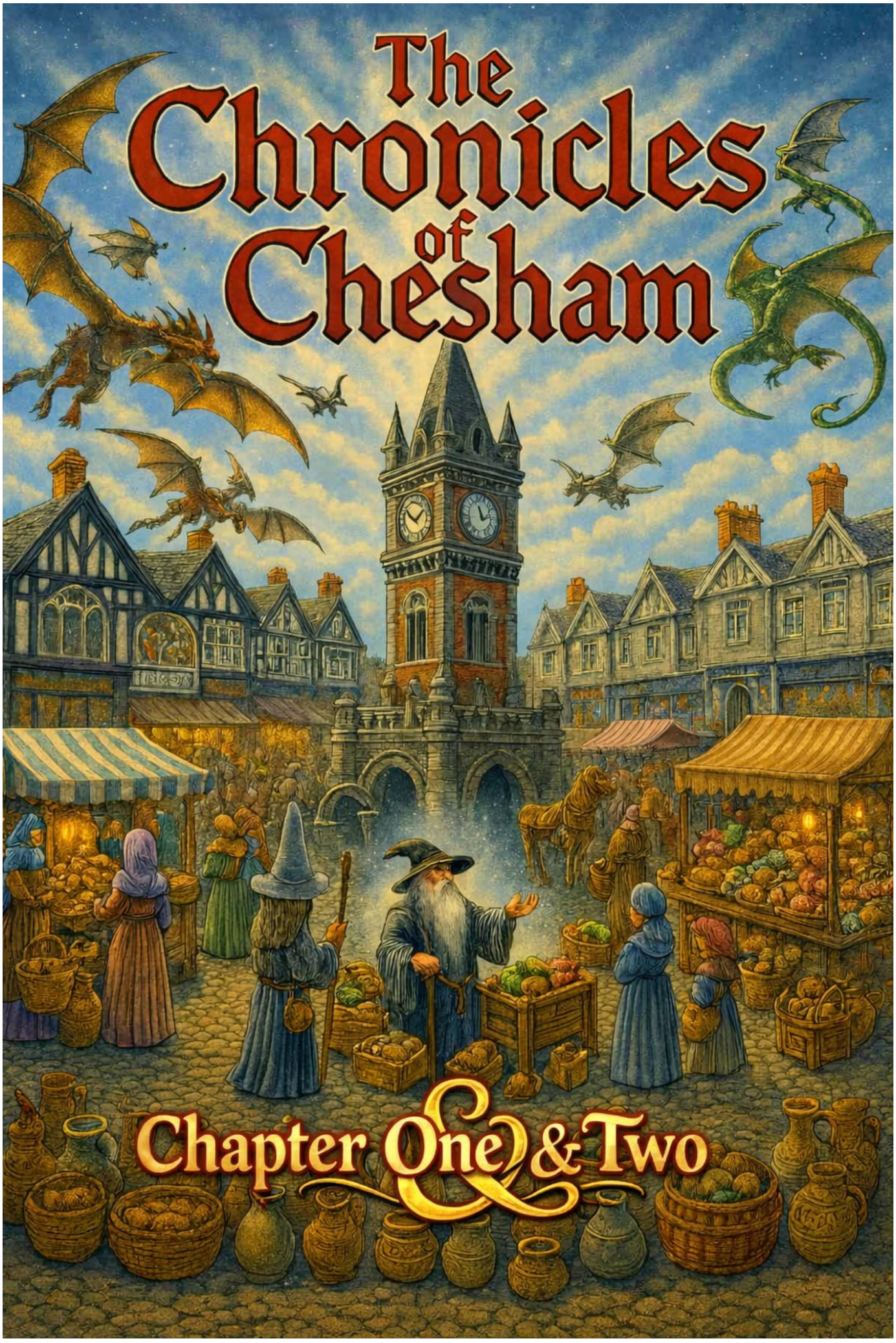
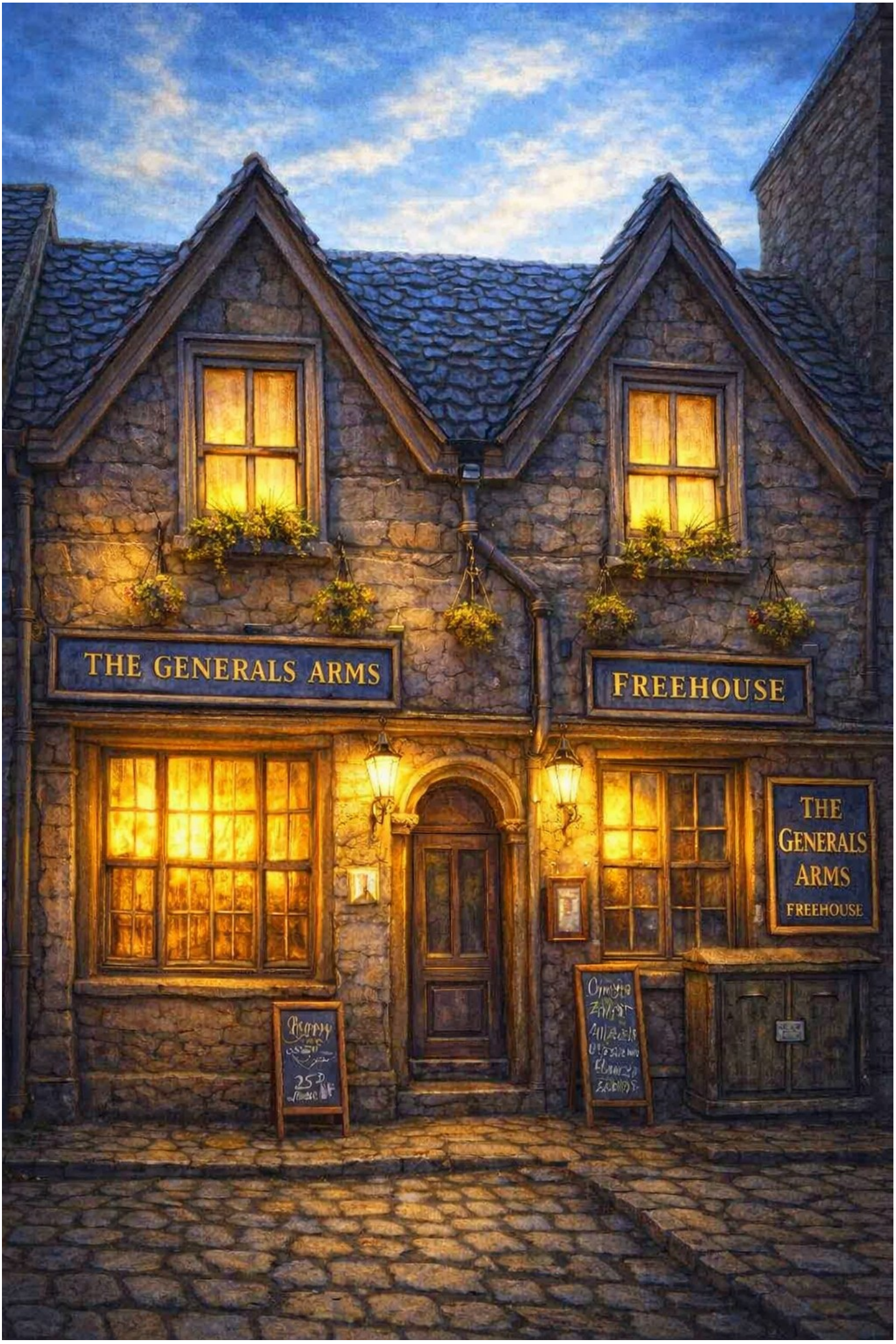

The Chronicles of Chesham
Chapter One & Two


THE GENERALS ARMS
FREEHOUSE
THE GENERALS ARMS
FREEHOUSE

Chapter One - The Beginning

Imagine, if you will, that the universe that we live in has many, many parallel versions. The same people, the same places, just each and every one of them ever so slightly different, thousands of them.

