardly to one side as props were being fussed into position. Right then he would rather have been on the other side of the stage curtain, in the venue’s main hall drinking at the free-flow bar with everyone else. Instead he

was wearing a hideous 1920s style blue and white striped bathing costume, and was waiting for Twinkle Toes to explain his supposedly amazing idea for their closing skit. The set-up didn't look too promising. Towards the front of the stage, parallel to the closed stage curtains a couple of bored looking harriets were holding up a white cotton sheet. This clearly was to block the audience's view of the bucket of water and the stack of crash mats that lay behind. Tucked away to the back of the stage a hosepipe lay unnoticed.

Twinkle had also roped in Doughnut as a stagehand. Doughnut was a nice enough guy, but entrusting him with any job was much like entrusting a drunken blind juggler with a box of eggs, or Boris Johnson with the job of Foreign Secretary. Twinkle ran through some instructions from his director's chair. Snot Rocket was dubious, but arguing would only serve to further delay his overdue appointment with the bar. Resignedly he hunched himself into a diving pose then lurched himself forwards to land face first onto the mats behind the sheet. A few moments after he landed, Doughnut flicked some water up over the sheet.

"Something like that?" queried Snot Rocket, looking up at Twinkle Toes.

"Yes, pretty much like that Snotty. Now Doughnut, you need to keep out of sight behind the sheet that our two lovely harriets are holding up. Your arse was sticking out. Oh and the timing has to be spot on. The idea's to make it look like Snotty has really just dived into a swimming pool."

"It's hardly original," pointed out a tall blonde harriet who'd been watching the rehearsal from the side lines. "I saw something like that at the Brussels Beer Odyssey a few years ago."

"Yes, but we're going to go further. That's where you come in Popsy, how high can you pee?"

"S'cuse me?" gaped Pop Tart as Twinkle's grin broadened.

"Right, after you and Snotty have done the diving into the swimming pool mime a few times, Snotty here is going to pee into the pool."

"Am I?" queried Snot Rocket in surprise.

"Yes, mime aiming it upwards and that's where the hosepipe comes in."

"Oh that's disgusting," retorted Pop Tart. Twinkle Toes ignored her.

“Doughnut, you’re our hosepipe man. We don’t want a full gush, and we don’t want to be flooding the whole stage so make sure the water ends up in the bucket...”

“Hold on” interrupted Snot Rocket. “Are you saying that Doughnut is going to be aiming that thing up between my legs?”

“Got it in one,” grinned Twinkle.

“But how’s anyone going to see anything when the sheet’s being held up at waist height?” argued Pop Tart.

“He’s going to aim it upwards,” explained Snot Rocket who had caught on a bit quicker.

“Got it in one,” enthused Twinkle Toes. “We’re going to have a ‘who can pee the highest’ competition. I’m going to be the next contender. I’ll assume the same position and, Doughnut, you’re going to open the hose up a bit more so my arc goes higher.”

“Twinkle still thinks he can organise a piss up,” giggled one of the harriets that was holding up the sheet. Twinkle Toes patiently waited for the brief spell of laughter to die down.

“Then Popsy here comes in with the challenge that she can pee even higher.”

“And exactly how am I supposed to manage that?” demanded Pop Tart as the curtains parted slightly and a curious face peeped through.

DJ Jazzy Jizz was setting up for two hours of quality, beat thumping disco classics when another round of uproarious laughter erupted from over near the bar.

“My name’s Tinkle Toes and I can’t organise a piss up in a brewery” came the high-pitched squeak as Wally Wonker exhaled another lung full of helium.

“Wonker, you’re supposed to be blowing up balloons with that,” chided Mary. Wonker looked thoughtfully at the canister.

“I could also stick it up my arse, that might be fun. Maybe I’ll save it for later,” he grinned. “So how’s the doll naming going?”

“Oh nothing decided yet.” Mary held up the doll before her, pleased at the attention that her new baby was getting. “Suggestions so far have been Matthew, Mark, Luke or err John, after Baps here.”

A thoughtful look passed across Wonker’s face.

“Baps, I’ve known you for years, but never actually found out how you got your hash name. You don’t seem to be too well endowed in the breast department if I may say so.”

“If Baps had a bra size it’d be negative,” laughed Mary, the red wine going down very nicely.

“Oh” smiled Baps, remembering his naming very clearly. ‘How did you get your hash name?’ type questions were great conversation pieces over a pint, and the story behind his was one worth airing.

“Well, after maybe one or two beers at my first hash Christmas party I decided to try to chat up some harriet by going up to her and cavorting around with my shirt pulled open and my nipples on show. I think I might have used the line ‘I’ll show you mine if you show me yours.’ Anyway, I didn’t manage to get anywhere with her, but there were enough witnesses that I couldn’t really avoid getting a naming out of it. My nerd name’s John so I got named ‘John the Baps Tease’. It pretty soon just got shortened to Baps.”

Mary was listening with interest. She was still to get a hash name and was slightly nervous. There were some very unbecoming names out there born of some very innocent comments said at the wrong time, in the wrong context or with the wrong person listening. She was about to ask Wonker how he got his when a shriek from over by the stage caused heads to turn. Two hashers, still in red dresses, jumped back from the join in the stage curtains as a splash of water caught one of them full in the face.

“What’s going on over there?” questioned Mojo as he joined his wife, pint in hand. He had changed into jeans and the official red dress run t-shirt. One of the hashers from the fracas approached the group and asked Wonker if he had any spare balloons.

“I just want to help blow them up,” came the overly innocent request. “With water” the mischievous hasher added under his breath. Wally Wonker handed him some balloons and these were hurriedly snatched off towards the restrooms. It looked like the evening was going to get rather more interesting.

“So, you two managed to find somewhere to stay tonight?” asked Baps.

“Premium Inn,” replied Mary without hesitation. Mojo gave his wife a sideways glance. How much had she been telling everyone?

“Yeah, once we got past that damn Auto-Inn machine” Mojo added.

“If Wonker here had designed it, he’d probably have her giving blow jobs,” laughed Baps. Wonker nodded thoughtfully and the other listening male hashers grinned at the idea.

“Look, it’s just not working” complained Pop Tart from flat on her back on the stage. She had got changed onto a skimpy yellow bikini that was now soaked at the crotch where Doughnut had badly aimed the hosepipe.

“All you’ve got to do is a head stand for maybe thirty seconds with your legs wide open” patiently instructed Twinkle Toes. “And Doughnut, you’ve got to get that hose aimed right or it won’t look realistic.”

Pop Tart crawled to her feet and looked down at the puddle of water on the stage.

“So far it just looks like I’ve peed myself,” she complained. Frustration was building, then the curtains were flicked open and two water bombs were launched between them. One exploded on the back of Doughnut’s head and Pop Tart got another cold shower.

“If they do that again...!” Pop Tart shrieked, her face shading red with anger.

The bandit attack on the stage hushed conversations for a moment. Twinkle Toes poked his head out from between the curtains and barked threats in the general direction of anyone who may have had more mischief in mind. It only served to stoke the fires. Mary took the opportunity to give her husband a gentle tug on the arm and led him off to somewhere a bit more private.

“So, did you get the stuff?” she urgently enquired, not wanting to sleep on a cold, hard oil splattered concrete floor that night.

“Yep, toiletries no problem and that local budget store was still open. I got us an air bed, some blankets, and they even threw in a little something else” Mojo grinned manically. Then bizarrely he squatted down and started bouncing around like a frog on acid as DJ Jazzy Jizz mixed in an ancient classic from Jive Bunny.

“Bounce, bounce, bounce, bounce” he grinned up at his bemused wife as his beer slopped all over the floor.

The water fighters had been busy recruiting. Now four of them were creeping towards the stage, missiles in hand. The two recruits clambered up to the curtains, one each side in a pincer movement. Stealthily, or as stealthily as anyone can be after five pints of craft beer, they crept up to the join in the curtain. On a nod they ripped the curtains open and two brightly coloured water bombs were hurled through from the mass of chattering hashers in the hall. Pop Tart had sensed the movement outside the curtains and was ready with the hosepipe. The gush caught the first assailant at chest height. The other scrambled for cover. The arc of water followed, catching everyone in its path with a cold soaking. Twinkle Toes jumped forwards and tried to wrestle the hosepipe from the incensed Pop Tart. The angle of the stream jerked to one side and caught DJ Jazzy Jizz full in the face as he was queuing up The Weather Girls. A spray of water splashed the decks, the amp, the mixer, and dribbled down onto the plug extensions. With a sobering electrical bang the Weather Girls fell silent, and so did the hall full of laughing and chattering hashers.

A three-piece suit and a black umbrella really isn't the ideal attire for a spot of breaking and entry. With a police cordon across all official entrances to Museum Gardens, the Koreans had had to find alternative access. Dung picked his way through a hole in the fence, careful not to catch any expensive threads.

"Well done Gook, I had a DVD I was going to watch this evening" grumbled Bong as he continued his tirade against Gook's incompetence with the pizza order. "I suppose you were going to sneak off to one of your sleazy clubs?"

Dung gingerly pushed away a strand of barbed wire. Savile Row doesn't mix well with barbed steel. He slipped out a cheap paperback from his breast pocket and wrapped it around the line of vicious points. One big push and he was through, but with a heart-rending rip. Was it the pants seat or a jacket flap or maybe a sleeve cuff? Dung felt all around then realised with a sigh of relief that all he had managed to do was rip most of the cover from his book.

"OK, we're in, but why isn't this place crawling with police?"

“It’s like any crime scene,” explained Bong. “The wooden tops only secure the area. They’re not authorised to enter the scene and risk contamination. They have to wait for forensics to arrive.”

“Wooden tops?”

“The bobbies on the beat,” patiently explained Bong. “You’ve got to get inside the culture of the society that you’re operating within. Understand their street language. Know how their social infrastructure works. Know what makes them tick, what makes them laugh.”

“I thought all you did was hack into stuff,” muttered Gook dismissively.

“Well we’d better get that module before *forensics* get here” cut in Dung, eager to cut off another round of bickering between his two subordinates.

Keeping to the shadows the three Koreans edged closer to the main body of the wreckage. As his two colleagues picked through the twisted metal, Gook fiddled with the tracking app on his smartphone. He had an earpiece connected to the phone’s AUX port to pick up audible clues.

“Are you sure this is from the satellite?” queried Dung, holding up a concave metallic object that looked more like a large wok.

“Yes, that’s a parabolic dish antenna,” confirmed Bong. “The whole apparatus has been disguised to avoid detection.”

“As a set of kitchen utensils?”

“Uh hu” Bong nodded.

“Great, so if the Americans did spot this thing geostationary two hundred miles above the Pentagon they would think ‘ah, that’s OK, nothing sinister, it’s just someone’s fitted kitchen suite that they’ve left carelessly hanging around in orbit’.”

“Yep”

“Well, what’s the Terror Initiator disguised as then?”

“A doll” replied Gook, distractedly glancing up from his phone.

“Do you have a fix on it? It doesn’t seem to be here. We need to find it before some child walks off with it and inadvertently initiates the terror sequence,” demanded Dung in increasing irritation.

“Well the thing is the tracking system’s working in Zulu time which is causing an operational conflict with the Android operating system on the detection

device” explained Gook in fluent techno-babble. Dung looked questioningly at Bong.

“Zulu time. It’s the military term for GMT” clarified Bong.

“Oh, Gook Maybe Time. Gook, we’ve got to find that doll, the Attack Initiator, before someone else does.”

“The signal did originate from here but there’s a lag,” explained Gook. “So I’m trying to amplify the rebound by piggybacking it on a popular entertainment channel.”

Gook continued to stare intently at the smartphone. Dung was having none of it. He strode over to Gook and yanked the earpiece cable from the phone port. The smartphone speakers kicked in and the sounds of rampant sex were emitted into the night.

“Really Gook?” came Dung’s disapproving, hands on hips, rebuke. No matter, Gook now had his signal fix.

“It’s this way.”

“So how did Wonker get his hash name?” queried Mary to Mojo’s back as he luxuriated in a long, exuberant pee against a wall of the Premium Inn car park.

“Oh, Wally Wonker. That’s one smart guy. He’s an IT contractor. Really smart guy” Mojo repeated. “Works on some really high profile systems. Been out to Saudi on oil projects, done a load of stuff in defence that he’s not allowed to talk about. That’s the great thing about Wonker. He just seems like a regular, really nice guy who likes a pint and a laugh. He never brags about this and that, and well that’s the great thing about the hash in general. It’s a great leveller, no one get’s pretentious because then they just become a target for getting slapped back down by some RA” blathered Mojo as he steadied himself with one hand braced against the wall before him.

“But why’s he called Wally Wonker?” Mary pressed again. She also had to steady herself against a wall. It had been a good evening.

“Oh, that. Just an innocent comment really. Seb, Sebastian, that’s his real name, once commented that in the office he’s never seen without a cup of coffee in his hand and in the pub he’s never seen without a pint in his hand.”

“And...” Mary had to prompt again.

“Ah yes, well have you ever read The Dilbert Principal or seen any of the cartoon strips.”

“Oh yeah, they’re funny.”

“Well there’s this short balding character called Wally who hardly does anything except walk around with a cup of coffee trying to be as unproductive as possible. Well directly Seb mentioned the coffee thing he basically walked into that name, being short and balding as well.”

“But what about the Wonker bit?”

“Ah, well just calling him Wally didn’t quite seem to quite fit. Then someone remembered having an entire conversation with him about one client site where they gave you chocolate sprinkles for your coffee, so we went with the chocolate angle and called him Wally Wonker.”

“He’s cute. I like him. He makes me laugh” dreamily commented Mary.

“Does he have a significant other?”

Mojo looked around sharply as he zipped himself up.

“Oh I don’t fancy him or anything, I’ve got you” quickly added Mary as she hooked an arm around her husband. “Just curious, that’s all.”

“Oh he did have some lass from Chelsea once” explained Mojo as they walked arm in arm, partly in loving union, partly to prop each other up. “She came along to a hash once, after I’d moved up to Walsingham so I only got to hear about this. But it seems that the hash really wasn’t her scene so she gave Seb, Wonker, an ultimatum. It’s either me or the hash.”

“And...” prompted Mary.

“Well you saw him this evening didn’t you?”

“Oh, so he lost her?”

“Sadly yes, but he loves the hash and trying to make him give it up was a bit mean” mused Mojo. “The hash isn’t for everyone, so maybe they’re better off apart.”

“There’s some mean names out there,” commented Mary after a thoughtful pause, mindful that she was yet to be named.

“Yes, you need a sense of humour,” agreed Mojo. “You need to be able to laugh at yourself.”

“Your one’s OK,” Mary gave her husband’s arm a loving squeeze.

“Yeah” laughed Mojo. “Just because I’m called Joseph and use to do a bit of gardening for extra money.”

For the last few meters they walked in silence through the bare concrete subterranea of the Premium Inn parking area.

“Ah home sweet home,” sighed Mary as they arrived at garage number six. Mojo unlocked the roll-up door and they ducked inside. Apart from Mojo’s purchases from earlier, a spare tyre and a shelf loaded with an empty bottle of engine oil and a bottle of antifreeze were the only furnishings. It was time to make the place more homely. Mary dug out the airbed and set about inflating it.

“So what’s the mystery item they threw in?”

“Oh yes” grinned Mojo and pulled a long plastic stick from under the blankets. It had a handle and footrests and a large spring at the bottom. Mojo mounted it, can of beer still in hand, and started bouncing around the garage.

“Oh, a pogo stick,” laughed Mary. “I thought they went out with the Rubik’s Cube.”

“That’s probably why they were being giving away,” agreed Mojo as he merrily bounced his way around their concrete and steel love nest.

“So *you* get to pump your stick while *I’m* lumbered with the blow job.”

“Sounds good to me,” replied Mojo. “You always do say to look on the bright side. This place stinks of petrol. We can only lock the roller door from the outside and we have to go to reception to use the facilities, but other than that this place is just perfect. We have a light and a spare tyre over there and a bottle of antifreeze should we run out of beer, and I get to pump my stick” Mojo laughed and fell on the airbed just as Mary was tightening the plastic plug.

“Yes, isn’t it just so delightful?” enthused Mary in *merlot* enhanced euphoria. She picked up the doll and did a little twirl.

“No shower, no bathroom facilities or running water or even any bleedin’ windows” grumbled Mojo from the airbed behind her.

“Oh but we can pretend” laughed Mary as she gleefully ran to the fixed shelving. “This could be our fully-stocked minibar with crystal decanters and

only the finest champagne.” Mary twirled around and skipped to the spare tyre.