A pick n mix of universes where one could turn left at a junction in one (and get a cola cube), whilst in the other you turn right (and get a liquorice stick). Each time with different outcomes and possibilities for the inhabitants.

And if your mind is open to the possibility of this, then imagine that in some of the universes will be a world that we would recognise as similar to our own, and in others, although familiar, they would be very, very different.

Different periods of time, different technology, different

politics, belief systems, industries, economies, the same gods of course, for these were their playthings, like different versions of the same game, with themes of their choosing, and their believers and non-believers living very much for their amusement but having no idea quite how much so. Quite a shock to find that out when you pop your clogs, I can tell you.

This takes us to one particular universe, where our story begins. The town of Chesham. A melting pot of a town, where magic and ogres, and dwarves and goblins exist. Where law and order are in short supply and it is nearly always raining. There are no magic rings or cloaks of invisibility but if that becomes a useful

plot twist then let's not rule it out altogether.

There were dragons, however. Re-introduced as part of the towns "sustainability" strategy, the council felt that getting them to breed again would be a wonderful thing. There are, of course, now loads of the buggers and they are becoming increasingly more confident, and aggressive.

From the Palace of Lord Jasper in the North East, to the forboding Loop of Pednor, home to the Curious Stones and Herberts Hole. In the centre sits the main square, with its clock tower and markets (Wednesday and Saturday, Local Produce last Saturday of the month – nice!). It is also the place where the infamous Chesham Fringe was born, and the even more infamous "Shake your booty". In the North West lies the Guildmasters Square and the Aisle of the Apothecaries, where the locals go to cure that nasty rash.

Chesham has a unique quirk, every now and then ethereal magic would descend upon the town and it would physically change, overnight, brick by brick until it was the same, but somehow different, sometimes a new building would appear, sometimes new people but it happened in cycles that nobody could predict or understand, regardless of how much they said that they could.

In amongst the darkness, gloom and magic there is one thing true of virtually all residents of Chesham. They really, really like to drink. No, really really.

Some hostelries have tables which are capable of removing your arm hair so efficiently that thrifty ladies have been known to pop in for a wine and wax. There was the plotting place, the Queens Head, where the nefarious and the well heeled come to discuss their ventures, both good and evil.

The serious drinkers head to the market square to the public house called Trekkers, that furnishes its customers with fantastical ales from lands far away, and then there is the Generals Arms.

The Generals Arms, situated near The Barracks, where the town garrison protects Chesham from unwanted intruders, mainly from High Wycombe. In the Generals you can gamble, drink, eat well (the Chesham sausage is glorious apparently) and fight. Perfect fayre for any soldier, and if you were lucky then you wouldn't have to spend the night in the Chesham Gaol (conveniently situated nearby). And of course, the Drawing Room, more mystical than magical, run by a monk like character named Richard of the Robe, it was boozy too, of course.

There were others, of course, the Jolly Sportsman for those who like to throw dwarves, and Vault Seventeen, which concealed a myriad of tunnels and secrets below its cellars.

Such is the thirst of the residents of Chesham that the Town Council had been forced to move recycling day from fortnightly to every single day due to the enormous amount of empties put out in the streets. Beer bottles, wine bottles, spirits, the

lowest standards and exclusive vintages, these people would drink an ocean dry.

To walk along Church Street on empties day was a wonder to behold, how does anyone get anything done?



And it is in the south west of the town that our story begins, at the Queens Head. For today is not any ordinary day. Today is Shouty Wednesday.



Chapter Two – The Queens Head

The Queens Head. The place where deals were done, pacts were struck and an awful lot of nonsense was spouted, no more so than on “Shouty Wednesday”. A place of low wooden beams, swords on the walls and a fire that burns bright and long, as if fired by some kind of ethereal magic (but was actually down to a pyromaniac called D.O.B).

Wonderful ales were served, in a jug or a straight glass depending upon what kind of guy (or girl) you are.

The public house was made of two main bars, the place where the (relatively) normal people went to eat, drink and be (relatively) normal. And then … the saloon bar, the home of Shouty Wednesday, so called because of the deafening volume of just eight of its members.



The bar was staffed by Madame Manuella, a fierce lady with an incredible instinct for hostelry. She could sell condoms to a eunuch. When sat down for Shouty Wednesday, the ale flowed constantly, thanks to the efficient system run by Madame Manuella. For because of Madame Manuella, no one had to get up to get a drink, it came to you as soon as she could see your glass needed charging.

Of course, the by product of this was even more shouting and it took much longer to walk home for most of the constituents of Shouty Wednesday.

And so, why was Shouty Wednesday called so. The members would probably very much like to think that they came up with it but it was originally coined by a despairing River Elf, named Squeaky Dog Bob.

His name was indeed Bob, and his dog too was particularly squeaky. In these parts it was easy to earn a nickname but almost impossible to lose it, just ask John the Tosser in the beer garden, he won't throw anything across the pub again.

Squeaky Dog Bob, whose dog was actually quite deaf, was a left leaning River Elf. The sort you might find at protests, if he could be bothered. He was a frequenter of the saloon bar, and on one such occasion, when the volume had hit record levels, he took his squeaky dog, left the bar and as he did so turned around with a grand sweep of his arm and said "Oh god, it's Shouty Wednesday again!" Never to return to the main event ever again. And to the attendees.

Jeff the Engineer, a man of many complications. For although he claimed to be an engineer (an occupation that was not well known to the citizens of Chesham), he dressed exactly like a Wizard. He wore a wizardy hat, red velvet with gold moons and stars on, beneath which he had a fine mop of silvery hair. He wore a wizardy robe (more gold moons and stars) and he even had wizardy shoes, curled at the ends and made of the finest red leather. Jeff the Engineer had strong views, that became even stronger when tempered with some of the Queens Heads finest ales.



Then there was Frank the retired merchant. Frank was a man of some magnificence, he wore a top of the range portable sun dial on his wrist, that was made from the finest manufacturers in the whole of Chesham, Bolex. He wore the finest clothes, designer of course, and his footwear had the longest and curliest toes to them, to demonstrate his vast wealth. Frank liked nothing more than a fabulous lunch, and then there was his transport.