“And this could be the en-suite Jacuzzi with massage jets that get you right where you want them” she squealed in merriment as she shoved the tyre with her foot towards the end of the airbed. Twirling again she ran to stand before the closed garage door with arms outstretched in ‘lets pretend’ wonderment. “And just look at the magnificent view from our luxurious penthouse honeymoon suite where we could hold hands and look down upon the poor, sad, pathetic little people on the street below who could only dream of such luxury. And we could make wild, passionate love on our...” Mary span to face the airbed.

“...magnificent four poster bed.” Her voice tailed off as she observed the recumbent, snoring lump of her husband stretched out on the bed.

“Oh, he’s asleep,” sighed Mary. “Well I’ve still got you,” she picked up the doll and held it out before her.

“Let’s find you a cot,” Mary fussed as she folded a blanket into the spare tyre and gently placed the doll into the warm folds. Sitting down on the edge of the bed Mary took a moment to appraise her new son.

“That’s a very strange outfit you’re wearing baby,” Mary pondered as she pulled back the blanket for a closer look. “It makes you look very military, like a soldier. Oh I do like a man in uniform.” Mary fussed with the doll’s clothing, straightening creases and smoothing him down with motherly attention.

“Our founder was a soldier,” she soothed after a thoughtful pause. “Well actually he was an accountant but let’s not hold that against him. He was in the reserves and fought for his king and country. Then the Japanese blew him to bits in 1942. Very brave man. A man of character and substance, not like that lump over there” she jerked a thumb at the snoring mass behind her.

“Will you grow up to be a big, strong man like our founder?” Mary smiled. “Albert Ignacio Gispert his name was, or ‘G’ to his friends. That was his hash name” Mary paused as a thought struck her.

“I know, I shall name you after him. How about that then? You can be Baby G.” Mary leaned closer and ticked Baby G under his chin.

“Hello baby G, do you need feeding? I’ll see if I have some milk for you.” Mary loosened her dress and managed to wriggle free a single breast. Picking up the doll she pressed his plastic mouth against her bare nipple and closed her eyes in maternal happiness.

Mary’s eyes flicked open with a start as the garage door suddenly rattled upwards. Hastily she tucked herself away then unsteadily stood to confront the intruders. Before her in doorway stood three oriental looking men. One of them, the tall one, looked as if he’d just stepped out of a business meeting. Mojo awakened with a grunt.

“Who are you? Hey, you can’t just barge in here!” demanded Mary as Gook breathed out of the corner of his mouth “there’s the doll”.

“Oh sorry,” quickly stepped in Dung with an apology as Mojo sat up and rubbed his eyes, then reached for a bottle of water that wasn’t there.

“We were just looking for something,” explained Bong, his eyes unwavering from the doll.

“Well it’s not in here, whatever it is, so I think you’d better leave” Mojo managed between parched lips.

“Now!” his wife backed him up as the intruders showed no signs of movement.

Dung hesitated. Their prize was just a few feet away. “Hey, is that your baby?” he smiled, keeping his voice friendly. Diplomacy might just win this one.

“Oh this is Baby G,” Mary’s voice softened. “Isn’t he lovely?”

“Baby G?” questioned Mojo, trying to get some beer bamboozled brain cells to provide some sort of vague recollection of what had happened since he’d left the venue.

“Is he yours?” asked Bong as sweetly as he could.

“Of course he is” hissed Mary, clutching Baby G defensively to her chest. “Oh that limp dick couldn’t manage anything like that. God came down from heaven in a fiery ball of light and gave him to me.”

“She’s obviously drunk,” murmured Dung to his two subordinates with his hand hovering over his mouth. “Let’s just go along with whatever she says.”

“You seem to be still here,” growled Mojo as he awkwardly clambered up off the airbed. Dung did some fast thinking, and hit upon a desperate ploy.

“We’ve brought gifts for baby G,” he proudly proclaimed, then turned to his companions for support.

“Haven’t we?”

Mojo was taking an unsteady step forwards as the other two Asian men were nodding in support of the guy in the suit.

“Here, I have, err, a gold membership card for Stringfellows down in Soho.” Gook hurriedly fished a card from his wallet and thrust it at Mojo.

“Hardly appropriate” breathed Dung, hoping that the couple who appeared to be drunken vagrants could be easily hoodwinked into handing over the doll. Indications so far were to the contrary.

“Err, I have a DVD of Frank Skinner’s camping holiday summer special” offered Bong, handing over his evenings intended entertainment. Mojo dubiously took the DVD and turned it over in his hand. He had never even heard of a DVD series from the ageing British comedian.

“Yeah, and I have a copy of Murder on the Orient Express.” Dung dug the paperback from his inside jacket pocket.

“But most of the cover’s torn” protested Mojo as he examined the book. “You can only see the first three letters of the title.”

“Well the rest of the book’s OK,” reasoned Dung with a sinking feeling that all was not going well. Mojo had had enough. He was tired, his head had started hurting, and his wife had developed an emotional attachment to a plastic doll and had now, apparently, given it a sappy name. He stepped aggressively forwards. The three Koreans took a defensive step back.

“Look, we don’t want your gold,” Mojo thrust the membership card back at the geeky looking short guy. “We don’t want your Frank In Tents,” Mojo thrust back the seriously un-funny DVD. “And we certainly don’t want your Mur’!” yelled Mojo as he hurled back the paperback and with an infernal rattle yanked down the roller door between himself and the startled intruders.

Saturday

*the disciples gratefully received the child from the heavens
and there was much rejoicing and merriment*

*but dark strangers from distant lands sought to take the child
for they knew the child's greatness
and the child could do them great harm*

The partying of the night before had caused quite a few headaches, and at least one of those headaches was still on going. Twinkle Toes held his head in his hands as the rest of his event mismanagement committee made unhelpful comments.

“Well, you were holding the hose when it hit the electrics” pointed out Doughnut.

“I was trying to wrestle it from Pop Tart” retorted Twinkle Toes, lifting his head. “Baps, you’ve had another word with the Romanians. Are they going to charge us for the damage?”

“I would,” put in Zebedee. Twinkle Toes held up one large, craggy hand.

“Let the man speak,” he demanded.

“Well, I tried to pour oil on troubled waters,” quipped Baps, believing that there was always a room for a spot of humour.

“More liquids being splashed about is the last thing we need.”

“Right, and I had to assure them that no more water would be splashed about anywhere in the venue, apart from the pool of course.”

“I know,” groaned Twinkle. “That’s effectively killed off our closing skit.”

“I could still do that *drinking a pint through my underpants while still wearing them* trick” Baps brightly pointed out.

“No!” quickly cut in Twinkle Toes. “Look, what about the damage?”

“They’re waiting to hear back from the DJ. That guy was a seriously unhappy bunny last night.”

“I think it’s safe to assume that a large bill will be coming our way” pointed out Wally Wonker, trying to add a constructive comment to the general grumbling.

“Do we have much stretch in the budget?” asked Zebedee.

Twinkle Toes gave a brief convulsive laugh. He need say no more. Everyone knew that rescuing the event had been a financial minefield.

“We could sell some more regos,” suggested Doughnut optimistically. That comment didn’t even qualify for a laugh. The event had already begun.

Something, or rather someone, caught Bap’s attention. A good RA has an eye for the unusual, especially a guy carrying an umbrella on a day that was forecast to be almost cloudless and with the mercury well into the thirties.

Baps also took particular note of the guy’s feet. He was wearing a sparkly new pair of branded trainers. They were so new that they almost squeaked as he strolled casually through the venue’s main hall. Baps slowly cast his gaze upwards. He could see no hash insignia anywhere on the guy’s casualwear, and there was certainly no sign of a distinctively coloured wrist band to show that he was a paid-up participant of the event through whose venue he had chosen to wander. The intruder stopped to chat to a couple of W&NK hashers and they pointed him in the direction of the huddled event mismanagement. The stranger turned and headed towards them.

“Well done for getting Dung to ditch that suit,” praised Gook as he loitered with Bong outside the building to which they had trailed the two garage vagrants.

“Yeah, we can’t have him sticking out like a sore thumb on this operation,” replied Bong as he watched the milling noisy crowd that was wandering in and out of the building. “The problem with Dung is that he just doesn’t stop to understand the whole picture. He focuses on one fragment even if the rest of the puzzle doesn’t fit. He did some research before he came out here into what English gentlemen wear. Trouble is he found a load of images from the 1920’s. He looked a right plumb when he turned up at Heathrow Airport in a bowler hat and carrying an umbrella.”

“At least he got rid of the hat pretty quick, but he just won’t let go of that damn umbrella,” observed Gook.

“He just doesn’t trust British weather,” explained Bong as he glanced up at the warm blue August sky. Their conversation lapsed into silence as the two Koreans watched the comings and goings, trying to understand the people that now unwittingly had possession of the Attack Initiator. Bong glanced at

his watch. It wasn't even ten in the morning, yet more than a handful seemed to be enjoying a beer. He strained to read the printing on the wide-awake t-shirts that all of them seemed to be wearing. One word seemed to dominate.

"Hash. That's short for hashish isn't it?" queried Gook.

"Yes, and a lot of them have 'WHORE' printed on their shirts. Prostitution do you think?"

"Well, that one over there seems to be called 'Rear Entry'. Is that a sales pitch?"

Dung tried to piece together the bigger picture. Drugs and prostitution yes, but sleeping in a garage? That part didn't quite fit. Maybe that couple were lying low, trying to avoid detection until they could re-join their cell.

"Can you hack into the doll?" suddenly asked Gook, interrupting Bong's train of thought. Bong weighed up the question.

"Not with all the interfaces locked down," he admitted. "Did you build in functionality to open a port?"

"Yes" confirmed Gook, "but you have to physically connect to the doll first".

"And that's the rub" Bong pointed out. "But being a top *keyser*, if a Wi-Fi port was to be opened I would be in faster than you can blink".

"Keyser?" questioned Gook.

"Oh, all the top hackers aspire after the famous hacker Keyser Söze."

"Never heard of him," frowned Gook.

"Exactly. It's no good being a top hacker if everyone knows who you are, you'd get caught. It's a nickname of course. Keyser named himself after a character in a Hollywood film. Now if you're in the upper echelons of the hacking world, like I am, then you're a *keyser*."

Gook paused thoughtfully. It all sounded like pretentious bullshit.

"Right" Gook began. "I'm lead developer. Dung is Project Manager. But I've never found out what your job title actually is."

"Oh, I'm a Penetration and Resource Infiltration and Compromisation Keyser" proudly explained Bong.

As they observed the chattering mass of hashers congregating outside the venue, the watchers were being watched. There were predators about, and fresh meat had been spotted. Meat sufficiently fresh that the girly chatter between three older harriets trailed off as each one considered the prospects

of moving in for a kill. The carnivores edged a little closer. Opinions were swapped and eyelashes started subconsciously fluttering in the general direction of the two Koreans. One of the predators brazenly stepped forwards. Glancing over at her wide-eyed companions she cheekily mouthed that she might be having herself a Chinese tonight. Poised for the kill the generously proportioned cougar moved to within striking distance, then reluctantly slunk off as her attack plan was interrupted by the approach of a third Asian man.

Dung was looking serious. This was not a good sign, and why had he changed his t-shirt? Bong and Gook also noted that he was carrying two more similar t-shirts and a small pile of wristbands.

“OK, put these on,” instructed Dung as he handed out the items.

“So who *are* these people?” asked Bong as he dubiously held up a t-shirt.

“Right, news isn’t good, but I’ve got us a way in” began Dung. “That couple that have the doll, they’re part of a group that call themselves the Hash House Harriers.”

“Hash House Harriers?” questioned Bong.

“Yes, clearly they have links to the drugs trade, specifically couriering and maybe peddling it. There are several hundred of them all here on some sort of convention.”

“Wow, not people to be trifled with then,” breathed Gook in awe.

“Yes, very nasty. It seems that running hash is a big part of their operation. I saw quite a few kilos of a white powder being very openly distributed.

“And they’re getting away with this in broad daylight?”

“It seems to be a bit of a training camp as well. They all meet up to practice running away from the police. One of them, some guy calling himself Zebedee, was telling me about the trails they set for each other. They run through alleyways, brambles, thick vegetation, anything to avoid capture.

“Zebedee?”

“Yes, they all have these nicknames to avoid incriminating each other.”

“So how do we get the doll, the Terror Initiator?” questioned Gook.

“I’ve got us all rego’s.”

“Rego’s?”

“Yes, we’re joining their convention. It’s the only way of getting inside their operation so that we can get the doll back before someone decodes it or initiates the terror sequence.”

“So were infiltrating them?”

“Yes, I’ve told them we’re from their South Korea operation. Apparently they have cells world wide.”

“So what do we do now?” queried Gook as he struggled with the wristband.

“Just wait here, we’re on one of their training runs. And remember, these are hardened drugs lords so try to fit in and use the appropriate street talk” grimly instructed Dung, his voice low and deadly serious. The other two Koreans glanced nervously about, then almost jumped as a cheerful voice greeted them.

“Hi, you must be the guys that just joined us. Lucky we had some spare rego’s for sale” grinned Zebedee. “So, you’re from Seoul Hash?”

“Yeah, we got sole man” quickly agreed Bong and raised two fingers in the form of the hippy peace symbol. Dung rolled his eyes.

“Hey, I like you guys,” laughed Zebedee. “Are you ready to have your balls busted?”

The three Koreans looked at each other in alarm, then realised that a large group was forming around them. Dung’s sphincter tightened, they were now surrounded and outnumbered. Then he noticed the guy from the garage. He looked even taller than he did last night. He was broad, athletic, powerfully built, and he was carrying the doll. Dungs eyes locked on the doll, then he realised that the garage man had spotted him. The man’s eyes narrowed and jaw tightened. Eyes met, and Dung tried to assume the friendly smile of someone greeting an old acquaintance.

“OK, form a circle,” yelled Zebedee, breaking the tension that had developed in that one brief look. A roughly circular area formed around the ballbuster trail’s lead hare. Zebedee patiently waited, a plastic carrier bag of flour in one hand and a strip of plasterboard¹ clutched in the other. Two months of hard work had brought him to this point. The trail had been thoroughly *reccied*, reconsidered and refined multiple times, and the hand picked co-hares stood

¹ An effective substitute for chalk.

at the ready. Now it was time to hit the play button and see the whole trail unfold like a line of falling dominos.

“Welcome to the Bethnal Green UK Nash Hash ballbuster trail” loudly greeted Zebedee to cheers from the pack.

“Now the hash has always been non-competitive, and a ballbuster should simply be a longer version of a standard hash trail for those who want to work up a bit more of a thirst for their après-beers. A ballbuster is not meant to be a military-style mud run designed to grind you to your knees. It is not meant to be an obstacle course of barbed wire and Viet-Cong infested swamps that leaves you fearing for your lives” began Zebedee, then paused for dramatic effect. “Unfortunately, no one told your haring committee this.” Zebedee smiled as his punch line prompted the expected round of nervous laughter.

“But we’re not all complete bastards” continued Zebedee, then paused again.

“OK, we *are* all complete bastards, but we do have a sweeper. Mojo here will be sweeping up all the scrag ends that should have joined the pub-crawl trail. And, for those that don’t know, it seems that he and Just Mary were rather busy last night. They now have a little baby boy!”

The assembled hashers cheered again. Mary and Mojo’s new arrival was not news to most, and their lack of success at producing a real offspring had already filtered through the hash rumour mill.

“Everyone say hello to Baby G our new mascot,” hollered Zebedee, enjoying the showmanship. “Let’s have a high five for Baby G.”

Mojo made his way around the encircling hashers, holding Baby G high so that everyone could place a hand on the doll. Without any real plan on how the future may unfold, Bong tried to make a grab for it.

“On on is that way!” bellowed Zebedee with one elbow jabbed in the direction of the first of very many chalk arrows and blobs of flour. The excited mass of hashers made off in the indicated direction, knocking Bong’s hand away from the doll. The Bethnal Green UK Nash Hash ballbuster run had begun.

Alfred Thistlethwaite was a ‘pillar of the community’. That’s what the local rag had called him, a ‘pillar of the community’. He muttered that to himself now as, with some irritation, he aimed another jet of water across the crazy paving inside the Gasworks Lane Community Garden. Out of all the founder

members that had transformed the former rubble heap into a place of floral beauty and thoughtful relaxation, it was he who opened up, tended to the weeding and watering, picked up the infernal litter, and locked up at the end of the day. It was his sanctuary. A sanctuary he was more than happy to share with quiet, respectable folk who made no noise and took their litter home. Now a bunch of infernal kids had been in again. Angrily he scrubbed a wet broom at a chalked arrow on a flagstone. He had heard them earlier from his home two doors down, screaming and shouting they were. 'Onion, onion', that's what they were shouting. Utterly ridiculous! This was a community garden. He grew flowers to make people happy. This was not a bleedin' allotment! "Onions my foot" he muttered to himself.