Most citizens of Chesham transported themselves via the medium of their own feet. Not so Frank. He had got made for himself a chariot, it had beautiful red paint, it had beautiful cream leather within which he and one other could sit. It had beautiful red wheels with gold trims and most unusual of all it needed no horses. It had been put together by a sorcerer from a far away land whom Frank had met when not a retired merchant. It was voice activated, however the thick accent of the people from where it originated meant that the chariot sometimes found it hard to understand Frank, and was prone to getting instructions wrong.



For example, once when instructed to slow down it misheard it as “mow down” and the twins of Church Street have never been the same since.

Then there was Ben, also a merchant (semi-active), originally from a far off land but now very much a Chesham resident. He wore traditional merchant robes of fine material, and also had a flash sun dial on his risk (of the Bolex brand, natch). Ben was prone to making deals, in itself of no particular issue. However, Ben also was a very, very enthusiastic consumer of ale. This meant that to do business with Ben, you had to also be an ale enthusiast – or try to be. The, slightly, disappointing result of this was that although many deals were struck in that place, no-one could really remember what they were, and so the cycle continued, night after night.

And now to Richard, the half goblin. A quiet creature in comparison to the others, friendly and amiable, with a



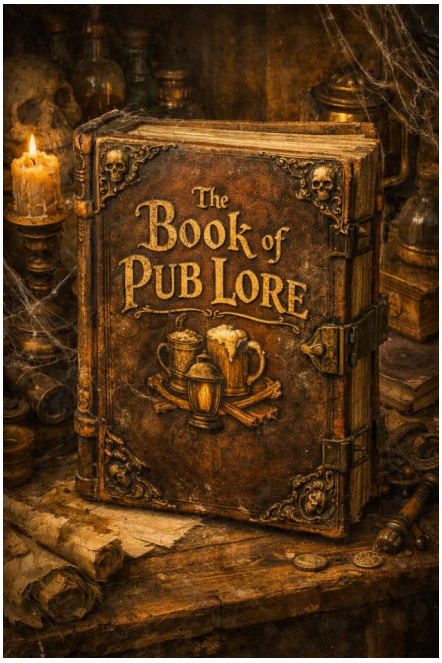
wonderful greyish green tinge to his skin, pointy ears and slightly pointy protruding bottom teeth, as is common with the half goblin variety. He always wore a slightly

armoured tunic, and kept a 9 inch curved goblin knife tucked into the back of his belt – just in case.

Half goblins are a rariety in this part of the world, legend had it that Richard's father had a spectacular night out at the Jolly Sportsmen, and in the morning was awoken by a lady goblin who had somewhat taken advantage of his inebriated state – 9 months later Richard arrived.

This was not the only anomaly with Richard, who was also known as Ian. There was, of course, a simple explanation for this.

<u>Pub Lore Fact</u>



As with all public house lore, a man can ask another man his name the first time that he meets him, he may even ask for a reminder the second time that they meet but after that it is impolite to not remember another mans name.

<u>End of Pub Lore Fact</u>

Frank had been in this very situation and decided that Richard must be called Ian, and has so called him Ian for the last few years of their acquaintance. Richard/Ian being too polite to correct him has just put up with it.

Also present was the night watchman of the great gates to Chesham, Mick. He was a burly chap with a tendency to wear his night watchmen armour all the time. Due to the nature of his job, Mick the Watchman knew every single person in Chesham, and everything that they did.



Mick was a sports

fanatic, football in particular, although his love was for

unfancied lower division teams – it gave him something to moan about. Mick was also something of a writer, penning many articles on Chesham's "amazing" decision to leave the Buckinghamshire Union (or BU), a trading bloc of different towns that had encouraged free trade and free movement (not on his bloody watch). He felt it was an alright idea to begin with until he was being told who he could and couldn't let in through the Chesham gates, that was after all, his job.

This sometimes put him at odds with Frank, who was somewhat pro BU and had wished that there had not been a Chesham referendum to come out of the BU. Both, however, knew that this was not a conversation to get Jeff running on – but of course they did .

And then to Timmy, tattooed Timmy the Orc. Orcs were similar to goblins in appearance, except they were rather louder on the laughing front. Some could hear Timmy laughing from the next town on a good night. Timmy, as with a lot of orcs, was born and bred to work on the nascent Chesham transportation system.

A brilliant idea of large carriages pulled by large horses to get the residents of the town around in an inexpensive fashion.



Brilliant indeed, until the Bringing Orcs Living Life Outside Collective Knowledge Standards Union was born. A movement dedicated to improving the lives of Orcs working on the transport system by making sure that they never really did any work at all. There have been so many strikes and disputes that most residents have forgotten that there was a transport system in the first place. Last month Timmy did work 3 days, but he doesn't like to talk about it.

Always tucked away in the corner of the table was Bob, a smiley individual with exceptionally lovely hair for a man of his years, a silvery mane swept back across his head like a septuagenarian chip monk. Bob was small in stature, wore basic clothes and the most ridiculous shoes for a venue such as the Queens Head.

He was a fan of the sandal type shoe – Grogs. He loved his Grogs but they unfortunately did mean that through the many holes in them his toes were visible, and not necessarily to everyone's taste. Bob carried a wooden staff, even though he didn't need it, to make himself appear wiser but the really fascinating fact about Bob was the unbelievable volume he could achieve on a Shouty Wednesday, much to the annoyance of Frank who found this quite objectionable.

Bob and Frank were not a good combination, and some poor bugger who was caught sat between them on a Shouty Wednesday would soon be subject to a masterclass of back-ward and forward abuse.

Some members of the Shouty Wednesday gathering would count in their heads before the first insult was thrown, and then – off we go again.

No one really knows why but it is understood that Frank once parked his voice activated chariot on Bob's front garden and squashed his turnips.

Maybe some day we will all know.



And finally, there was Russ, the outsider. He had arrived in Chesham only recently and somehow snuck his way into Shouty Wednesday on the basis of his enthusiastic consumption of ale, telling of extremely poor jokes at inopportune moments, and that he was apparently some sort of musician on the quiet. No one really knew how he made money because no one ever saw him go to work but enthusiasm was everything, and if you were good at drinking then Shouty Wednesday is the spiritual home for you.

Russ was a fan of the jug drinking vessel, perhaps because it resembled his own body shape.



Aside from this core group who attended Shouty Wednesday, there was one other character who was ever present in the saloon bar, Mr D.O.B (pronounced Dee Oh Bee). He was slight in stature, bald and tanned, and was single handedly propping up some of the less well to do hostelries in Chesham. He would walk miles from public house to public house until he would eventually arrive at the Queens Head.

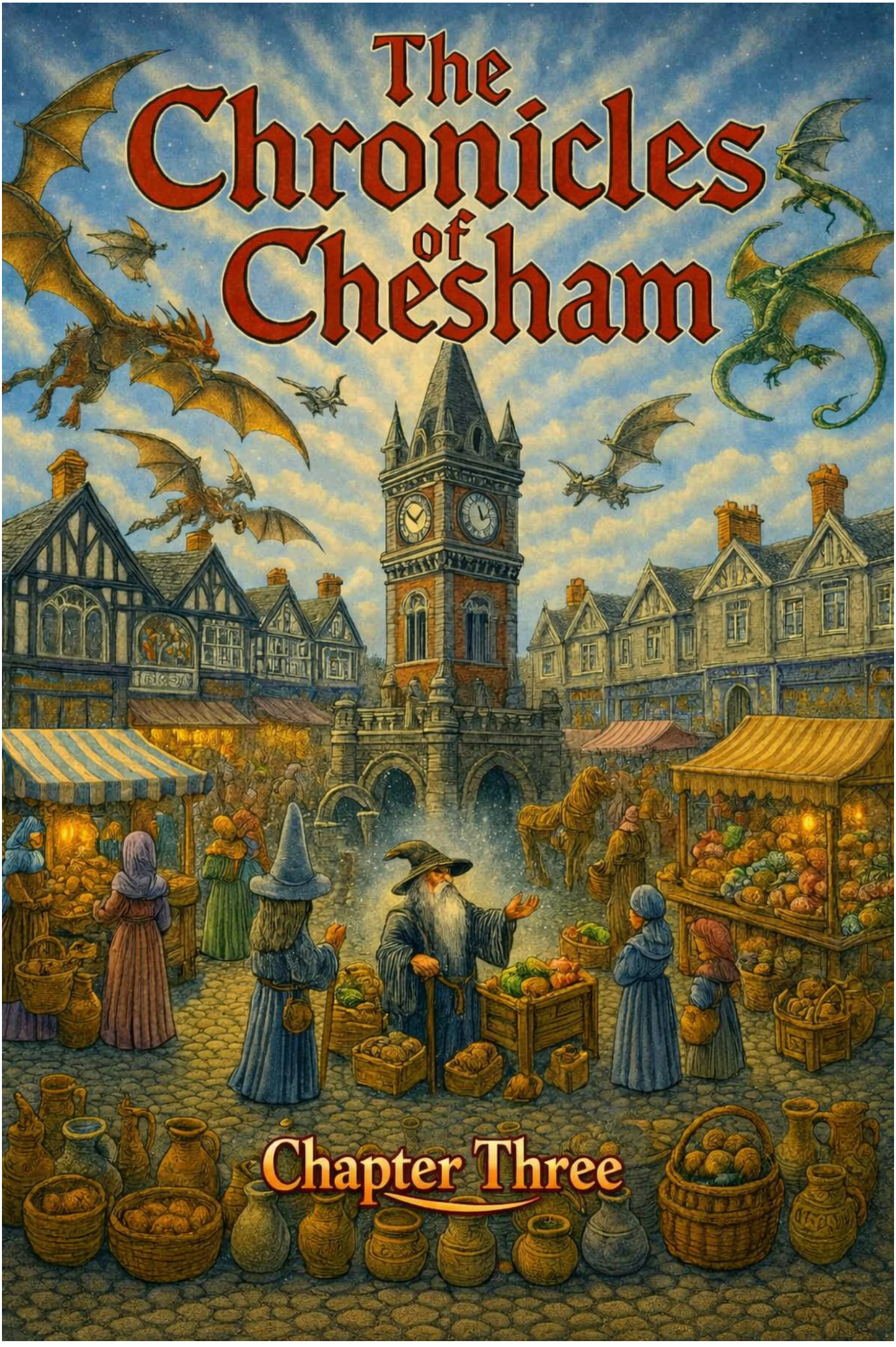
Casual observers have noted that he does not always make sense by the time he had got there. It was known that D.O.B was often too busy to go to work, and he was very, very sensitive to temperature. Upon arriving at the Queens Head, the Shouty Wednesday crew would often shout to him “How many layers on today D.O.B?” This would be met by a loud “whhhhooooooooaaaaaa” sound, to which D.O.B would just smile his rascally smile with his twinkly eyes and remove four layers of clothing before ordering his grog.

At that point he would then go to the fire and put on enough logs to heat the whole of Buckinghamshire.

And he would continue to do so for the rest of his stay. Everyone else just accepted that if D.O.B was there, it would be hotter than a summers day in hell.

And so, the scene is set. It is time to get on with the plot, an exercise that could well be very disappointing for you.




The Chronicles of Chesham
Chapter Three

Chapter 3 – Getting on with the Story

And so, on this fine Shouty Wednesday, Frank was not in a good mood, he had spent the entire afternoon out in his chariot looking for people to splash, and had not had a single success – very disappointing.

All that talk of splashing had focused the minds of the group on the Queens Head wet shirt competition, that was extremely popular with the locals. Now this is an alternative universe, so let's allow for some explanation. Yes this was an exercise in drenching human beings (and other creatures) so that their attire became wet and clingy but there were two main differences.

Firstly, this was an activity that was strictly men only (sexist!), and secondly the liquid that was used was beer. This had created an interesting sub-competition, which is who could open their mouth the widest and catch the most beer whilst being drenched. Who looked the most fetching after becoming beer soaked had become something of secondary consideration.

It turns out that being loud also meant that you were quite good at keeping your mouth wide open, and Timmy the Orc and Bob between them had caught nearly a gallon in one fling of the bucket. Their technique had been studied and copied over the years, until nearly all of the locals were getting better at this vital life skill.

And then comes the unfortunate drawback, the competition had become so boozy that no one could really remember who had won, or cared.

And so, back to this Shouty Wednesday, the saloon bar was full of the crew and room was tight. The table that everyone liked to sit around consisted of a long wooden table, and a bench that would not look out of place at Lord Jaspers great debating chamber. Enough room for three, the others sat on their chairs around the table but the bench created a, sometimes, awkward dynamic. The person who sat in the middle of the three people on the bench had to be someone who was not, ahem, of a certain age and was not required to get up and down to go to the toilet every five minutes. Today, it was Russ who had been entrusted with the middle seat, but unfortunately in a rush of enthusiasm, Russ had arrived at Shouty Wednesday rather early and now his, er, seal was well and truly broken.