There were a couple of arrows outside the gate. They could stay there. Outside the gate was not the jurisdiction of Alfred Thistlethwaite, 'pillar of the community'. That was council. He paid his taxes. They could deal with anything outside the gate, and if they didn't then he would damn well write to his MP. Again. Inside a line of arrows had run to his prize ornamental fishpond. The fishpond was the star attraction of the Gasworks Lane Community Garden. In a former life it had been a Jacuzzi in some top West End hotel. A founder member had known someone involved in the renovation. It's once gleaming white plastic had withered under sun and seasons and layers of photosynthesis, but it's murky depths still held goldfish, water lilies and a yellow plastic fish that some child had brought and forgotten. Alfred tottered off to fetch his sandwiches, previously neglected on the edge of the sundial. Returning, he thoughtfully bit into a corner of the two slices of succulent white bread, which sandwiched an exquisite spread of butter and juicy cold baked beans. Simple pleasures. Alfred grinned as he remembered his wife, Marge, telling him that he would never be able to feed himself when she was gone. Then his jaw set square and his gaze hardened at what he spotted on the far side of the fishpond.

So that's how the kids had got in, or got out. Alfred absently set the sandwich aside on the edge of the fishpond and reached across to pull the gap in the chicken-wire fence closed. It was a long stretch. Alfred strained as he caught hold of one hanging curtain of chicken wire. His leg quivered and knee nearly buckled as with a grunt he tried to pull the errant fencing across the gap. It

was too much for his taught abdominal muscles and stretched colon. With a clearly audible escape of wind Alfred's body readjusted itself. Alfred carefully backed away from the fence along the edge of the Jacuzzi fishpond, then leaned on its edge and chuckled to himself. That would be the beans. He remembered putting the beans on the hob. The hob, he remembered the hob. The gas, did he turn the gas off? Alfred froze in shock realisation. The gas, had he turned the gas off? He could smell gas. He must have left it on. Alfred hurriedly tottered towards the gate, mind filled with the horrors of a gas explosion, and how was he going to stop those infernal kids getting through that fence. Barbed wire? Razor wire? Plant some *triffids* along the back of the pond? Alfred smiled at that one. Maybe put a piranha in the pond, or even an alligator. Alfred shuffled along the pavement to his home two doors down. Behind him three bedraggled figures wearily approached the wrought iron gate, then after studying the pavement for a moment they pushed their way through.

Slightly breathless, Alfred leaned on his garden gate and stared blankly at his front door. The peeling red paintwork was about a decade overdue for a new coat. Marge was always reminding him about that, right up until the end. Alfred's brow furrowed. Why was he here? He was Alfred Thistlethwaite, 'pillar of the community', and his place was in the community garden. It must be closing time, that's what it was. Did he lock up? Alfred patted the pockets of his beige gardening trousers. The large metal lump of the padlock told him that he hadn't. Those infernal kids would be getting in again, causing all sorts of havoc with his chrysanthemums. Alfred pulled out the padlock and shuffled back to the gate of the Gasworks Lane Community Gardens.

Dung wearily raised a hand as he slumped gasping on a garden bench. "Just let me rest" was his only plea as his subordinates returned to say that they couldn't find trail anywhere in the garden.

"It must be another one of those false trails," surmised Gook as Bong tried to urge the exhausted Dung to his feet.

"Just give me a moment," pleaded Dung as sweat rolled down his face. "Just give me a moment."

Equally glad of a rest, Gook sat down on the other side of the bench while Bong leaned nonchalantly against a sundial and looked on at the pair with some amusement.

“So how come you’re so much fitter?” demanded Dung after he’d got his breath back. Bong was only too happy to answer.

“Squash. When I’m in the court it’s high intensity, high impact, total control of the ball.”

Dung looked suitably impressed and Bong was eager to press the point, but without appearing to be bragging. He continued with assumed modesty and a dismissive flourish of his hand. “But now I’m in one of the top clubs in London, all the other members make my skills look rather *ordinaire*.”

Gook could smell pretentious bullshit again, and was having none of it.

“So you’re a Squash Intense Control Keyser *Ordinaire*,” he suggested with a similarly dismissive hand flourish. Bong kept his expression passive, refusing to rise to the bait.

“So how about you?” demanded Dung, turning to Gook. “You were keeping up better than I was.”

“Oh I’m a high intensity gamer and coder. When you’re hammering keys as fast as I am it really burns the calories,” explained Gook with an assertive nod.

“I can imagine that must be great exercise for the wrist,” snarled Bong in a return volley. The conversation lapsed into silence with both opponents out of ammunition, for now.

“Those hashers are complete lunatics,” commented Dung. Bong and Gook solemnly nodded.

“Especially that Zebedee. He had us pulling ourselves across that canal on a raft!”

“Then ten minutes later he had us crossing back over on a zip wire!”

“Then there’s that shopping arcade that he took the trail into. That wasn’t so bad but did we really have to run right through Santa’s Grotto? That little girl wouldn’t stop crying.”

“Yeah, we need to watch our backs with these hashers. They’d slit your throat soon as look at you” warned Dung.

“Yeah, must be all that hash they do. Makes ‘em crazy.”

“Why do they celebrate Christmas in August in this country anyway?” suddenly asked Dung. Both Bong and Gook shook their heads in bewilderment.

“Strange people. Their minds are really screwed up and Kim Jong-un hasn’t even initiated the terror sequence yet,” observed Bong, sounding almost sorry for the people that his country was working against.

“Right,” asserted Dung, suddenly standing up. “We’d better get back on trail then and get our hands on that doll. If there’s no trail in here then it must continue on past the gate.”

With renewed energy Dung, trailed by his two subordinates, strode to the tall, barb topped wrought iron gate. With one hand firmly clutching the handle Dung pulled. Nothing happened but a short movement and a sharp clink of metal. Dung pulled again, harder. The gate refused to open. Bong had a go, but the situation had become clear. They were locked in. All three looked at each other, the same questions shared but as yet unspoken.

“Why would someone lock up without checking first that no one was inside?” Gook cast around for an explanation, and soon spotted the answer.

“Of course” he pointed. “It’s all done remotely or by a timer. Look, there’s the control box up there.” Dung and Bong followed Gook’s outstretched finger. There indeed was a six-inch long metal box with a “T” shaped antenna protruding from its top side.

“But I can’t see any wires,” questioned Dung doubtfully.

“There must be a Wi-Fi connection between the control box and the gate locking mechanism,” reasoned Gook. “Bong, you’re our top *keyser*, can you hack into it?”

“Sure thing” enthusiastically jumped in Bong. “Using a *bigendian* bit stream I could backdoor into the control mechanism, then with a couple of logic bombs simply zero-factor the magnetic flux and release the armature plate” he beamed. “Who’s got a smartphone? I’ll have us out in a moment.”

Dung looked doubtfully at the gate. He reached through the bars and felt around on the reverse side of the locking plate. With his hand he rattled something metallic. A padlock.

“Bong, I’m sure you’re good but you might struggle to hack one of these with a big Indian bit stream. Whatever one of those is.”

“Oh” responded Bong despondently. “Old Technology.” Then he looked questioningly back up at the control box. “So what’s that then?”

“A bird box” suggested Dung.

“Are you sure?”

Right on cue, a sparrow landed on the ‘T’ shaped perch, chirped a couple of times as it cocked it’s head at the three Koreans, then alighted and flew into a hole in the side of the box.

“I think so,” surmised Dung. “Look, guys, wasn’t there the name of this place on a plaque just on the outside of this gate.”

“Where we can’t see it?” pointed out Gook.

“But we can reach through and take a photo of it with a phone, then Google to find whoever runs this place and phone them up to ask them to come and let us out.”

“Great idea” enthused Bong. “Who’s got a phone?”

“I left mine in my suit jacket pocket” replied Dung. “That’s where it lives.”

“But it’s a mobile device Dung, you can take it with you. That’s what ‘mobile’ means,” reasoned Gook.

“Yes, but it’s in my suit jacket pocket. You have yours?”

“Yes, but the battery’s flat” sadly replied Gook. “I was live-streaming from Penthouse TV. Looks like it’s down to you Bong, you’re our top *keyser* and squash *ordinaire*.”

“Ah, I lost mine when I was catching Pokémon.”

“You lost it? How?”

“Well, one of them jumped out of a bush and grabbed it off me.”

“Was it a Hitmonchan or a Sawk? Some of those fighting Pokémon can be really nasty“ gaped Gook in awe.

“No, it was short and pale with pimples and had a hood over its head.”

“That was a hoodie!” reacted Dung in shock.

“Really? I’ve never caught one of those” enthused Gook.

“Anyway, it ran off with my phone” glumly confirmed Bong.

There was a thoughtful silence as the three Koreans weighed up the new situation. As project manager, Dung felt that it was down to him to step in with leadership and direction.

“This situation requires expert analysis of the practical implications with a cool head and an eye for an effective solution,” he proclaimed.

“Which means that we do all the work and he just thinks about it” interpreted Gook.

“Yes, it’s called management.”

Dung attacked the task methodically. In a clockwise direction he made a detailed inspection of the small garden’s seemingly over protective perimeter. At the strangely oversized fishpond he paused. Someone had left a half eaten sandwich on a plate discarded on the side of the pond. Cautiously lifting the top layer of bread he risked a peak inside. The lumpy orange contents looked decidedly unappetising. Dung distastefully pushed the plate away towards the fence, wiped his fingers on his t-shirt then turned and rested himself against the edge of the pond. It was time to formulate a plan.

“OK, we have a high fence topped by razor wire bounding the road edge of the garden. On this side we have a high fence with a pretty impenetrable looking hedgerow behind it. To our left is the butt end of a house, so that leaves the wall over there by the compost heap as our best chance of escape. That’s the weak point.” Dung paused to make sure that his team was with him so far. “So have a search around both of you, and see if you can find anything that can get us over that wall. It has a low fence running along the top of it. That may help us if we can hook something over a fence post.”

As Bong and Gook searched the garden for anything with which to scale the twelve-foot wall, Dung toured around looking for something with which to slack his thirst. A standpipe further along the back fence looked promising, but was it off the mains or connected to some tank? A glass stood by the tap. Dung detached the hosepipe that had been fitted to the tap, filled the glass and had a close look at the clear cold contents. Nothing seemed to be swimming in it. He was about to lift it to his parched lips when a shout from Bong caught his attention. Setting the glass aside on a stone table by the back fence, Dung walked over to where Bong and Gook were routing around inside a shed.

“Someone left it unlocked,” explained Bong as he dragged a small stepladder from within the dusty interior. Dung looked doubtfully at the ladder, then back across at the wall.

“Too short.”

“Ah, but we can balance some of these compost bags on top.”

Dung looked back over at the wall. “Still too short, is there any rope in there?” There was none, but then Dung remembered the hosepipe. It might just work.

Bong, the squash *ordinaire*, took five attempts to loop a length of hosepipe over one of the short fence posts that topped the grey concrete wall. Dung impatiently checked his watch. Finally with the hosepipe in place, Bong started to haul himself up. Dung offered words of encouragement as Bong got himself teetering on the balanced bags of fertiliser, hanging on the looped hosepipe for support. The entire focus of the operation was to get up that wall, so no one noticed that Gook had wandered off. Bong loosened his hold on the hosepipe and pulled it around the metal fence post until the nozzle again hung at hand height. It had made for a good handgrip last time, so it would do again. Bong stared up at the top of the wall, just a few feet above his outstretched hand. One good haul and he would be up.

“You can do it!” shouted Dung with managerial encouragement. Bong took a deep breath and was just about to again trust his whole weight on the hosepipe when the hose jerked in his hand and a jet of cold water hit him squarely in the face. Bong teetered backwards and in one airborne moment plummeted directly towards Dung. Both of them landed flat on their backs on the grass with a thud. Gook rushed over to assist. Dung picked himself up as a last dribble of water escaped from the nozzle. He looked accusingly at Gook, then across at the standpipe, then back at Gook again.

“There must have been some water left in the hose,” explained Gook as innocently as he could manage while trying to suppress a gleeful smirk. Dung glared back at the standpipe. The hose was again attached to the tap. Dung frowned. It was time for some team restructuring.

“Gook, your turn. We’ve got to get out of here and find that doll.”

Asbo was chief security officer at 22b Gasworks Lane. One of his favourite things to do on a sunny Saturday afternoon was sleeping on the job. He dozed now on the kitchen floor, dreaming of tearing cats apart. His ears pricked up at a sound out beyond the veranda. Was it that old guy again? He liked barking at that old guy, but really couldn’t be bothered to get up right then.

The scuffling sound continued. There were voices as well, unfamiliar voices. Asbo opened an eye. Through the open kitchen door he could see the short iron fence that bounded the veranda. A hand appeared. Asbo was fully awake now. Another hand and Asbo sprang from the kitchen door. Between the two hands a face heaved into view. The face first showed jubilation. Then changed to shock, then horror as forty-five pounds of snarling American pit bull raced towards it.

For the second time in five minutes Dung found himself positioned directly below a falling body. This time he was quicker. With a headlong dive to his left he landed somewhere conveniently soft, but decidedly smelly. Bong jumped out of the way as well as Gook landed arse first in a privet hedge behind a row of red and white roses. The pit bull barked and snarled from the top of the wall until it got bored and padded back to its shady resting place. As Dung picked himself out of the compost heap, Gook started to laugh hysterically. His two colleagues stared at him in mystified bemusement until he was finally able to control his fits of laughter long enough to explain the point of hilarity.

“For once” he began, stifling another howl of laughter. “For once, Dung ends up in the shit, and I come up smelling of roses.”

Dung didn't seem quite as amused. Wiping manure from himself with the back of his hand he grumbled off towards the standpipe. His throat was still dry and he needed a quiet moment for a rethink. If things got any worse they could be stuck in here without food for 40 days and 40 nights. When he reached the stone table by the fence he stopped short. That hadn't been there before. Where he'd left that glass of water now stood a bottle of red wine. Dung picked it up and examined the label. *Merlot*, that was one of the wines that he'd noticed in the building that the hashers were using. He called over his two subordinates.

“Gook, did you put this here?” demanded Dung.

“No” replied Gook, staring blankly at the bottle. “Where did you find it?”

“Right here on this table.”

“Well it wasn't there before.”

“I put a glass water down here. Now it's turned into a bottle of wine.”

“And the problem is?” queried Gook.

“But how did it get here? That’s the problem.”

“There’s no problem as long as we have a bottle opener,” pointed out Bong.

“It’s a screw top,” observed Gook helpfully.

“Even better, but do we have anything to...” began Bong, but Dung irritatedly cut in.

“That’s not the point. I placed my water here...” then he stopped dead, staring in astonishment at the hedgerow behind the chicken-wire fence.

“Hey! What’s that?” he pointed a wavering finger. Bong and Gook stared blankly at the fence and the thick hedgerow beyond but saw nothing of interest.

“What?”

“There, just there. It was the doll, I swear it.”

Bong and Gook looked at each other.

“It’s the heat, we’d better get him into some shade” suggested Bong. Gook nodded solemnly.

Bong was about to cast around for the deepest shade in the garden when a movement caught the corner of his eye. There, on the far side of the little stone table where Dung had found the bottle of wine was a small hole in the fence. Peeping through it was... Bong’s jaw fell in astonishment. Peeping through it, just for a moment, was the doll. Bong was about to say something when a knocking noise from over by the fishpond caught everyone’s attention. The knocking had come from a yellow plastic fish. It stopped moving as the three Koreans approached.

“Hey, isn’t that where we left that old sandwich?” queried Bong.

“Yeah, I shoved it where that fish now is” confirmed Dung as he gaped at the rogue garden ornament.

“First water turns to wine, and now a sandwich turns into a fish.”

The doll appeared again, cheekily peeking at them through a gap in the fence on the far side of the fishpond. Quickly it disappeared, but all three Koreans had seen it. They had also seen how to get out of the garden. After some excited chatter, Bong crawled along the edge of the pond and pushed aside the fencing.

“Hey, there’s an arrow here, through the hedge” he called back. “This must be where the trail goes.”

Bong pushed his way through and Dung started to follow.

“Hey, guess where we are?” came another excited shout. “We’re right outside the back of that building that we started from.”

Gook was the last to attempt the slippery crawl along the edge of the pond. Dung was just pushing his way through the last of the hedgerow when he heard Gook give a panicked yell. This was followed by a large splash.

Baps dubiously turned the miniature plastic beer tankard over in the palm of his hand. He was only half listening as Twinkle Toes explained that it was a sample from the Crown brewery. “We were thinking about putting one in every goody bag, but the cost was prohibitive” Twinkle droned on as Baps cast his gaze around the main hall of the venue. Everyone was back from the ballbuster now, apart from the Koreans.

“I was thinking maybe you could give someone a ‘down down’ out of it,” suggested Twinkle Toes. “Might be funny.”

“Thanks” acknowledged Baps as he dismissively slipped the item into his pocket.

“Any progress on the closing skit?”

“I’ve tasked the mismanagement with thinking up some ideas, but nothing useful yet” Twinkle Toes shook his head glumly. “And no you’re not doing the ‘beer through your underpants’ one” he added hurriedly.

The big rear doors to the main hall were wide open, letting in the late summer heat. Hashers were wandering in with empty beer tankards, then wandering back out with full ones to enjoy draining them again in the sun. In the doorway the three Koreans appeared. The short geeky looking one was thoroughly soaked and was dripping pondweed into the venue floor. The other two didn’t look in much better shape either. Bap’s interest was piqued. He could smell a good story for the circle, and it smelt something like the bottom of a pond. Baps was about to wander over and investigate when he spotted Zebedee rapidly approaching. If the Koreans had come to some grief on trail then here was the most likely culprit to point the blame at.

“Are you RAing the ballbuster circle?” excitedly began the ballbuster lead hare.

“Yeah, but what have you done to the Koreans?”

Zebedee glanced around. “Have they only just got back? Anyway, I’ve got some great dirt on Mojo and Just Mary, the Koreans were telling me that...” Then his voice trailed off as he spotted Mojo approaching. Mojo was clearly still laughing about something, and they were probably going to hear what it was very shortly.

“Hey, you have just got to hear about this. Baps, you’re running the ballbuster circle, right?” Baps nodded and flipped his notebook open again. Potential charges had been coming thick and fast ever since the front-runners had arrived in off trail. This was going to be a good circle.

“What’ve you got Mojo?”

“Oh, this is hilarious” began Mojo. Clearly he was going to enjoy telling this story. “Those Koreans got themselves locked inside that community garden...”

“Locked in?” interrupted Zebedee in surprise. “It’s supposed to be open until dusk. It says so on the sign outside.”

“Well it’s locked now, and someone wiped out the trail.”

Zebedee groaned.

“So, how’d they get out?” asked Baps, his pen already busy in the notebook. Mojo enthusiastically launched on with his story.

“Hi, I’m Smelly.”

Bong had been glaring conspiringly at the doll, now strapped into a baby carrier on Mojo’s back. He turned to find a wide, busty woman of generous proportions smiling at him. A layering of foundation and thickly applied lipstick failed to disguise that the woman was unlikely to be less than 50. Bong raised an eyebrow in surprise. The woman was wearing a large frilly pink bra on the outside of her running top, and a matching pair of plus size knickers over the top of her jogging bottoms.

“Smelly the Elephant,” the harriet explained in a broad Manchester accent and leant forward so that Bong could see her name in little white block letters on a necklace. He also got a fairly generous eyeful of her cleavage.

“Hi” managed Bong.

“So, where you from?” questioned Smelly as she fluttered a pair of false eyelashes at him.

“Korea” distractedly replied Bong as he glanced back over at Mojo and the doll. Mojo was now in deep conversation with two others. No chance of getting near unnoticed, even if he did manage to get away from this strange person who reeked of perfume and alcohol.

“Oh, north or south?”

“Take a wild guess on this one Smelly” derisively put in a passing hashier. “I don’t thing the northerners get out much.”

“That’s true,” admitted Bong. “If I was from North Korea I’d have to be some sort of spy,” he couldn’t resist adding. Smelly gave an unnecessarily loud forced laugh.

“Your not are you?”

Bong just smiled.

“I did the bra and pants¹. We visited a brewery” Smelly enthused. Bong failed to think of a suitable response in this increasingly surreal conversation. One thing was clear though. The woman before him had obviously spent some time in the aforementioned brewery.

“So what’s your hash name?” purred Smelly as she moved a little closer.

“Bong” replied Bong as he took a small step back.

“Oh, like the thing you smoke? How did you end up with that name?”

Well, I was born with it, thought Bong. It was a common enough Korean name, just like Dung and Gook.

“So how did you get mixed up in all this?” he asked, switching the subject.

“Oh, the hash. I was doing some secretarial work in New Scotland Yard and started dating a sergeant. He got me into it.”

“The police are in on it?” reacted Bong in surprise.

“Oh yes. We even had the commissioner of Somerset and Avon police on the hash, but he’s left the force now.”

“What, did he get caught?”

¹ A trail set by B.R.A.S. & Pants Hash House Harriers. This stands for: Brewery Runs Around Scotland & Pants because you are Panting for your beer. All participants wear Bra’s and Pants on the outside and a brewery visit is a key feature.

A shout of “ballbusters, circle up outside” interrupted the mind-bogglingly bizarre conversation. Most of the fit, fast looking hashers started to wander out into the balmy August heat with drinks in hand. Bong managed to slip away from Smelly and joined his two colleagues as they ventured out onto the grass outside the venue in curiosity. A circle of gossiping hashers gathered around Baps as he filled plastic glasses with the event’s cheapest ale. The first charge went to Zebedee for *that* trail. One of the front-runners was asked to suggest a song, and he immediately had the assembled pack chorusing a heartfelt rendition of...

He’s the meanest
He sucks the horse’s penis
He’s the meanest
He’s the horse’s arse

Ever since he found it
All he does is pound it
He’s the meanest
He’s the horse’s arse

The pack chorused “drink it down, down, down, down...” and Zebedee sank the beer in one perfect draw. Baps consulted his notes. Would he call overseas visitors and ballbuster virgins next? No, that would include the Koreans and he had something special in mind for them.

“Can I have Blunderbird front and centre please?”

“Good choice” shouted Twinkle Toes who already knew of the charge to come. Twinkle had greeted the tall, affable Japanese like an old friend once they had finally got him released from police custody just the day before. He had been at Blunderbird’s naming a few years ago where the pack had eagerly seized upon the International Rescue theme. Blunderbird had a habit of blindly jumping in to save things without the slightest hesitation. Unfortunately, whatever he tried to rescue normally ended up in a worse condition than if he’d just left it alone.

“So, I understand that you did a bit of sightseeing before this event?” Baps began after Blunderbird had joined him in front of the circle and a beer had been pressed into his hand. Blunderbird did a half bow in confirmation.

“And you visited Westminster Abbey, actually during a service. Did you enjoy it?” Again Blunderbird did a half bow.

“Only there was a fire in the abbey was there not?” pressed Baps.

“Fire, yes fire” again affirmed Blunderbird. Baps took a small step forward. The scene had been set. It was now time to break the story fully open.

“Blunderbird here gallantly jumped to the rescue of a woman who was walking down the aisle with her handbag on fire,” began Baps. “He grabbed the bag from her and stamped on it until the fire was out. Lets have a big hand for Blunderbird.”

An uncertain round of applause rippled around the watching hashers. There had to be more to this story, and there was.

“Only, it wasn’t a woman was it? It was the Archbishop of Canterbury in his ceremonial robes, spreading incense smoke among the communion.”

A burst of laughter erupted from the audience. Baps waited for it to subside. It had taken a lot of hash contacts in high places and a lot of strings being pulled to get Blunderbird released from Horseferry Road nick in time to receive his ‘down down’. The pack launched into another classic hash song as the hapless Japanese sank his beer.

Baps again glanced at his notes. Oh yes, Zebedee had brought Mojo and Just Mary’s sleeping arrangements to his attention, courtesy of some comments from the Koreans at the start of the run. There’s not much that can be kept secret for long in the hash. As he called the couple forwards, Smelly sidled up to Twinkle Toes and nudged him in the ribs.

“You still needing a closing skit?”

“Yeah,” replied Twinkle suddenly brightening up. “You have something in mind?”

“I could do a striptease,” offered Smelly as she hung unsteadily onto his arm. Twinkle turned to look her fully in the face.

“Down to my nipple tassels and a fig leaf” she continued as if reading his next question through his eyes.

“Thanks, we’ll err. We’ll bear that one in mind,” responded Twinkle Toes noncommittally. Unfortunately it was the best suggestion so far. Smelly was wandering off towards the wine bar as Twinkle Toes leaned over to a hasher standing next to him.

“So, how *did* Smelly get her name?”

“Oh, Smelly the Elephant?” came the murmured reply as Mojo and Just Mary were downing pints to a suitably inappropriate song. “She was out in Sumatra doing elephant washing or some such and an elephant did a poo on her head.” Twinkle Toes coughed and nearly spat his beer all over the hasher before him. The Koreans hovered at the back of the crowd, not really too sure of what to make of the proceedings.

“OK, can I have all the overseas visitors and ballbuster virgins to the front please?” Baps launched into his next set of charges.

“Oh I like doing the virgins” he rubbed his hands together in glee.

Several hashers stepped forwards and were handed full beer glasses. Baps was watching carefully, the Koreans hadn’t moved. They were whispering to each other as Baps called them forwards. They were not going to escape that easily. Deciding that compliance was the safest option, the three hesitantly stepped forwards into the circle and received a beer each. For Baps this was routine. He started with the Koreans and led with the standard questions, what’s your hash name and where are you from? Under interrogation Dung tried to keep it simple, he was Dung from Korea. This didn’t seem to satisfy. Thinking quickly and trying to stay calm he realised that the hash henchman probably wanted to know what cell he was from.

“Seoul” Dung quickly replied.

“Seoul H3?”

“Err, that’s right.”

“And who made you cum?”

Dung baulked at this question. Bong was a bit sharper on the uptake and put in that they were all here on business and had taken the opportunity to drop by. Baps moved on down the line of hashers and the Koreans all drew a sigh of relief.

With pints downed all the visitors returned to their places in the circle. The Koreans had decided to escape back into the venue building before any more attention was drawn to them when Baps called the next charge.

“Can I have Dung back into the circle please?”

The Koreans froze mid-pace and Baps had to repeat his request. Dung reluctantly re-entered the circle.

“As you know, there are no rules in the hash, but in Seoul hash do you have the new shoes rule?”

Dung thought for a moment. ‘Yes’ or ‘no’? He gambled badly and went with ‘yes’.

“And the shoes that you’re wearing now. New are they?”

“Err, no not really” hazarded Dung, now suspecting that for some bizarre reason, wearing a new pair of trainers was a bad thing.

“But you’ve left the label on the back of them” pointed out Baps. Dung automatically glanced down and lifted both heels. The encircled hashers laughed. There were no labels, but Dung had just proven guilt beyond all reasonable doubt.

“Are they hollow?” enquired Baps. Dung just looked suitably confused.

“Then you can drink out of them,” continued Baps. “Off with the right one.” Dung glanced at his two companions. Both looked tense. Bong made a faint gesture as if to say ‘just go along with whatever they want’. Dung bent down to untie his right trainer.

“No the right shoe” enthusiastically chorused the circle. Baps decided to hold no prisoners this time and let the hapless Korean remove his right trainer. He had plenty of beer to get through anyway. Baps took the trainer and to Dung’s horror filled it with beer. The pack started to chorus a countdown from ten as beer poured from the porous material of the squeaky new shoe. In horror Dung realised that he was expected to down the contents of his trainer. As if Baps was holding a gun to his head, Dung quickly lifted the back of his trainer to his lips. Just do what they say and I might just get out of this alive, was all that Dung was thinking. With the contents of the trainer suitably downed, Baps was kind enough to explain the hapless Korean’s mistake.

“The right shoe is the wrong shoe and the left shoe is the right shoe,” smiled Baps. The watching hashers all laughed. It seemed that everyone else had somehow known this.

“Now let’s have the right shoe.”

In abject resignation, Dung removed his other shoe and drank from that one as well. As he was finally allowed to squelch his way out of the circle he gave a subtle indication to his waiting companions that they should get out of there as fast as possible. What he was not expecting was Bap’s next charge.

“Can I have Dung back into the circle please?” The pack laughed again. “And let’s have your two friends as well.”

Dung thought about making a run for it, but knew that would be hopeless. These guys could have him pinned down in an instant. With even more reluctance Dung turned and again was handed another beer. What would he be made to drink this one out of? With his two subordinates beside him he listened in dread to whatever the henchman was going to come up with this time.

“So, did you enjoy the trail?”

The Korans glanced at each other. What was the right answer this time? They all went with a noncommittal ‘yes’.

“Only I understand that you had some problems in a community garden?”

“Yeah, someone locked us in,” protested Bong.

“Well we do like to help each other out on the hash” sympathised Baps.

“Only I understand that help came from a rather unlikely source. Tell us what happened.”

Dung’s gaze fell upon the doll. Mojo was holding it. He tantalisingly waggled Baby G at the Koreans and smiled.

“Err, well first a glass of water suddenly changed into a bottle of wine,” began Dung.

“Then a sandwich turned into a plastic fish,” put in Dung.

“And that doll appeared on the other side of a pond and we found our way out” explained Gook, pointing a wavering finger at Baby G. Baps noted the violation of the no pointing rule, but let it slide. He had a much better angle to work with.

“So, our Baby G turns water into wine, bread into fish and walks on water does he?”

“Well, he was in the fence on the other side of the pond,” corrected Gook, but Baps was on a roll.

“Hey everyone, our Baby G performs miracles!”

This prompted a round of cheering and applause from the encircled hashers.

“He’s here to save us,” proclaimed a visiting GM¹.

“From what?” questioned one of the harriets.

“From debauchery” came an overenthusiastic but badly thought out reply.

“Why would we want that?” yelled Smelly, then nearly fell on her face.

“From sobriety!” suggested the visiting GM. This provoked a sustained round of cheering. Mojo had been mulling over an idea. Fuelled by craft beer he stepped forward into the circle with Baby G raised above his head.

“If I may make a suggestion?” requested Mojo. Baps affirmed. This could get interesting, but he wasn’t quite ready for what Mojo had in mind.

“The hash works due to the humour and dedication of its members, but unlike almost every other organisation in the world it lacks a central command structure. There’s no one in overall charge. There is no one to bring together the individual fiefdoms of the hashing world into one cohesive unit. But there is one hasher who is with us today, just one who could take on that mantle. Just one who could lead the hash into a new age of debauchery. He walks on water. He turns water into wine. I motion that we elect our very own Baby G as King of the Hashers!”

There were a few sporadic cheers as Mary turned to her husband with her mouth hanging open in surprise. He shrugged. It was just an idea. Just a spur of the moment thought.

“Do we have any seconders for the motion?” put forward Baps, deciding to run with the idea. After all, West London Hash once elected a flowerpot as GM. As he recalled, the flowerpot had done a much better job than most other West London GMs.

Opinions were thrown to the fore, all of them positive. Baps asked for a show of hands. Gradually twelve were raised, then more, then a forest of arms was stretched towards the heavens.

¹ Grand Master. Responsible for the mismanagement of a hash chapter.

“Motion carried” proudly proclaimed Baps. “Baby G is our new, ... our first ever, King of the Hashers”.

The assembled hashers burst into rapturous applause. Baps smiled. This was turning into a rather good circle. Then came shouts of “crown him, crown him”. This turned into a chant and Baps started to feel the moment die as he realised that he had nothing with which to crown the new king. Thinking hard, Baps had a moment of divine inspiration. Reaching into his pocket he pulled out the miniature beer tankard from the Crown brewery.

“I have a crown for our new king!” proclaimed Baps with the little tankard held high. On it was embossed the brewery corporate logo, a crown. This prompted a renewed chorus of cheering.

“We need a crowning ceremony” came a suggestion from the pack.

“A throne for our king,” Baps regally demanded. “Our king shall receive a coronation”.

As a chair was brought forwards, Just Mary took a step into the circle. If this was to be anything like a naming ceremony then there would be a baptism of beer.

“Don’t you dare throw beer over my baby or I’ll crucify you!” warned Mary. She looked deadly serious and Baps heeded the warning. Zebedee pulled a bag of flour from somewhere, and after pressing the little beer tankard into the doll’s hand, Baps proceeded with the honours.

“By the power vested in me by WHORE hash house harriers and the whole of hash kind, I crown you Baby G, King of the Hashers.” Then Baps ceremoniously dumped two generous handfuls of flour onto the new king’s head. Mojo stepped into the circle and held the flour-covered doll aloft.

“Behold the King of the Hashers!”

The chants of “Baby G, Baby G” could have been heard from behind the hedgerow inside the empty community garden.