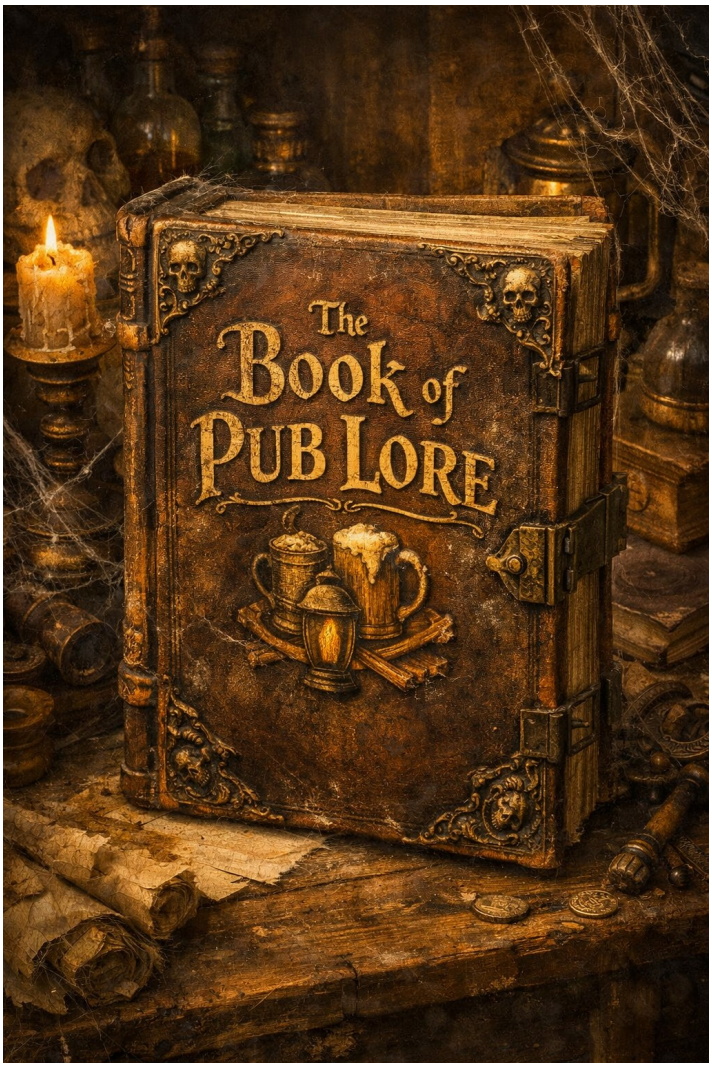


“Oops, sorry,” said Russ as he tried to clamber over the others

This was not going well, Russ had imbibed rather too many for this early stage and balance was becoming an issue until it happened, one of the worst crimes that can occur in a pub – he knocked over Micks pint with his backside.

“Noooooooooooo,” everybody watched in horror as a full pint of ale flew from the table and spilled across the floor. There was only one correct course of action.

Pub Lore Fact



Spilling another mans pint is an act of pure abomination and must be rectified immediately by first apologising profusely, and then immediately offering to restore the bereaved drinker with another drink. This is a three line whip, and anything else than doing this is completely and utterly unacceptable. It doesn’t matter how much beer was left, you have wronged and must immediately put the universe back to being right. Anything else will lead to being exiled from the pub.

End of Pub Lore Fact

Needless to say, Russ apologised profusely and immediately bought Mick a fresh pint. Balance had been restored.

After many, many ales Bob was questioning Jeff the Engineer about his attire.

“Are you sure you are not a wizard?” asked Bob.

“No, I am an engineer,” replied Jeff, rolling his eyes in annoyance.

“But you have got a wizardy hat!” remarked Bob.

“It’s just a typical pointy hat,” said Jeff.

“You’ve got wizardy robes!” said Bob, pulling slightly at Jeff’s sleeve.

“They are just in fashion, that is all,” replied Jeff, his annoyance beginning to grow.

“And you have got a wizardy wand!” Shouted Bob, and in doing so reached into Jeff’s robe and pulled out what indeed appeared to be a magic wand. Jeff was not happy and clutched at the wandy looking object, Bob tugged back and Jeff pulled it towards him and in the toing and froing of two adult males with far too much ale on board a green streak of light flew from the object that definitely wasn’t a wand and shot across the room, striking poor D.O.B straight in the crackers. D.O.B yelped and dropped the logs that he was about to put on the fire, and he then became enveloped in a strange bright green glow. The Shouty Wednesday crew gasped and there was silence, as D.O.B began to levitate in front of them in his unholy glow.

“What’s going on?” asked D.O.B, sounding more than a little worried,until his eyes rolled back and a voice that was not that of D.O.B emerged from within him.

“BE WARNED, A GREAT EVIL IS COMING AND A BAND OF MEN MUST BE FORMED TO STOP THE DESTRUCTION OF CHESHAM. EIGHT MEN MUST COMPLETE A QUEST FOR EIGHT ITEMS, WHICH MUST BE TAKEN DEEP INSIDE HERBERTS HOLE …”

This last part caused Russ to snigger very loudly, he was not aware that Herberts Hole was a place to the west of Chesham, within the great loop of Pednor – or as the locals called it “The Pednor Loop”.

“STOP LAUGHING!” Boomed the great voice from within D.O.B.

“ONE TASK EACH MUST BE PERFORMED –

YOU MUST GO FROM THIS PLACE AND FIND FUR OF GLIS GLIS, TOOTH OF WORM,

A LAGGARDS TOE NAIL, A DRAGON SPERM,

BARK OF SILVERTREE, A MAGIC LIGHT

A GOLDEN EYE, AND A NATTERFRIGHT

– YOU HAVE EIGHT DAYS….”

With this D.O.B dropped to the ground with a crash and the crew looked at each other in amazement – who’d have thought that a worm had teeth?

D.O.B shuffled off to get more logs for the fire, and Ben the Merchant then spoke.

“We need to get organised, we are going to have to work together to get these items or Chesham will fall to great evil.”

“Can we finish Shouty Wednesday first?” Asked Timmy. And they all agreed that they would, after all they would still have a couple of days to prevent the total destruction of the town.

In the morning, among a blizzard of hangovers, the gang met again at Brazils. Brazils was a special place, a small café that specialised in curing hangovers. A bacon sarnie or a more complex hangover cure, such as smashed avocado on sourdough with chimichurri (ooh fancy).
This was not, however, the secret sauce, the coffee of Brazils was renowned throughout Chesham as the cure for the morning after. And our trepid crusaders all drank from the coffee cup to bring them back to life.

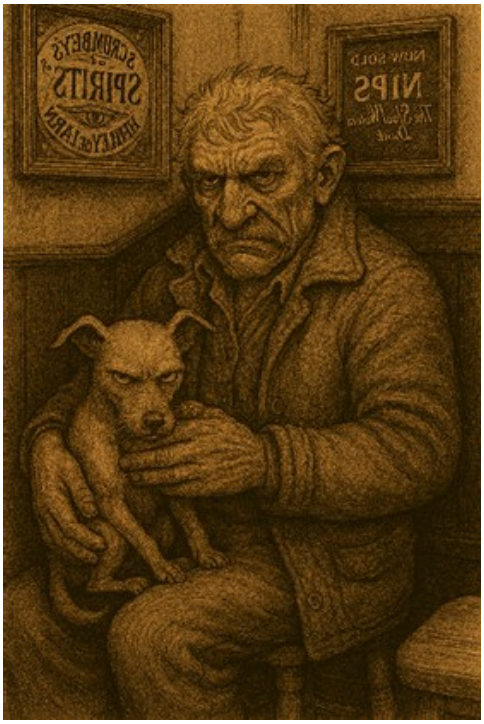
“Bugger it”, said Russ, “we are going to have to go and see Dave the Bastard.”