As another perfect August sunset descended behind the tower blocks of East London, the venue filled with weird and wonderful characters. Characters borne of the creative genius of Dickens, Hans Christian Andersen, J. M. Barrie and a whole pantomime parade of other masterful writers. The Nash Hash Saturday night party was always fancy dress, and the theme of *pantomime*

had really let the hash creative juices flow. There were harlequins a plenty, and fairies and pirates and Buttons and flamboyant Cinderellas. A pantomime horse was helping a couple of Cruella De Vils prop up the bar, and the disco was pumping. Twinkle Toes, decked out as one of the Cinderellas, mingled his way around the venue as best he could on a single stiletto. The weather was being exceptionally kind and DJ Jazzy Jizz had got his wheels of steel back in tune. Everyone was having a really good time, although the Koreans were being very reserved. They either hung about in their own huddle or were showing a curious amount of interest in the new King of the Hashers. Whenever Twinkle Toes had wandered in their direction to make conversation they had seemed to edge away, almost as if they were frightened of him. Must be the makeup, he mused. The skits would be starting soon. Twinkle Toes grimaced as the thought of Smelly jiggling her boobs about on the stage filled his mind. Their grand closing skit would not be until tomorrow afternoon, but so far they had nothing better.

“What’s happening now?” asked Gook as a blur of brown fur span around on the stage.

“They’re doing these short performances,” explained Dung as he impatiently readjusted the sheet that was supposed to turn him into the ghost of Christmas past.

“Why?”

“Well, wouldn’t you do crazy stuff if you did as much hash as these guys do?”

“Like chasing a doll around East London?” suggested Bong.

“Yes, exactly” jumped in Dung, quick to return to the main concern of the moment. “How are we going to get that damn Attack Initiator module back? Now they’ve made it their king it’s even more closely guarded.”

“I say we go in hard,” suggested Bong, thumping a fist into his open hand.

“No!” Dung rounded on him. “These people are too dangerous. They made me drink out of my shoes!”

“As you were saying earlier, we’ve got to either beg, borrow or steal” Gook reminded from a previous discussion. “And we’ve agreed that stealing either by stealth or by force is too dangerous.”

“Well, I’m not begging” gruffly put in Bong with finality.

“How are those guys *doing* that?” marvelled Mojo as he leaned against the bar next to Twinkle Toes.

“I don’t know, but a break dancing pantomime horse is pretty damn impressive.”

“Can you do better for the closing skit tomorrow?” asked Mojo as the curtain closed and the stage management set to work preparing for the next skit.

“Sure, if we had a miracle. Maybe your King of the Hashers can help with that?” quipped Twinkle. They shared a laugh. “It wouldn’t really be an issue but once we had that swimming pool skit I went around telling everyone that ours would be the best of the bunch.”

“Oops” empathised Mojo. “And it’s W&NK hash next. I hear what they’ve got is actually quite good.”

“Ah yes, the Westerham and North Kent hash. They’ve found a couple of trained singers apparently. They’re promising a star performance” sullenly agreed Twinkle.

“Hey, you’ve lost your Mojo,” slurred Smelly as she clung to a wall next to Mary.

“Oh he’s over by the bar talking to Twinkle Toes.”

“And whe... where’s your baby?” asked Smelly, suddenly realising that Mary was no long clung to her beloved doll.

“Being borrowed” Mary curtly replied, wishing that this very drunk Cruella would totter off somewhere else before her red wine ended up all over Mary’s hired Fairy Godmother costume. “Shush, the next act is just starting.”

The rest of the chattering audience did not need to be told to shush. As the curtain trailed back the strange sight of a large white woman-sized ball with protruding head, arms and feet silenced half of them. When the large white ball started to sing with the voice of an angel, then the remainder fell silent in awe.

For just one sperm
Just one sperm
I so yearn

I so yearn
For just one sperm

Make me complete
To be complete
Little hands
Little feet
So complete

Then little eyes
Baby eyes
Little eyes
Little Mouth
Send me south

But what I fear
Really fear
No sperm near
No sperm about
Then flush me out

The song trailed off, the last few notes like falling stardust. Pink lights behind the stage started to pulse and a low gasp of female delight burst from the sound system. The gasps grew louder, raspier, hornier, building to a crescendo of female orgasmic ecstasy.

“Oh what’s happening, what’s happening?” cried Egg as a stream of hashers in white polythene suits and white bathing hats rushed onto the stage. They ran to and fro across the stage as if seeking but not finding.

“Hey boys, over here. Over here!” Egg called out. Then watched in anguish as they all ran from the stage.

A single sperm turned and ran back onto the stage, and Egg sighed a large sigh of relief. The sperm stopped before her and tried to push inside but Egg stopped him with both hands.

“Hey, I’m not that easy. With whom am I making an acquaintance? From whom do you cum?”

“Oh my dear Egg, I am from a handsome man of great social stature,” replied the sperm.

“And what does this man do?”

“Well, he’s a financial specialist.”

“Oh” Egg feigned a yawn. “Well OK so I’ll become a baby with brains I suppose. Cum on in.”

The sperm was about to push his whole self into the bulging white globe of Egg when the lights started flashing again.

“Wait, it’s happening again.” Egg held off the eager sperm as the gasps of female delight ascended in pitch and volume. A second stream of hashers in white ran across the stage. One peeled off at Eggs call.

“Shift out the way mate, we’re not even related.” The second sperm rudely pushed in, but Egg stopped him.

“Not so quick lover boy. I’ll ask you the same question to you. From whom do you cum?”

“I’m from a super stud that’s hung like a horse and all the girls swoon over,” boasted sperm number two in a broad American drawl.

“And what does this man do?”

“Professional super league baseball player” came the reply without modesty as sperm number two squared his shoulders.

“Sorry financial specialist” offhandedly apologised Egg as she again feigned a yawn, but before sperm number two made to push himself into Egg the flashing pink lights started once more.

“What sort of party’s happening out there?” gasped Egg at the ceiling.

The rasping sounds of female excitement built again. There was a final squeal then silence descended across the stage.

“What, no one?” Egg cast around. “Ah, condoms, bane of my life. Well I’ve still got you super league baseball player.”

Sperm number two was about to push himself into Egg when a single sperm ran onto the stage. He cast wildly around then finally found Egg.

“Sorry ol’ gal” apologised sperm number three. “Got a tad lost just past the tonsils”

“Huh, typical, you wait all month then they all cum at once,” complained Egg. “So, from whom do *you* cum?”

“I’m from awfully good stock my dear Egg. Eton and Oxford educated, a multi-millionaire with significant influence over mainstream British politics and by all accounts a rather good sense of humour.”

“Oh cum on in” delighted Egg. “And hurry up before any more cum along.”

“And in 2016 the man from whom I cum was appointed foreign secretary,” continued sperm number three as he went to dive into Egg.

“Ugh, Boris, get away from me. I vote leave me alone” gasped Egg and pushed sperm number three away.

“Any more?” asked Egg hopefully at the ceiling.

“Sorry, but we can’t hang around all night Egg. There’s only so long we can survive in here,” pointed out sperm number one. “Why don’t we all serenade you?”

“Oh yes woo me, woo me,” Egg clapped her hands in delight. “Sperm number two, you can go first my super league baseball player.”

Sperm number two opened his arms, inflated his chest, and led with poetry.

Roses are red
Violets are blue
I’m such a stud
So let’s just screw

I’ll knock you up
Good ‘n proppa
When I’m done
Nought ‘ll stop ya

We make baby
Big and burley
Hung down too
Just like yours truly

“Ah yuck” repulsed Egg. “I’m an egg. I don’t get ‘knocked up’, I get fertilised. Really. I want to become a baby with brains.”

Sperm number two stepped back affronted.

“OK, Boris” Egg sighed. “You can woo me.”

Sperm number three sank to both knees and spread his arms.

Oh, speak again, bright angel. You are as glorious as an angel tonight.
You shine above me, like a winged messenger from heaven who makes
mortal men fall on their backs to look up at the sky, watching the angel
walking on the clouds and sailing on the air...

“Really Boris” cut in Egg. “Is cheap Shakespeare all you can manage?” She looked around, there was just one sperm left.

“OK, how about you my financial specialist?” Egg resignedly feigned a yawn. Sperm number one sank to one knee, spread his arms and again the audience was enraptured by the lacquered tones of a trained opera singer.

I have genes
Beautiful genes
Strong in health
Crisp and clean

Blue for eyes
Sharp of mind
Golden hair
Nice behind

I’ll make you real
Make you whole
Every hair
Every mole

Let us create
Our genes entwine
Nine months time
All going fine

“Oh come to me,” sang Egg in delight. “We’ll become a beautiful baby.” Sperm number one crawled inside Egg’s costume. All the other sperms ran onto the stage and circled around Egg chanting “September, October, November, December...”. On each cycle Egg expanded bigger and bigger until on the month of June the costume ripped open. To the sounds of a crying baby, a harriet in a white hospital gown stepped forward from the burst costume and walked with a wide maternal smile to the front of the stage. In her hands she was cradling a baby doll, and the doll was recognised instantly.

“It’s Baby G,” someone shouted from the audience. “It’s our king!” Rapturous applause filled the hall, drowning out the sounds of crying baby. Those not on their feet stood and those already standing clapped even harder. “That was really rather good” enthused Mojo. “Certainly raised the bar.” “Oh good grief, to beat that we *are* going to need a miracle” groaned Twinkle Toes, and took a long gulp of his beer.

With great power comes great responsibility. A king should be able to lead his people. As the final moments of Saturday evening ticked to a close, Baby G ‘King of the Hashers’, led a conga line of Just Mary, Mojo and Wally Wonker through the Premium Inn car park. Mary held the doll out before her as the line drunkenly weaved between cars and down ramps until they finally arrived at garage number six.

“Did you see that prank that was pulled on Blunderbird?” laughed Mojo as he finally managed to get the key into the lock and heaved the garage door upwards with the usual bone-shaking rattle.

“Yeah, and someone filmed it and live streamed it straight onto the screen in the main hall” giggled Wonker as he lent against the garage wall, still in his Buttons outfit, but with most of them now undone. “Did you two really sleep in here?”

“Blunderbird really is Mr International Rescue,” laughed Mojo as he slumped face first onto the airbed.

“Master of Disaster” agreed Wonker.

“And at least that got rid of all that footage of those old London Hash pantomimes. It was probably great to have been there at the time, what ten, fifteen years ago but no one was really interested” came Mojo’s muffled response from the airbed.

“What happened? I missed it. I was in the loos,” complained Mary as she tucked Baby G into his car tyre cot. Mojo was only too happy to recount how some cute harriet had run up to Blunderbird and told him that a pantomime horse had got itself stuck up a ladder by the pool.

“Had it really?” Mary gaped.

“Blunderbird, being Blunderbird didn’t stop to ask why there was a ladder hanging by a rope by the poolside, he just started climbing” put in Wonker, eager to partake in the story telling. “It was all really quite cleverly rigged up.”

“Yeah” continued Mojo. “Blunderbird was nearly at the top when they detached the ladder. The pantomime horse was left hanging and Blunderbird got dunked into the pool. It was hilarious.” Both Mojo and Wonker burst into laughter.

Mary gasped again and clasped her hands to her mouth. “So how did the horse get down?”

“Oh they just lowered it. But the best bit. The very best bit was when they threw a rope to a splashing and spluttering Blunderbird and pulled him to the side of the pool to the sound of the Baywatch theme tune.”

“I didn’t even know that Blunderbird couldn’t swim,” laughed Wonker as he sank down onto the airbed next to Mojo. The unanimous decision was that it had been a damn good party, but there was work to be done.

“Thanks for letting us crash on your floor,” again thanked Mary.

“Yeah, I’m only up on the third floor,” muttered Wonker as he rolled off the bed and started poking around in the garage.

“It did seem a bit early to be leaving the party” apologised Mary “but we’ve volunteered to set the hangover trail and have to be up early. Oh and it’s good to get away from those Koreans.”

“They’re creepy,” agreed Mojo as he unsteadily propped himself up on an elbow.

“They just kept hanging around us and taking an interest in Baby G,” complained Mary. “It was almost as if they were waiting for a chance to run off with him. I let them have their photos taken with him. Well I wasn’t going to let go of my baby so they had photos with the both of us. Then they wanted to have photos of him sat out by the pool or something so I made my excuses and said we had to leave. Might have stayed a bit longer at the party else.”

“They probably mean no harm” reassured Mojo as Wonker excitedly laid his hands on the pogo stick and started erratically bouncing around the garage on it.

The removals process from garage to third floor took a while, and first required getting Wonker off of the pogo stick so that Mojo could have another go. As the merry trio passed through reception with the men laden with baggage and Just Mary protectively cradling Baby G, Wonker asked if they were going to try to get their money back from Auto-Inn.

“What’s the point?” argued Mojo. “I’m not going to waste my time with that stupid machine again.”

“Just give it ago, you never know your luck” smiled Wonker. It took a bit more encouragement but finally Mojo approached the machine with a pessimistic grumble.

“Hello and welcome to Auto-Inn, Premium Inn’s automated check-in facility. How may I help you this evening?” cheerfully enquired Auto-Inn as Mojo pressed a button. Mary handed Baby G to Wally Wonker and went to join her husband at the machine. The chances were that he would be needing some help.

“He’s still got flour on him,” observed Wonker.

“Well, see if you can get any more off of him thanks.”

Wonker turned the doll over in his hands as the pair grappled with the check out functionality. The flour from Baby G’s baptism had got beneath his green military uniform. Wonker ran a finger under the doll’s shirt, then pulled down his trousers.

“Hey, he’s even got flour up his arse” exclaimed Wonker.

“Oh, stop molesting him you pervert,” retorted Mary as Wonker was digging around with a fingernail. As the flour fell away, Wally Wonker froze in surprise. He was just about to call out his discovery, but held his tongue. Mojo and Mary were still working on Auto-Inn, and now was not a good time to distract them.

“Sorry to hear that you are leaving,” commiserated Auto-Inn. “Please enter your payment card.”

“But I’ve already paid!” protested Mojo.

“Oh, it needs to identify your account,” reasoned Mary.

“Right, OK, where do I enter my card?”

“The same slot that you used last time, dummy,” retorted Auto-Inn.

“I thought it didn’t do voice recognition” reacted Mojo in surprise.

“I don’t,” responded Auto-Inn as Wonker burst into laughter behind the confused pair. He was enjoying this.

“It’d better not debit my account again,” grumbled Mojo as he pushed his card into the slot.

“Activating check-out sequence” cheerfully announced Auto-Inn. “Did you enjoy your stay?”

“T’riffic” retorted Mojo. “I can still smell the engine oil now.”

“Would you like to participate in our customer satisfaction questionnaire? You could win a one way trip on Air Malaysia and a free parachute,” continued Auto-Inn. Wonker stifled another laugh.

“No thanks, I just want to go for a beer. Any chance of a refund? We’re leaving early,” snapped Mojo as he hit a button.

“I’m sorry, your selection was not recognised. Would you like to participate in our customer satisfaction questionnaire? You could also win a one way ticket to North Korea and a free propaganda poster.”

“I said no you stupid machine” barked Mojo and hit the same button again, only harder.

“I’m sorry, your selection was not recognised, please try again.”

“I think you’d better just do the questionnaire. It’s not going to accept any other response” calmly reasoned Wonker as Mojo was looking like he was going to explode. Resignedly Mojo made the alternative selection.

“Oh you *do* want to participate in our customer satisfaction questionnaire! How simply wonderful” enthused Auto-Inn with an overload of customer-facing happiness. “Press any key to continue.”

Mojo randomly pressed a button.

“Well, that’s not the one labelled ‘Any Key’ now is it?”

“Oh that one!” burst Mojo after peering closely at the keys.

“How do you rate the service that you received? Press 1 for absolutely awesome, press 2 for totally splendid or press 3 for blissfully amazing.”

“No selection for abysmally dreadful then?”

“Oh just press any button and get this over with” suggested Mary who was also getting increasingly fed-up with the machine. Mojo hit a button.

“If you made use of the tea and coffee making facilities, did you take only the spare biscuits and all of the sugar packets, the cups and saucers as well, or everything including the kettle?”

“What tea and coffee making facilities? All we had was a bottle of antifreeze.”
Mojo made another random selection.

“On the Premium Inn entertainment system, did you watch the mindless talent shows in which clueless contestants inflict their lack of charisma on the nation; the tiresome re-runs of Baywatch where the only real interest is in the breast and buttock department, or the frustratingly tame X-rated features that every other sad fucker has jerked off in front of who doesn’t have the personality to go out and get a real girlfriend?”

“How impertinent?” gasped Mary. Wally Wonker behind them gagged and spluttered in suppressed laughter.

“Did your night time copulations include, the missionary position, the sixty-nine, the doggy position or were you so pissed that you didn’t even manage to get undressed before passing out?”

With this Wonker couldn’t help but burst out laughing. Just Mary rounded on him. No self-respecting company, or even Premium Inn, would produce a system like this.

“Wonker, have you been messing with this machine?”

Wally Wonker nearly fell off his chair as he rolled around with uncontrolled, side-splitting laughter. Finally he was able to get his breathing under control.

“I can’t believe how lax the security is on that machine. All I had to do was attach a laptop to a USB port around the back and hack the questionnaire.”

“Can you hack it to give a refund on the room, erm, garage, and maybe some compensation money on top for the shitty stay?” hopefully questioned Mojo, brightening up considerably.

“Sadly, or I should say reassuringly, the financial side is much better protected. That module seems to be embedded in the firmware. Sorry.”

Wonker paused and thought for a while, his analytical brain and years of deviously hacking around awkward IT problems kicking in with another crafty solution. “I’ve just found a USB port up Baby G’s arse. I’m going to plug him into Auto-Inn and get our king to sort out the irritating bitch.”

With that he approached the machine, Baby G in hand, and reached around the back for the USB cable. The cable slotted neatly between Baby G's arse cheeks and Wonker sat the doll primly upon the annoying machine. All three stood back to watch. What they witnessed they would be talking about for the rest of their lives.

It started with a scream. A high-pitched, highly distressed electronic scream from deep within Auto-Inn. Baby G's eyes flashed red. His lips parted, and to everyone's astonishment he started to speak in a deep, threatening, heavily accented voice.

"Armageddon has begun. Your satellites will fall. Your smartphones will fry. Your databanks will be wiped and your world will be thrown into chaos. Your entire existence will be annihilated. Wha ha ha ha haaa..."

Just Mary gasped. Mojo's jaw dropped and Wally Wonker just said, "Wow". A loud bang further startled all three of them. Sparks flew and flames shot from the back of the machine. Mojo grabbed the doll and they fled.

Dung thoughtfully ran a finger across a floor plan of the venue. Hanging next to it on a wall of the Korean's East London base was a plan of the Premium Inn parking area, but Dung had already dismissed any attack via that route. Even though the garage could not be locked from the inside, the door was so loud when opened that it would surely wake anyone sleeping inside. There had to be another way of grabbing the doll, but during the day the couple's movements were too unpredictable. Except when they were visiting or hovering around the bar, Dung mused as he tapped a finger on an area of the diagram.

"There's yours" interrupted Gook as he handed a cardboard-topped silver carton to Dung. Dung absently took his food order and continued staring at the diagram. Seconds later his attention was taken again by the large flat screened TV flickering into life. All three jumped to attention and saluted as the image of Kim Jong-un glowered down into the cramped living room.

"It looks like I've interrupted your dinner again," the tyrant observed.

"Sorry Kim Jong-un. Bit of a late one as we've been chasing the Attack Initiator all day," respectfully apologised Dung. "And I've got special fried

rice” he added nervously. Soon he would have to explain that they hadn’t recovered the module yet.

“Chicken chow mein” put in Bong, following the theme of the conversation.

“And I’ve got poodles,” happily announced Gook.

“No Gook, that’s noodles!” Gook’s two colleagues rounded on him.

“Oh” came Gook’s disappointed response.

“Dung, have you recovered the Attack Initiator yet?” demanded Kim Jong-un, already losing patience.

“Sorry Kim Jong-un,” began Dung delicately. “We’ve been chasing it all day. It’s been captured by a group of hardened drugs traffickers who call themselves ‘The Hash’.”

“So they can use it against us?” Kim Jong-un reacted in alarm.

“Oh no Kim Jong-un, they don’t know the purpose of it” quickly put in Bong.

“So, what would a group of drug traffickers want with piece of electronic equipment that they don’t know the purpose of?” reasoned Kim Jong-un.

“Well, we disguised it” Gook falteringly started to explain.

“As what?”

“As a doll Kim Jong-un.”

“Well, they don’t sound very hardened if they’re going around carrying dolls. Can’t you just threaten to take their sweeties away if they don’t hand it over?” barked Kim Jong-un.

“Well, one of them has become rather attached to it. We trailed them back to their hide-out earlier then decided to go for food” Dung began to explain, wishing that he could just sink into the floor.

“And they’ve adopted it as their king” apologised Gook with his palms raised in submission.

“They’ve made a doll their king? Really? Why?” glared Kim Jong-un in disbelief.

“Well, erm, the doll has been made in your image Kim Jong-un” Dung winced and waited for the inevitable backlash.

“Me!” roared Kim Jong-un. He then picked up the stuffie of himself off of his desk and looked at it with considered regard. “Actually I quite like that.”

“Look, they can’t do any harm with the doll can they Gook?” began Dung, looking to Gook for support. “They can’t initiate the attack sequence. The doll needs to be connected to the rest of the satellite for that.”

“And the rest of the satellite is spread all over East London” helpfully put in Bong.

“No it doesn’t” disagreed Gook.

“What?” demanded Dung.

“I wrote the Attack Initiator as an autonomous unit. If initiated it will open the most conveniently available communications channel and assemble the attack sequence through that, only it will be a lot slower, that’s all. I was just assuming that the most convenient communications channel would be Bong’s Attack Infiltration and Compromisation Handler” Gook explained. “It’s for robustness.”

“Robustness!” burst Dung. “I never agreed to that feature.”

“You were too busy writing the project plan and we needed to get the project completed so I just went ahead with best practice.”

“Wait, wait!” cut in Kim Jong-un impatiently. “What’s an Attack Infiltration and Compromisation Handler?”

“That was my work of genius,” proudly explained Bong. “It encodes every nefarious instruction that comes out of the Attack Initiator to look as if it’s come from some other source. Maybe from a Chinese military satellite. Maybe from an American warship. Unfortunately it got destroyed when Gook ordered pizzas, but don’t worry Kim Jong-un, the code can easily be uploaded onto a similar module in a new satellite.”

“So what happens if the attack sequence doesn’t go through your handler?” Demanded Kim Jong-un.

“Err, then everything that comes out of the Attack Initiator will clearly be from us” meekly explained Gook, now seeing the glaring flaw in his design.

“But you wanted it all singing all dancing Kim Jong...”

“Oh never agree to that requirement,” groaned Dung.

“...so I made an all singing all dancing security interface to the doll, the Attack Initiator. Only I know how it works,” continued Gook, obviously proud of his creation.

“So there’s no chance of the attack sequence being accidentally initiated?”

“Oh no. And even if it did, we’d know about it” assured Gook. Kim Jong-un paused in thought, and a small amount of hope rose in the hapless Koreans that their megalomaniac leader would let them go. The storm hadn’t even started yet.

“So why’s my nob throbbing?”

“Kim Jong-un?” questioned Dung in surprise.

“My nob, Dung. It’s throbbing.”

“Have you spoken to Dr Nathanael?” kindly suggested Bong.

“This nob, Bong.” Kim Jong-un opened a desk drawer and pulled out a pulsing red rattle. Dung’s jaw fell slack.

“Dung, you gave this to me before flying to London to work on the attack satellite launch. You said it would show me the progress of an attack sequence initiation. What’s it telling me now?”

“Erm,” Dung began and glanced at Gook.

“Erm, that the attack sequence has been initiated” Gook confirmed weakly.

“I thought you said that couldn’t happen Gook,” demanded Kim Jong-un. Gook went pale and Dung started to sweat.

“You wrote an attack sequence app for my phone Gook, why hasn’t that alerted me?” demanded Dung, making a weak attempt at blame passing.

“Is your phone switched on?” suggested Gook. Dung reached into his suit jacket pocket and pulled out a phone, then muttered under his breath as he switched the device on.

“So, let me get this straight,” began Kim Jong-un. “In...”

“Seventeen hours time” Dung looked up from his phone.

“In seventeen hours time, communications will be bouncing around the world which will make our enemies attack each other while we sit back and watch. Then when they’ve finished we pick through the bones and take what we want. That is what I instructed you to do, and the key point is that these communications will appear to be coming from our enemies” Kim Jong-un glowered through the screen at his cowering countrymen.

“Instead...!” yelled Kim Jong-un, starting to go red. “Instead all these communications will clearly be from us and the wrath of the world will be directed straight into my face.”

The Koreans remained resolutely silent as Kim Jong-un's displeasure intensified into a full-blown tornado of unharnessed anger.

"I wanted nuclear warheads flying between our enemies, not directed at us," Kim Jong-un bellowed, leaning across his desk and glaring angrily through the screen.

"Maybe China will see the funny side when they're led to believe that Taiwan is negotiating to become the fifty-first state of America" weakly suggested Bong, who then grimaced and took a small step backwards.

"Get that doll and stop the attack sequence!" roared Kim Jong-un. The Koreans instinctively ducked as Kim Jong-un's stuffies again came flying at the screen.

Sunday

*so it was that the child became king
and the disciples rejoiced with the holy water*

*but for the king had dark powers
and those that trespass against him
for shalt have fire and brimstone rained upon them*

The Koreans acted decisively and immediately. Armed with just a Cuban cigar and a whole lot of hope they headed directly down to Premium Inn. The plan was simple. Just one well aimed puff at a smoke detector and the whole hotel would be evacuated. With good luck and well-timed cunning the Attack Initiator would be theirs. The plan fell apart on arrival when they found the place already besieged by fire engines. What followed was a night of confusion. They eventually tracked the doll's signal to the third floor of the hotel, but while they were searching for the right room, the signal moved again. Until six o'clock that morning the Koreans hung around outside the original garage listening to the strange sounds that were being emitted from within. At around six o'clock the Koreans only just had time to dive behind a Toyota Prius as the garage door was suddenly yanked upwards and a short, balding guy with a backpack ducked out. They followed him back to room 301 where two hours later a tired looking Mojo appeared with the doll in a baby carrier on his back and a bulging supermarket carrier bag in one hand. Doggedly they trailed him back to the venue where he pulled out a map and started muttering to the doll. The Koreans crept closer.

"Well you were a naughty boy last night, weren't you?" chided Mojo as he reached into the shopping bag and pulled out a short length of plasterboard. "Destroying the Auto-Inn machine and all that, Mary was not happy. I blame Wonker, he's a bad influence. Oh and what were you doing with him back down in the garage last night? When we woke up in Wonker's room, both you and him were gone. Mary was panicking. She thought he'd taken you down some club or something and gone and lost you. Then he turned up about six saying that he'd been working on some idea for the closing skit. Says he wants

to borrow you for it. Sounds very mysterious. Says you're going to have a starring role. Of course you're not going to let on are you?"

"Of course it won't it's just a doll you idiot," breathed Bong as he crawled low along the far side of a short wall topped with railings. Mojo swung the baby carrier off his back and took an appraising look at the doll. Baby G was still gripping the little Crown Brewery beer tankard in his right hand, but needed something else to turn him into a true hasher. Mojo had just the thing. From the carrier bag he pulled out a much smaller bag with a carrying handle and slung it over Baby G's shoulder. Into the bag he poured a small amount of flour. There, that was much more like it. Slipping Baby G back onto his back he pulled a map from his pocket and pondered how the hangover trail should begin. Bong crawled closer. Mojo had his back to the railings and the doll was just within reach.

"So, now you're our new King of the Hashers it's about time you set your first trail," continued Mojo conversationally as he bent down to chalk an arrow. A sweeping hand just missed Baby G as Bong stretched at full reach through the railings. Bong cursed as Mojo continued the line of arrows towards the nearest green area.

Gook ducked low in the bushes. Mojo was coming his way and stopped just yards away where an overgrown path disappeared into a tangle of undergrowth bounding the edge of a playing field. Commando style Gook crawled his way towards where Mojo was standing.

"Twinkle Toes was going to set the hangover trail himself, but was happy to let you have the privilege" muttered Mojo as he chalked a circle on the pavement. Gook crawled closer through the undergrowth and discarded lager cans, but the stalker was being stalked. A predatory pair of eyes were watching from the undergrowth as Mojo was explaining trail markings to his new prodigy.

"I think we'll have a check here Baby G. It's a circle that marks where the trail disappears for a while. It slows the front-runners down while they look for where the trail continues and that keeps everyone together. Clever huh?"

Rufus loved to play, and crawling about in the undergrowth looked like a great game. Eagerly he weaved his way through the bramble stems towards his new

playmate. The sole of a protruding trainer was just too big a temptation. With a little jump and a yap, yap, yap, the playful Jack Russell sank his teeth into the sole of Gook's trainer. Mojo glanced around but saw nothing. Taking the little footpath to the playing field was just too obvious. Instead he continued the trail on towards the canal.

Less than a couple of centuries ago, London's industrial heartland relied on its network of waterways. The Regents Canal, River Lee Navigation, Hertford Union Canal and the Limehouse Cut were all major arteries of commerce. Now the waterways enjoy quieter times, playing host to commuting cyclists, Sunday morning strollers, cruising boat dwellers and the occasional hash trail. With a new born August sun casting gentle warmth across the metropolis, Mojo happily cast blobs of flour along a stretch of tranquil towpath as he chatted away to Baby G.

"Oh, it would have been lovely to have Mary with us this morning" wistfully muttered Mojo as he approached a row of canal boats. "She was in a funny mood when she got up though. Would have thought she'd be happy having somewhere comfortable to sleep last night. Women! Never will understand them. We're trying to save money but she just keeps buying these pregnancy-testing kits. She's spending more on them than we use to do on birth control. Still, there's always hope. Would you like a little brother or sister?"

Dung and Bong trailed at a distance. They slunk behind a graffitied wall as Mojo stopped by a picnic table and set the bag and the doll down onto it. Resting himself against the edge of the table Mojo studied the map. There were a few options from here. Mojo had his back to the doll as he contemplated whether a check or a false trail would best keep the pack together at this point. After some quick whispering and gesturing between the two Koreans a decision was made. This could be just the opportunity they were looking for. Bong nipped through a hole in a fence onto a parallel road, while Dung took a few fast steps across the tow path then lithely leapt onto the back of a canal boat. Did someone live on this boat? If so then judging by the boat they probably slept on newspaper, had no ownership of a comb or a razor and made do with just a single pair of underpants. The boat was a floating junkyard. Dung tiptoed through the piles of empty lager cans and beer bottles

that scattered the aft deck, then ducked under a buckled bicycle half hanging from the roof to reach the ledge that ran along the outside of the boat. Most canal boats have a ledge and a handrail running along both sides. The handrail was missing from this one, but Dung made do as a passing duck eyed him with interest. Mojo's picnic table lay alongside the end of a line of four boats. Dung peeped over the top of the first one, the floating junkyard boat. Mojo was still there studying his map. If quick, and by using the boats as cover, Dung felt that he had a sporting chance of grabbing the doll.

A stack of metal beer casks filled the bow of the boat. As Dung picked his way through them he noticed that someone, who could profess to no artistic flair, had scrawled the name '*The Offie*' above the forward door of the boat in garish purple paint. The name at least seemed appropriate. With umbrella held out for balance, Dung leapt onto the next boat and ducked down on its aft deck. This stubby thirty footer was a converted coal haulier registered in Yorkshire. She was in a lot better condition than *The Offie* and seemed very well cared for. Someone had lovingly painted a juicy red apple next to her name, '*Scrumpy*'. Dung quickly passed along the outside edge of *Scrumpy* and stepped onto the aft deck of a sleek sixty footer that gleamed with polished black paintwork. It was the boat before the one that Mojo was lounging beside. Dung hopped onto the outer ledge and peeped over the top of the boat. For a moment it looked as if Mojo had gone, leaving the doll alone on the picnic table. Peering higher Dung could glimpse Mojo bent over, forming a circle with flour on the side of the towpath. Dung knew that he had to move fast or Mojo would be moving on. Now was the time to make the grab. Hastily he scuttled along the outer ledge of the narrow boat, past gleaming gold lettering that spelt out the name '*Skylark*'. Nearing the foredeck, Dung was startled by the aft door banging open behind him. His foot slipped and he wildly grabbed for the rail and missed. A duck quacked in alarm as Dung started to gently topple backwards with both arms flailing madly. The duck dived for cover as Dung made a panicked lunge with his umbrella. He just managed to hook the umbrella's handle over the rail, but now completely off balance Dung swung in a great arc and tumbled onto the foredeck with a loud bang. Breathing hard and with heart pounding, Dung was flat on his back with his head between two flowerpots when the foredeck

doors swung open. A bearded man in his sixties, with a tobacco pipe protruding from the corner of his mouth and a disapproving frown marking his forehead stared down at him. Dung scrambled apologetically to his feet as the boat owner was demanding to know what exactly Dung was doing on his boat.

“Awfully sorry sir,” grimaced Dung in his politest textbook English. “I’m from Korea and we just don’t have canals over there. We have nothing like this and it’s just great”, he waved a hand expansively and tried to assume a disarming smile. “I just wanted to know what it felt like to stand on one of these.”