“Oh no,” said Richard/Ian, “we haven’t seen him in a while – is he still as bad as they say he is?”



“I think it will be necessary,” chipped in Frank, “he does know these lands.”

With a collective sigh, the group left Brazils, bacon sarnies in hand and coffee pulsating through their veins, to go back to the Queens Head – where Dave the Bastard led the early shift.



The doors of the Queens Head flung open, and there in his throne in the saloon bar sat Dave the Bastard. The chair itself was not special, but be warned, if you sit in Dave the Bastards chair when he enters the pub, then you must surely move or be subjected to such hellish antics that you will wish you never sat anywhere at all, ever!

This morning, Dave the Bastard sat elegantly in his chair, drinking super strength ale and awaiting his audience. The crew approached gently.

Ben the Merchant approached initially, “Dear Dave, we seek your wisdom and guidance”.

Dave looked unmoved.

“We have a serious mission to undertake and need your thoughts??”

Dave did not talk, he was a handsome man of north of eighty years, however sometimes dressed in the style of a man from several decades before. He wore open shirts, fine breeches and wellies that would take him over a river of lava. He had a craggy face, that had seen many a scene from his earlier years as a merchant sailor, and later a gamekeeper for the Jasper family.

Eventually he spoke, with an accent of almost pirate quality (which was exciting for Russ, who had firm ambitions on being a pirate one day).

“Listen here, you idiots,” he spat, as the group leaned in, and unbelievably Ben was listening but also buying a round of beers.

“You are going to need a plan, I have seen curses like this when at sea and they are not much fun. You will need to be selected for a task each, the task will choose you – you cannot choose the task. Then, and only then will the gods be on your side – if they even know you exist, here give me.” Dave the Bastard pointed his leather finger at some stirring sticks, “give them to me – and a writing device.”

Dave the Bastard was carefully handed a quill and ink from behind the bar, and having asked for the tasks, he scratched them onto the stirring stick one by one.

“Behold! Fate will choose your task for you, and then I will explain what you must do. And then I want you all to F&%^k off.”

Ben placed tankards of grog in front of everyone, as they queued up to select their fate. In doing so, Ben also bought Dave the Bastard another super strength ale, hoping it would somehow influence the outcome.

“Come forth, Richard/Ian and choose,” Dave the Bastard grinned.

Richard the half goblin was nervous, he extended his semi-clawed hand toward Dave the Bastards fist, which clutched all eight sticks. He could not see which one was which.

He picked one and slowly drew it out of Dave the Bastards hand.

“Tooth of Worm, I’ve got Tooth of Worm!” Richard was elated, although he had to confess to being mildly bemused about where he might find such an object.

Frank stepped forward, confident, elegant, and still mildly hungover (although the hair of the dog was helping), he thrust forward a rather nicely manicured hand and drew a stick from Dave the Bastards hand.

“Its’s a magic light!” Declared Frank.

It went on, draw after draw.

“Fur of Glis Glis!” Shouted Ben.

“A Laggards Toe Nail,” said Timmy.

“A Golden Eye!” Exclaimed Mick.

“Bark of Silvertree,” announced Jeff.

There was now some nervousness, with only Bob and Russ left to draw.

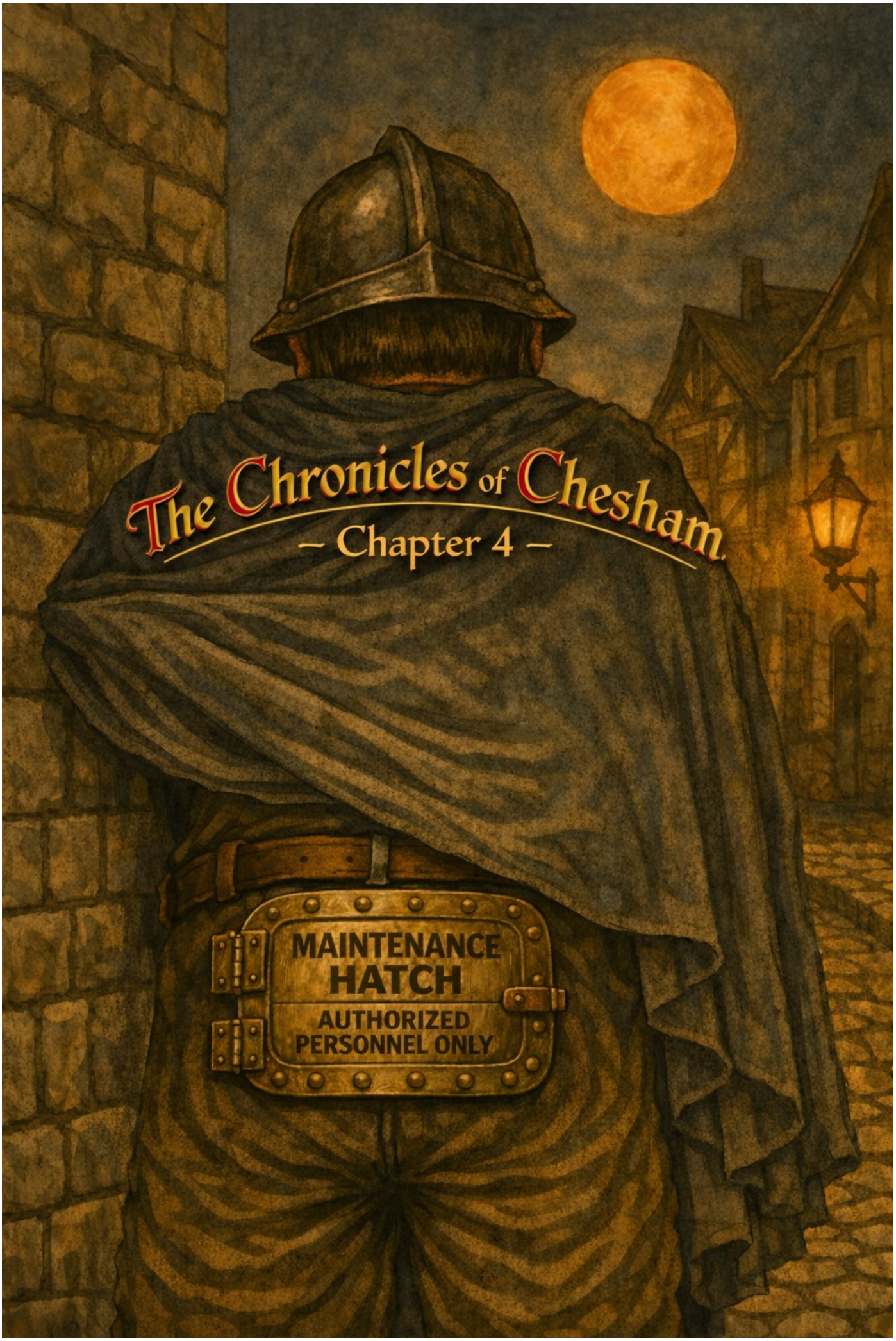
Bob approached Dave the Bastard nervously, and then drew.