“Hey don’t mention it”, grinned the boat owner warmly. A little poodle poked its head through the open doorway and yapped happily.

“Sorry for the intrusion,” Dung hastily continued. “I’ll just be on my way now. Was just out for a pleasant Sunday morning stroll along the canal. That’s all.”

Dung made to step from the boat, but the owner was having none of it.

“Hey we’re just off up the canal. Ol’ Skylark needs some maintenance. Join us, the kettles on. We love having guests.” Dung was about to protest but was interrupted by the sound of an engine starting in the aft.

“Hey Rosie, we have a visitor” called out Dung’s new canal friend.

“Hiya” cheerfully called back an ageing woman with bushy flaming red hair. On the canal side Mojo glanced around as a narrow boat cast off.

“All aboard the Skylark!” he heard someone call out in a suitably theatrical accent. Mojo did a double take as the boat passed by. Wasn’t that the tall Korean hasher who was stood in the bow looking decidedly bewildered?

For the next three miles Mojo chatted away to Baby G about the art and science of trail setting. How the streets and woodlands are a hare’s canvas, and how to position markings at junctions so that even the most unobservant don’t miss the turn. For a frustrating hour Bong and Gook trailed behind with no chance of getting near enough to make a grab for the doll. Finally Bong was able to second guess that Mojo would be heading for some wooded scrubland beside the river Lee. Cutting ahead he made to set up an ambush as Gook scraped along with half of the sole of his right trainer hanging off and Jack Russell claw marks adorning the lower half of both legs.

Mojo was explaining differences in haring styles across the world as he entered the wood. The venue was close, just over the other side of the playing field. Mojo stopped under a tree and glanced around. One final check then the 'On Inn'. Perfect.

"I was hashing out in Malaysia a couple of years ago," Mojo chatted away to the plastic doll on his back. "Couldn't believe it. The hare over there doesn't even go around with the pack, marking the checks through and all that. He just sits and drinks beer and waits for the runners to come back. We're going to be following everyone around, making sure no one gets lost aren't we Baby G?"

A hand dropped down from the lower branches of the tree just as Mojo bent down to form the check. Bong cursed under his breath, and struggled to keep his balance on the branch. Mojo stood and purposefully strode off into the playing field. The bar in the venue should be open by now and he was getting thirsty. Behind him a loud thud echoed from within the trees.

"That sounded like a pretty big squirrel, didn't it?" commented Mojo without glancing back.

Bong picked himself up from the ground and angrily aimed a kick at the tree. Gook, and a rather breathless Dung approached as Bong hobbled around cursing and holding his foot. Then he aimed an even more furious kick at something that wouldn't bruise his toe.

"I nearly had it. Twice!" seethed Bong as he glared angrily across the top of some bushes at the sight of Mojo disappearing across the playing field.

"I was pretty close as well, damn dog," cursed Gook.

"Yeah, and I got to hear all about British Waterways regulations A001 through to F069. And I got to see how a canal boat's septic tank is emptied" grumbled Dung. "But at least the tea was nice."

"Well, he's almost back to the venue. We'll have to try to get hold of the doll back there," seethed Bong in exasperation. "We just didn't have a good enough opportunity to grab it."

"Ha, at least you've screwed up their trail for them Bong" happily observed Gook.

"How?"

“Look, you’ve kicked that check through. You’ve stuck a large footmark right though one side of it. Now instead of heading off across the field, the whole pack will be heading down that little path there. God knows where that leads to.”

A sudden thought hit Bong like a thunderbolt, or one of the nuclear missiles that would be aimed directly at Pyongyang if they didn’t stop the attack sequence within the next few hours.

“Seen a ghost, Bong?”

“No, just seen the solution. Where can we get a few bags of flour from?”

“And the ‘on on’ is that way,” pointed Mojo with his elbow having greeted the bleary eyed pack and explained the markings of their Sunday hangover trail. The pack sauntered off in varying stages of recovery from the excesses of the night before. Mojo followed on behind with Baby G still in his baby carrier strapped to his back and a bag of flour in hand for marking through.

“So where’s Mary?” asked Twinkle Toes as he caught up with the back of the pack.

“Got a text from her earlier. Says she might not make the ‘on out’ and that we have to talk.”

“That doesn’t sound promising,” emphasized Twinkle.

“Yeah, I’ve probably squeezed the toothpaste at the wrong end again” grimaced Mojo.

Also notably absent were the Koreans. Bong was dusting flour off of himself by the time that the approaching shouts of “on on” could be heard across the meadows. He hurried on through the unfamiliar network of overgrown footpaths. For the last hour they had woven an extra half a mile of trail through thick undergrowth and had established three ambush points. One of them should surely snare them the doll as Mojo dashed on after the pack with Baby G still on his back. Bong’s was the first of the ambush points. He had spent half an hour propping up logs and branches to form a tunnel through which the pack would need to crawl. He would be hiding on top of the thick pile of foliage and grabbing the doll would be a simple case of reaching through when Mojo crawled underneath. The plan was good, but Bong had missed a turning when backtracking to his position. The shouts were getting

closer. Bong felt panic rising in his veins, then he accidentally burst into the clearing where he had angrily kicked through the check. Like a rabbit caught in headlights Bong dashed madly about as the first runner entered the wood.

Zebedee regarded the check with interest as Bong crouched behind a bush just a few feet away. He had broken the last three checks and was convinced he was leading the pack, but this check was clearly kicked through. Someone was still ahead. Zebedee bounded on down a narrow footpath and very quickly found fresh flour. The trail twisted between trees and pushed deeper into bushes until he was forced down onto his hands and knees to crawl under a long obstruction of logs and branches. This was good. This was really good. This was what hashing was supposed be about. Further along the ground became boggy and the trail led across a log over a fetid stream. On the far side he had to squeeze between two trees.

“Hi Gook” Zebedee cheerfully called out as he pushed through the gap. Gook seemed to merge himself further behind a tree. Zebedee leapt on through the shrubbery thinking it strange that he hadn’t seen any of the Koreans on trail until now, but the blobs of flour were before him and there was a lot of beer to be drunk back at the venue. Finally the trail hit a high twelve-foot chain link fence. Beyond it was a ditch with a line of flour blobs leading up to a playing field. Zebedee peered through the wire, not understanding at first how to get through. Then he noticed the thick tree branch that had been propped up alongside the fence, and a line of old pieces of rope that had been tied around a metal fence post to form handholds for climbing down the other side. Clever. Someone had really thought this trail through. Zebedee eagerly climbed on up the branch, clinging onto the wire fence for support. Behind him a long curtain of ivy shrouded a shadowy figure with an umbrella at the ready. The umbrella wasn’t for hooking anything from him and the figure slunk further behind the ivy shroud.

Bong was silently cursing as a constant stream of hashers kept him pinned behind the bush. The faster runners were first, hardly hesitating to dash on into the vegetation. Next were the joggers who paused for a breath before pushing their way into the undergrowth. Then finally the walkers and

chatterers ambled along and stood around chatting about the sudden change in terrain whilst not actually making any progress into it. Mojo came up behind them with Baby G still bouncing along in the carrier on his back.

“Who kicked this through?” he demanded as he gazed down at the wrongly marked check. Nobody knew.

“Trail goes that way,” Mojo indicated across the field. The walkers ambled off as Mojo reached into the carrier bag and found that he was down to nothing but flour dust. In annoyance he reached behind him and half pulled Baby G out of the baby carrier as he grabbed the little bag of flour that the doll had hooked over its shoulder. It wasn't much but was enough to repair the damage to his trail and get the small remainder of the pack headed 'on inn' in the proper direction. Baby G rocked precariously on the edge of his baby carrier as Mojo stood up from fixing the check. After just a few steps the doll fell to the ground unnoticed. Bong stiffened behind his bush, his eyes glued to the doll. Would Mojo notice? Oblivious Mojo broke into an easy jog to catch up with the walkers. Bong immediately saw the flaw in his plan. He had assumed that Mojo would follow the new trail, but this was now irrelevant. The doll lay just a few feet from him, alone and unguarded. Bong crept out from behind his bush and grabbed the doll. Triumphantly he held it out before him. His country would now be saved from near-certain nuclear annihilation.

“Hey you found my baby,” called out a happy voice from behind him. Bong froze, then started to turn as Just Mary plucked the doll from his hands and headed off across the playing field.

By midday the main hall of the venue was filled with noisy, thirsty hashers. Those who'd had enough energy to run the trail had headed straight for the bar. Now the bar area was a seething throng of hashmanity. The general hubbub suddenly exploded into raucous cheers and laughter from the general direction of the craft beer taps. The gathering melee pressed inwards to see what all the excitement was about while the Koreans huddled in a far corner, their brows furrowed with the prospect of their homeland becoming a post apocalyptic nuclear wasteland. Dung checked his phone and grimly announced that they had little over two hours to cancel the attack sequence.

Their attention was taken by a couple of passing Oxford hashers who were still falling about with the hilarity of what had just happened over by the beer taps.

“I can’t believe that someone let Doughnut change a barrel.”

“Yeah, I saw the beer fountain go up. He went and got himself covered in Naked Ladies” both roared with laughter.

“That’s a nice Twickenham ale, I hope it wasn’t the last barrel.”

As the Oxford hashers wandered off, Mojo and Just Mary entered through the main doors. The Koreans glared at them as they wistfully wandered hand in hand towards the soft drinks bar where a partially cleaned up Doughnut was now serving. This was presumably for health and safety reasons – his health and safety.

“I’ve had a call from Kim Jong-un” began Dung, his voice grave and tinged with foreboding. “He is seeking assurances.”

“We should go in hard. Grab the doll and make a run for it” reasserted Bong.

“No!” warned Dung harshly. “We’ve seen these guys run, well the ones without beer guts anyway. They’ll chase us down in an instant. We need to outwit them.” All three Koreans glared across to where Mojo and Just Mary had become surrounded by a small gathering of hashers.

“Here’s one of their henchmen,” urgently whispered Gook. All three glanced around then tried to shy away as Baps approached them.

“Hi guys, you do the hangover trail?”

“We were there,” growled Bong.

“Baby G helped Mojo set it. Everyone says it was rather good” enthused Baps. “You guys staying for the closing ceremony?”

“We’ll be here,” Dung confirmed, and the Koreans sidled away. Baps wandered off to congratulate Mojo. Slyly Dung slipped away from his subordinates and hurried after Baps. The outwitting had begun.

Mojo managed to keep his face set in a bemused grin as a gaggle of awed hashers enthused over his trail.

“Loved the bit where we had to crawl under all those branches.”

“Oh, then there was that balancy bit across that log. That was great.”

“I would never have thought to set the trail over that fence like that.”

Mary clung to her husband's arm and basked in the reflected glory. Today was a good day.

"Err, yes, well I was inspired by Baby G" managed Mojo. What bit over the fence?

"Here's to our King of the Hashers," someone cried out, and glasses were raised to the new messiah. Soon cheers to the king were rolling across the hall. Bong hung back in the distance, waiting for a chance to edge closer to the doll. Dung had been wrong. Desperate times required desperate measures. His mind was working hard formulating plans, but as he eyed the doll, a predator was approaching.

As DJ Jazzy Jizz was warming up his decks, Mojo was quickly accumulating film star kudos. All he needed now was a pair of Oakleys and an entourage of producers and suited security heavies. Instead all he had was a plastic doll and a wife. The wife finally managed to drag him to one side for that private chat. Bong watched like a hawk. Mary led Mojo over to a quiet area by the lost property table and absently laid the doll upon it while she focused all of her attention on her husband. Bong glared on. This looked like being a serious talk, and the best chance for a snatch so far within the venue. He started to casually gravitate in the general direction of the pair while pretending to jig around to Psy's 'Gangnam Style'. The predator moved in.

"Hi" beamed Smelly the Elephant as she grabbed hold of Bong by both hands. "I like your moves. Let's dance."

Blunderbird was already occupying the dance area, spinning around in a blur of blue kimono. Deftly keeping out of his way another couple were twirling each other around like seasoned ballroom dancers. Everyone recognised them. It was Egg and Sperm Number One from the much-celebrated skit of the previous evening. Inspired, Smelly roughly pulled her startled intended conquest towards the middle of the hall. Bong glanced over in anguish at Mojo and Just Mary. The doll was lying on the table behind them seemingly forgotten. This was that golden opportunity that they had been waiting for, but he now had this ageing old elephant of a woman clinging to him and staring at him devouringly. With little enthusiasm Bong started to spin her around on the dance floor as a burst of applause rose from the gathering

audience. Sperm Number One had just lifted Egg into the air as if she were as light as a butterfly.

“Do that to me” urged Smelly. Bong gripped the over optimistic lump of woman around the waist and tried to haul her skywards. With her heels barely off the ground he was forced to dump her back down before he did a serious mischief to his back. Bloody hell she was as heavy as a wrecking ball. Bong again glanced earnestly over at the forgotten doll. The conversation between Mojo and Mary was looking intense, but may not last for much longer. He had to make the grab now, but how to get away from this wrecking ball?

Wrecking ball, mused Bong to himself. That was the answer. The frown left Smelly’s brow at Bong’s lack of success at lifting her, and instead turned to a smile of joy as his interest in her seemed to crank into a higher gear. Taking her by both hands he started to spin her around, quicker and quicker until they were both dizzy and sweating. Closer and closer Bong edged his wrecking ball towards the pair who were showing no attention for anything apart from each other. Smelly gasped in delight as she was twirled across the rapidly filling dance floor. Nearly in position, Bong squinted as he tried to judge the optimum moment to send Smelly sailing backwards into the chatting pair and escape with the doll in the middle of the confusion. Faster, faster, Bong could feel the centrifugal force pulling the mass of woman from him. He just needed that perfect moment, that opportune gap in the crowd to release his grip on Smelly’s sweaty palms.

“It’s about the best hope we have of getting that doll,” Dung was explaining to a slowly nodding Gook. He glanced around in search of the final member of his team, and a scowl of annoyance crossed his face. Inconveniently his subordinate was now in the clutches of that awful harriet with the lipstick and the oversized chest. This was really not an appropriate time to be fraternising.

“We need to regroup and put plans into action,” Dung asserted. “And you’d never catch me anywhere near a thing like that lump.” Then he purposefully strode off into the swirl of bopping hashers to pull the rest of his team together.

Nearly ... nearly ... now! Bong released his grip on Smelly's hands. Shock and horror spread across Smelly's face as she sailed backwards through a gap in the dancing hashers. Her trajectory was perfect. The plan was coming together beautifully. Then a figure stepped from the crowd and bodies collided. Dung had the wind knocked out of him as the full mass of flying harriet caught him in the chest. Bong gaped in horror and disbelief as he watched his carefully orchestrated plan tumble apart. As the two bodies rebounded, the next stop was the ground. Dung hit it first. His shoulder took the brunt of the impact, then he sprawled onto his back. Smelly came down next, face first on top of Dung. Pinned and winded, Dung gasped against the smothering mass of Smelly's cleavage. Heads turned, and Just Mary derisively glared down at the sprawling pair.

"That woman's always either sloppy drunk or throwing herself all over guys" she muttered to her husband, then grabbed Baby G and stalked off.

The stage had been prepared for the final ceremony. It didn't require much, just a table of 'down down' beers, Baps again as the RA, and an attractive harriet as beer wench to keep the beer glasses topped up. The heavy blue curtains had been drawn closed behind the setup to provide a pleasant backdrop. Today, Baps was to enjoy the luxury of a microphone to help him talk over the top of all the annoying private parties. A screech from it turned heads and signalled the start of the formal festivities.

"So, what did we all think of UK Nash Hash Bethnal Green?" boomed Baps across the hall. The hubbub of chattering hashers hushed to a murmur. A few random comments of a comically derogatory nature were issued from the audience.

"Did you all enjoy the food served up by our Romanian caterers?" Baps pressed on with some opening hash humour. "I know that one of our Korean visitors did, although it seems that he was rather disappointed when he found out that the shepherds pie did not contain real sheep dogs and that the hot dogs didn't really contain choice pieces of Doberman." Scattered laughter indicated a good start. Baps cast around for the Koreans. Damn, they were gone. Still, he had plenty of good material lined up. Doughnut was an obvious target. He was still wearing the top half a litre of a barrel of Naked

Ladies. The plan was to go through a few final charges and a naming. Then apparently Wonker had devised something for a final skit. Fingers crossed on that one, although at least they would all be spared from Smelly's belly dancing, and whatever else she had been planning to jiggle about.

Baps made his way through a long list of scrawled notes as the attack sequence counted down towards completion on Dung's smartphone. Big hash weekends like this always generated a wealth of good material for a capable RA. Usually the problem was deciding what not to include. There were plenty of costume malfunctions from last night's pantomime theme. The free-flow bar had, as usual, contributed to some increasingly outrageous behaviour. It was mind-boggling how one young harriet had thought that she could go topless into the photo booth and get away with it. Unfortunately she already had a hash name, but no matter, the stars of the weekend were yet to come.

"There has been one hasher amongst us who has been an absolute star for the whole weekend, right from the red dress run where he was 'conceived'. He has set his first trail – which I understand was an absolute blinder, performed miracles, and murdered Premium Inn's annoying Auto-Inn machine. I am of course referring to our very own Baby G, King of the Hashers. Where is Baby G?"

Silence descended over the hall. All held their tongues in anticipation of the arrival of the king. Baps anxiously scanned the faces before him. Mojo had been at the bar earlier. Now he had very inconveniently vanished.

"Mojo, Just Mary. Please bring forth our king".

The silence continued. His audience was glancing around. No one bustled forwards. Great, first the Koreans had disappeared, now the hash royal family. The assembled hashers started chatting amongst themselves. Where was Baby G? Who saw him last? Baps could feel control of the circle slipping from his fingers. As he asked again for Baby G, King of the Hashers to be brought forwards he failed to notice a movement in the curtains behind him. The audience certainly noticed though. Some of the more astute caught on to what was going on.

"Where is Baby G?" repeated Baps, a twinge of desperation entering his voice.

“He’s behind you!” shouted a handful of hashers. Baps glanced behind him at the expanse of blue curtain hung across the stage.

“No he’s not,” responded Baps into the microphone.

“Oh yes he is” enthusiastically chorused the audience as Baby G again poked his head out from between the curtains. The doll disappeared as Baps turned to take another look, but a movement in the curtain raised his suspicions. So, someone wants to play games do they? Fine.

“Oh no he’s not” sang Baps, rather more jovially.

“Oh yes he is.”

Baps turned sharply as the curtains again flicked closed. Grabbing a curtain edge he pulled it sharply back to reveal Mojo and Just Mary grinning and holding Baby G.

“Ah, so glad you could finally make it,” smiled Baps as he held the curtain open for the pair to step forward centre stage.

“Oh and look, Baby G still has his pint tankard. He might be drinking from that later,” continued Baps, taking Baby G and holding him aloft before the gathered hashers. Now he had their attention.

“Can someone fetch a throne for our king?”

A bar stool was brought on stage. Perfect. Baps seated the doll upon it then turned his attention to more immediate RA matters. In particular he turned his attention to Just Mary.

“Well, as you’re the, err, mother of the King of the Hashers we really can’t keep calling you Just Mary can we?”

“Err, no” Mary conceded, feeling a touch of nervousness that she would finally be getting a proper hash name.

“So, what stories do we have about Just Mary?” Baps began, addressing the audience. Quickly he changed his tack, the story of the moment was already before him. He turned to Just Mary.

“Actually, why don’t you begin by explaining to everyone how you came about acquiring Baby G?” Mary drew a breath. She was later to regret her response, but her head at the time was filled with other issues.

“Well there was a bright light, a big bang, then I found him under a bush.”

Baps grinned, what a great answer – for him. He could hardly hold himself back.

“Well, I’m not too sure if you and Mojo have had a big bang in a while but isn’t it normal for babies to appear from under a bush?”

The audience groaned at this one. Baps quickly moved on.

“OK, do we have any suggestions for a hash name for the mother of Baby G?”

Now the audience were fully engaged. Baps quietly waited for the suggestions to start flooding in. It took but a few seconds.

“Little Green Mum”

“Holy Spirit”

“God’s Bitch”

“Virgin Mary”

“Bush Baby”

“Baby Snatcher”

The suggestions continued until the combined grey matter of the assembled hashers could produce no more. A popular decider on a hash name is the ‘noise-o-meter’ where the loudest cheer to a name suggestion wins, but the final decision is the RA’s and Baps had already decided.

“OK, on your knees” Baps commanded. Mary knelt down on the stage and bowed her head ready for whatever suggestion Baps was going to run with. All eyes were on the RA and the kneeling harriet. Baby G was just a few feet away, but no one noticed the subtle series of small movements at first. The solemn business of the naming ceremony had commenced.

“By the powers vested in me by WHORE hash house harriers...” Baps began.

“Behind you!” came an anxious shout from the audience.

“We’ve done that one,” retorted Baps. Clearly irritated at the interruption at this auspicious moment.

“By the power’s vested in me by WHORE hash house harriers I name you...”

“No, look. Baby G!” The shout seemed even more urgent. Baps glanced across to where Baby G was still seated on the stool.

“What the fuck!” he cursed as he grabbed the edge of the curtain behind Baby G. Pulling it roughly aside the audience gasped at what was revealed. Dung sheepishly gazed up at a quizzical, and rather angry looking Baps. He had slid the handle of his umbrella under the curtain and had been trying to hook the doll’s stool back towards him. An equally sheepish looking Bong and Gook

were crouching beside him. The three Koreans started to rise. Mary was on her feet as well, demanding to know the meaning of all this.

Unusually, the assembled hashers were silent. An elderly hasher stepped forward with a voice that demanded respect.

“I think that we all want to hear what these guys have to say for themselves” began the hasher. “But as a point of order RA, did you just name young Mary ‘What The Fuck’?”

The mood instantly lightened as the audience erupted into laughter.

“Name her ‘What No Fuck’” came a counter suggestion from the midst of the crowd.

“Enough!” commanded Baps. “I think that these guys owe us an explanation.”

“We mean you no harm,” Bong tried to reassure as he took a step forwards. “Peace man.”

“Now, you guys are not all that you said you were, are you?” pressed Baps, holding much more information than some of them were expecting. They seemed to wilt under his gaze, then Baps turned back to the stunned audience.

“Yes, everyone. We have been infiltrated. Dung, Bong and Gook here have been trying to steal our Baby G away from us.”

Mary gasped and Mojo moved to her protectively.

“We’re not, were not, we’re from your Korea operation. We’ve stopped by while over here on business. We’re real hashers” protested Bong over the boos and hisses from the audience who en mass had taken a menacing step forwards.

“Real hashers are you?” quizzed Baps with an unsettlingly confident smile.

“Oh no they’re not” responded the pack.

“Oh yes we are” returned Bong and Gook. Dung remained strangely silent.

“It’s OK guys” began Baps. “I know exactly why you’re here. It seems that one of you is a bit of a Judas Iscariot. I won’t reveal my sources, but Dung, what were you telling me earlier?”

With some satisfaction Baps observed the shock on the faces of Dung’s companions as their project manager protested to them that he had to tell.

“And that was...” prompted Baps.

“Look, we’re actually from the Museum of Childhood” began Dung’s stammering explanation. As a seasoned project manager he had expected that bullshitting his way through this would be routine, but the situation was much more intimidating than expected. “We’ve been commissioned to produce a centrepiece for the Museum’s futuristic toys exhibition. It can sing and it can dance and it can err, climb. But our very expensive prototype climbed over the museum wall and you guys found it.”

“Yeah right” piped up one of the watching hashers. This kicked off several spirited rounds of ‘bullshit, bullshit, it sounds like bullshit to me to me’.

“Well, we don’t steal on the hash,” continued Baps. “If this is yours, then you’d better take it.” Baps plucked the doll from the stool and handed it to Dung. The Korean held it almost joyously before him for a moment then quickly kissed it on the forehead.

“No!” protested Mary. Mojo put an arm around his wife and whispered that it really didn’t matter now anyway.

“But he’s lying, he’s got to be” bewailed Mary in desperation.

“I believe him” jumped in Wally Wonker who had been watching the proceedings with increasing horror. If this all got out of hand, like it looked like it was going to do, then all the effort that he’d put into the closing skit would be wasted. Quickly he climbed onto the stage and plucked Baby G from Dung’s hands.

“You see, just last night I discovered that the Sun, or is it Android technology?” asked Wonker turning to Dung. “Actually does shine out of Baby G’s arse.” Holding up the doll to the gasping audience he pulled down Baby G’s green uniform trousers and showed them the USB port tucked between the doll’s butt cheeks.

“Well, now we need it back, quite urgently actually” asserted Dung as he tried to grab the doll back, but as a seasoned IT contractor Wally Wonker was quite use to seasoned project manager bullshit.

“After all the trouble you’ve caused us, I’m sure that you could spare your doll for another half an hour.”

Dung reached for his phone. The attack sequence was nearly complete.”

“I’m sure it’s not going to cause World War Three if you let us borrow him for a while longer.”

Dung grimaced.

“So, this is the closing skit you were talking about Wonker?” questioned Baps.

“Yep” Wonker grinned as he disappeared with the doll behind the stage curtains.

“OK, Baby G will now be performing the closing skit of UK Nash Hash Bethnal Green!” announced Baps with all the pomp and flare of a circus compère.

“I just need a moment to get set up,” affirmed Wonker as he reappeared carrying a pogo stick with a cardboard cross taped to it.

Some of the more alcoholically imbibed hashers weren't too sure what they had just witnessed, but this looked like a good opportunity to refill empty drinking vessels. Baps cleared the stage of anyone who didn't need to be there, which was pretty much everyone apart from Wally Wonker. Wonker mounted Baby G on the pogo stick cross and busied himself setting up a video camera to project the king's image onto a screen beside the doll. The Koreans retreated to a corner and were in a heated discussion as Wonker sat himself on a chair before the stage and booted up his laptop. He was connecting into Baby G's Wi-Fi interface as Mojo dragged a couple of chairs alongside for himself and Mary when she had returned from the bar. With the occasional sip from a pint of Naked Ladies, Wonker was grinning ear to ear. Everyone was going to love this.

At the bar Just Mary, as she may or may not still be called, caught up with Baps.

“Are you really going to let them creepy Koreans take my baby?” she demanded.

“Well, if it's their property...”

“But he's my baby!”

“It's OK, I've got some magazines at home which shows how to make a real one. It's all in pictures. I'll give them to Mojo for you.”

“He doesn't need magazines thank you very much,” growled Mary. “And what is my new hash name anyway?”

Baps paused with a pint of cider almost to his lips. “Buggered if I know” he shrugged, then strode off towards the stage. Just Mary stared after him in some confusion. She hadn’t even heard that one being suggested.

An image of Baby G secured to the middle of the pogo stick cross was being projected onto the screen by the time that Baps had climbed back onto the stage. He noticed that Baby G’s miniature pint tankard was empty. That was easily remedied from one of the ‘down down’ beers.

“All ready to go” announced Wonker from behind the laptop. Just Mary hurriedly sat herself down beside her husband and the guy that was apparently about to perform miracles with her baby. The microphone had been set up in front of Baby G, so Baps had to fall back on normal voice projection to call for hash hush.

“And now, Baby G will be performing the closing skit for UK Nash Hash Bethnal Green” again proudly announced Baps, then scarpered from the stage. If this all went wrong, whatever was going to happen next, then he wanted to clearly distance himself from any involvement.

“Three minutes” announced Dung glancing at his smartphone as words appeared beneath the image of Baby G on the screen.

“What the hell are we going to do?” hissed Bong, straining to keep the anxiety from his voice. Baby G started to sing, arms and legs moving in time to the tune. Gook was carefully observing what was happening. Wonker had clearly written a script to control the doll, but how had he initiated it from that laptop?

“Bong, he must have opened a Wi-Fi connection. Can you hack into it?”

“I’m onto it,” affirmed Bong, already digging out a new smartphone from his pocket.

Along with the rest of the audience, Mary gaped at her baby singing, and in such an absurdly strange voice. Comments were whispered as everyone watched in awe.

“Ha, that’s Wonker singing on helium!”

“Yeah, but the lip syncing is totally spot on.”

“Oh and I like the way his arms and legs move in time with the tune.”
The tune was very familiar to everyone who remembered the days of Monty Python.

Cheer up RA. You know what they say.
Some hares you know are bad,
They can really make you mad.
The trails they set can make you swear and curse.
When you're wading through the thistles,
Don't shout, just give some whistles!
And that'll help you catch up with the rest.
And

Always look on the bright side of hash!

doo doo
doo doo dee doo dee doo

Always look on the light side of hash!

doo doo
doo doo dee doo dee doo

If your beer seems jolly rotten,
then there's something you've forgotten!
And that's to laugh and smile and dance and shout - on on,

When the flies are biting,
And the weather turns to lightening
Just holler out RU to find where everyone has gone!
And always look on the bright side of hash

doo doo
doo doo dee doo dee doo

Come on!

“And always look on the bright side of hash” chorused the whole audience who were loving every moment of this. Huddled in a corner Dung desperately called out a two-minute warning.

“Are you in yet Bong?” Dung demanded.

Bong just hissed through clenched teeth as he frantically tapped away at his smartphone.

“Give him chance, he’s a top *keyser* remember,” reminded Gook doubtfully.

For hash is quite absurd,
when down down's the final word.
You must always face the RA with a bow!
Forget about your charge – even if the measure’s large,
enjoy it, it's a free beer anyhow!

“So always look on the bright side of hash!” boomed the whole of UK Nash Hash Bethnal Green. Wally Wonker’s grin broadened as he took another sip of his pint. This was going better than expected. What could possibly go wrong?

So always look on the bright side of hash!
It’s all about getting totally smashed.

doo doo
doo doo dee doo dee doo

Work is really shit,
when you look at it.
But hash is a laugh and joke it’s true.

Even in the snow,
There’ll be arrows where you go.
Just remember that the last laugh’s all at you!

“Sixty seconds” groaned Dung in anxious desperation. “Are you in yet Bong?” Bong was perspiring heavily.

And always look on the bright side of hash.

doo doo
doo doo dee doo dee doo

Always look on the bright side of hash.

doo doo
doo doo dee doo dee doo

Come on guys, drink up.

Always look on the bright side of hash.

doo doo
doo doo dee doo dee doo

Always look on the bright side of hash

doo doo
doo doo dee doo dee doo

Worse things happen in Weatherspoons you know.

Always look on the bright side of hash.

doo doo
doo doo dee doo dee doo

I mean, it's all about the booze!
You know, you start at a pub
then you go back to the pub.
So where've you been?
Down the pub!

"Twenty seconds" moaned Dung, seeing imminent failure before him.

"We're toast" muttered Gook under his breath. Bong simply daren't comment.

It was all over.

Always look on the bright side of hash.

doo doo
doo doo dee doo dee doo

Nothing will come from nothing, and lager tastes like nothing,
so drink it down you old bugger.

Drink it down, down, down, down, down, down, down, down.

With this final line Baby G stopped dancing. Only some of the beer had spilled down his front, but now he raised the tankard to his lips and tilted his head back to drink. Wally Wonker looked on with a deep sense of self-satisfaction. He had enjoyed programming this bit, but hadn't realised that the tankard would be full when Baby G raised his arm. It was good that the motor seemed to be strong enough for the extra weight.

Most other drinks glasses were raised in unison to drink with the King of the Hashers. Some of the beer entered the doll's mouth, but most ended up pouring down Baby G's front. As it splashed down the cross someone commented that he couldn't really be expected to hold his beer at his age. Then sparks flew.

"He's short circuited!" someone exclaimed from near the front. The sparks turned to flames as a blur of blue kimono raced up the steps onto the stage. Blunderbird half karate kicked the pogo stick to the ground before jumping up and down on the stricken, smoking doll until all signs of fire had been thoroughly extinguished.

"He's just killed Baby G. He's killed our leader!" gasped one of the harriets near the stage.

"Yes, bloody Japanese. They've got a track record in that" someone gruffly retorted from behind her.

Dung slumped back in his chair as he stared blankly at his smartphone.

"Attack sequence aborted" he managed to breathe with the slow exhale of a man just spared from the gallows. "Fifty nine milliseconds to go." Gook and Bong looked at each other in a bewildered uncertainty of how to react first.

Wally Wonker's chin was nearly resting on the top of his pint glass as he gaped at the smouldering remains of Baby G trampled across the stage.

"Oh hell, I'm erm, so sorry. I didn't realise someone had filled up his tankard" Wonker managed to stammer as he turned to Baby G's next of kin.

Mary just gaped at the scene before her. Tears were welling up in her eyes.

"It doesn't matter now" comforted Mojo with his arm wrapped reassuringly around his wife.

“True, it was just a doll” Mary conceded. “There’s much more important things to worry about now.” Her husband nodded understandingly.

“Look, can I get you two a beer?” offered Wonker, resorting to the man solution to everything.

“Better make it a lime and soda for me thanks. For at least about...” Mary glanced at her husband “...maybe eight months or so.” Both smiled in blissful maternal happiness.

“Well, what do we do now?” questioned Gook like a man whose life’s quest is suddenly over. Dung had already decided.

“I don’t know about you, but I’m going to get a beer.”