“Oh bugger …” sighed Bob. He slowly turned the stick over to reveal the item that none of them wanted to see. “I’ve got dragon sperm…..”

Russ sniggered again for a minute with relief, before pondering “Hang on a minute, what the hell is a Natterfright?”

Russ was not from these parts, the others didn’t say anything but quietly laughed into their ales.

Dave the Bastard gave each of them instructions on their items, and with a couple of more ales – the quest began.


The Chronicles of Chesham
– Chapter 4 –
MAINTENANCE
HATCH
AUTHORIZED
PERSONNEL ONLY

CHAPTER FOUR – Tooth of Worm

Richard the half goblin had originally been relieved to have been given the task of finding tooth of worm. He quite rightly deduced that he had never seen a very big worm in his entire life, and he had never ever seen one that had teeth.

After receiving the wisdom of Dave the Bastard, and conveying it to the rest of the Shouty Wednesday Crew, it was decided that a visit to the armoury at the furthest South East point of the city may be a good idea.

The Armoury was something to behold, a stone shop with a counter of wood, behind which stood the burly Armourer. Nobody knew his real name, not even Mick – he had just kind of always been there. He had a thick neck, and tattoos of various people being strangled and he wore a thick chainmail apron and a metal helmet. A large scar down his face indicated that perhaps some customers had tried to take his wares for free, it is a wonder what happened to those that had tried.

In one corner were some standard torture instruments, a rack for stretching people to the truth, an iron maiden for persuasion purposes, and a funny looking mouse trap with a spike on it.

“What’s that for?” Asked Richard, pointing at the mouse trap.

“For loosening the tongue,” replied the Armourer, Richard didn’t ask any more questions about that.

Whilst there, apart from Mick who always wore armour anyway, it was decided that they may need to get “tooled up”. Richard the half goblin already had his goblin knife, but the others decided perhaps a bit of self defence was going to be required in the circumstances.



Timmy chose a morning star, a spiky iron ball attached to a chain and handle. He wasn’t great with it but he loved the swishy sound it made above his head.

Russ chose a double headed axe, his rotund physique gave him a low level of gravity perfect for swinging it around. Bob and Jeff would stand no such nonsense (although Bob liked to keep a pointy knife in the back of his lovely hair).

Leaving the Merchants, Ben and Frank. Ben did not want a weapon but Frank was more practical, he purchased a bow and arrow.

This was not just any bow and arrow though, it was a Curvace, the most wonderful bow and arrow ever. He didn’t really want to use it but he liked how it made him feel, and that was the main thing (plus it was expensive).

The armourer spoke to Frank about the Curvace.

“This here is a top of the range Curvace Bow, with accompanying curvace arrows. You pull back on the bow and whisper to the arrows the target that you want to hit. You might even be lucky and get two targets out of one arrow if your timing is right. You release the bow and the arrow does the rest, got it?”

“Got it,” replied Frank as he slid the quiver onto his back and hung his new purchase from it.

“As long as you name your target correctly, it will never, ever miss.” Said the Armourer.

Suitably tooled up, the gang left the Armoury for the walk across the town, dragons circling in the sky above, menacingly.

Dave the Bastard’s briefing had been clear to Richard. The only place to find worms with teeth was within the Chesham Bois, also known as “The Bois”. This was an area of woodland that no Chesham resident would wander into at night, fine tall thin spooky looking trees, hundreds of them. Dave was also specific that Chesham Bois should not be confused with the other nearby woods of Lady Bois – going there would lead to a very different discovery indeed.



They arrived at mid-morning, and although it should be light, as they entered the Chesham Bois, it became extremely dark … and quiet.

The ground was completely covered in leaves, of reds and golds and browns, ankle deep and magnificent, and the ground rose up and down at angles and curves and small hills and mounds at almost every turn but the quiet was deafening.

Bob was beginning to regret wearing his Grocs, with leaves sticking inbetween his toes and twigs impaling his feet.

As this was Richard's task, he led the way carefully, his tusks protruding from this bottom lip were being sucked on nervously as he moved forward step by step.

Dave the Bastard had told him that "the toothy worms were very large, and not to be messed with, get in there and get out and don't hang about!"

Dave had recommended that Richard take a watering can with soapy water in it to drive them out of the ground. Richard was not a fan of soap so decided to bring a flagon of beer instead.

Eventually the eight of them reached a clearing, circular and brown and damp.

"Come on Ian, get on with it," said Frank, Richard ignored him splendidly.

They formed a circle, no one was quite sure why, but it seemed like the done thing to do in the circumstances.

Richard popped the cork from this flagon of ale and poured it into the ground. Russ and Ben looked on, and were finding it difficult to hide their disappointment that Richard was not pouring it into them instead.

Again, it was quiet, everyone watched as the ale made a damp patch on the floor and a sad little puddle of beer, Ben was quietly contemplating causing a distraction and then slurping it from the earth until suddenly ….. it was not quiet anymore.

If this had been a nature program, with a confirmed and trusted naturist doing the voice over, then he would surely have said the following:

“In nature, in the natural habitat of the giant toothed worm of Chesham Bois woods, a person not familiar with the area would be well advised to watch out for the slow crawl of the giant worms, some as large as 18 feet long, with teeth that would strike fear into the very heart of any man. However, imagine if an 18 foot long worm with teeth that would make a daytime tv presenter proud, were given … for the very first time ….. ale.”

Then it happened, from the exact spot where the puddle had been made, a hole opened up at unimaginable speed, causing all eight of our trepid explorers to fall backwards with the force that it had created. It wooshed into the air, a gigantic worm, all 18 feet, supercharged with a feeling that no worm had never ever felt before, it was absolutely hammered.

It landed in a coil smack bang in the middle of our merry band, not knowing quite what to do with itself. Timmy gasped, Jeff pointed, Richard peed a little bit, he had never seen anything like it.



Then it got up, swaying backwards and forth, it had reddened eyes, and a strong stench of ale emitted from it's giant toothy mouth. It was now looking accusatorily at the band of misfits. Then it made its move, swishing its tail, and with great force it launched it forward with malice aforethought.

For Bob, what happened next occurred in slow motion. He looked in horror as the tail moved forwards towards him.

Timmy shouted in slow mo "Looooook oooouuut, heeees garna get your craaaaaackeeeers" and the brotherhood of men looked on in abject horror as the tail did indeed ping the underside of Bob's crown jewels.

<u>Pub Lore Fact</u>

All of the men knew this was the worst injury of them all, a man can handle a full on kick in the nadgers in limited circumstances, but the underside flick of the cojones was unbearable.

End of Pub Lore Fact

“My goooooooolies,” yelped Bob as he braced for impact and, when he felt the force of that abominable blow, fell straight to his knees, clutching his throbbing man marbles.

Russ looked away, Ben closed his eyes, Frank laughed his head off.

The worm, staggered a little, eyeing up the remainder of them, deciding who would be his next victim. Like an angry drunk looking to tell them all another thing.

Mick knew exactly what to do, and taking a run up, he used Bob’s bowed head as a stepping stone and launched himself into the air, where he kicked his armoured foot straight into the worms mouth, causing it’s teeth to explode in a horrendous bloody firework of destruction.

The worm was struggling, not only was it drunk for the first time but now it was getting into its first drunken brawl without so much as a bye your leave.

As the teeth shot across the woods, there was a slight shriek and then an “Ow!”

One of the worms teeth had landed smack bang in the middle of Bob’s forehead. It stuck out like a rhinos horn, with a small trickle of blood acknowledging that this was not part of Bob’s natural form.

“You’re not having the best of days, are you?” Remarked Timmy.

Frank was still laughing at the first injury that Bob had sustained.

The worm had fallen straight to the ground and was out cold.

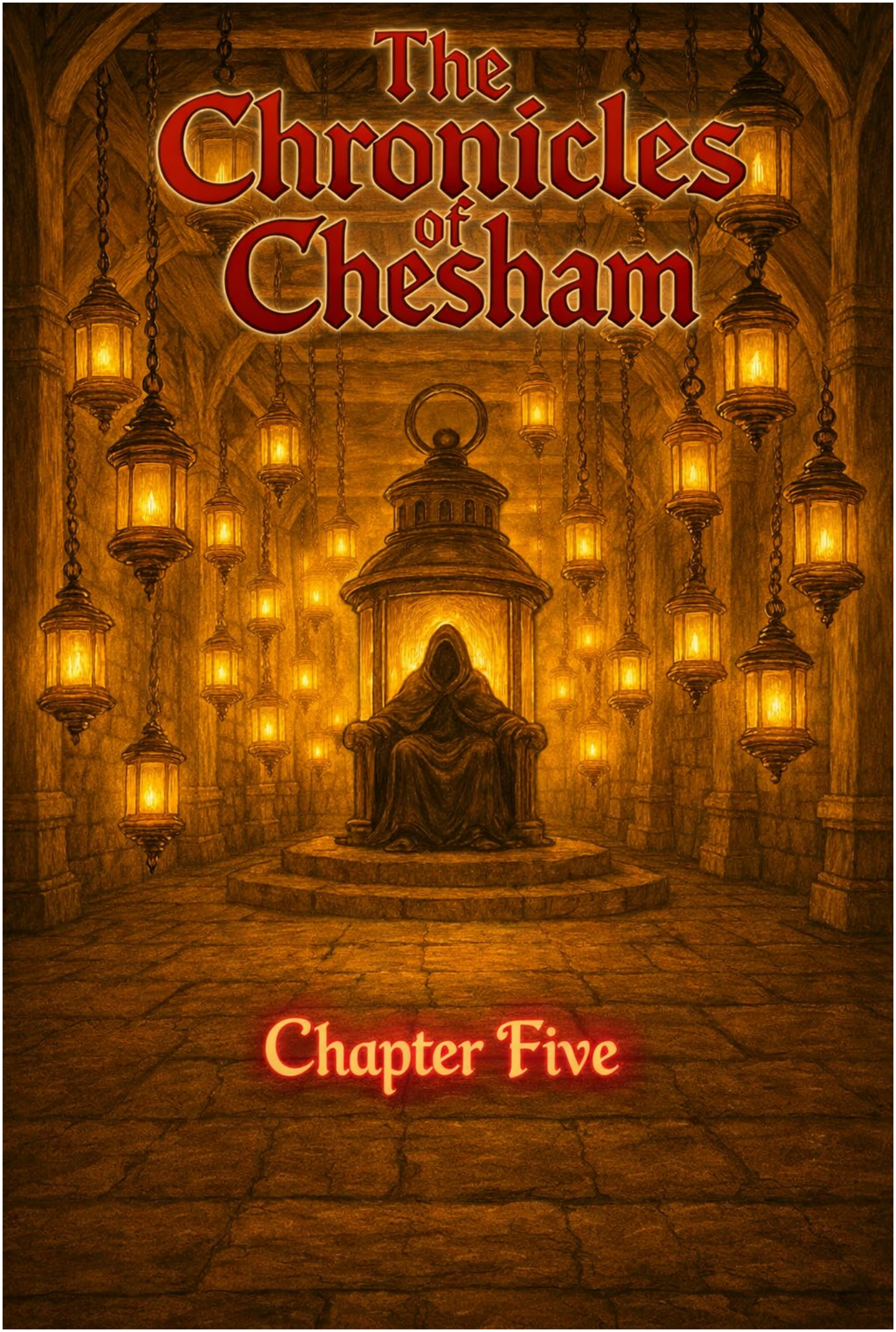
Richard collected some of the teeth and put them in his pouch, relieved that he had managed to complete his task successfully.

“We had better get out of here,” said Jeff, who could see in the darkness the outlines of other giant toothed worms, slithering around the trees, observing what had happened to one of their own.

Timmy and Russ picked up the groaning Bob and put him back on his feet, and the gang beat a hasty retreat towards the Market Square.

As Russ looked back behind them he could see seven or eight other giant worms, slurping at the ground where the ale had been poured, and beginning to fight each other and wrestle. Chesham doesn’t have a Royal Society for the Protection of Animals, but if they did – they wouldn’t believe this if you told them.

No worms were injured in the creation of this chapter, just Bob …. Very badly.


The Chronicles of Chesham
Chapter Five

Chapter Five – A Magic Light

The next task was one for Frank, who after the "worm" incident with poor Bob, had now stopped laughing and composed himself.

He thought back to the words of Dave the Bastard at the Queens Head.

"A magic light can be fulfilled, if you find the man in the square of the Guild, pass his test, and please his sight, and you will find a magic light.

"You do know that you are rhyming, don't you?" Enquired Frank.

"No, I'm not, don't talk such rot" complained Dave the Bastard.

"See, you just did it again!" Exclaimed Frank.

"Don't push your luck, you little ….."

But Frank had lost interest and gone outside.

In the NorthWest of the city stood the Guildmasters Square. It was large and dark and wet, as with most things Chesham. Around the outside of the square were numerous, very old halls, which were home to the trades of Chesham. There was a Brushmakers Guild, and Beermakers Guild and Hatmakers Guild and also more, er, sinister ones.

What fantasy story would be complete without an Assassins Guild (we will leave that for book four), and in the case of this particular chapter, there was a Guild of Lanternmakers.

Lantern Making was an ancient art form, and in a place as dark as Chesham, a very necessary one. The door to the guild was a large studded oak door with iron sections, encased within a curved archway. There did not appear to be any windows but either side of the door stood two large lanterns on poles.

On the door was a metal ring for attracting attention.

“That’s a big knocker!” Said Bob.

Frank looked at him for a moment as an angry parent would scowl at a child for spurting out something filthy in front of the family.

“Well it is!” Bob said again, Jeff gently kicked him and Frank turned his attention to the massive knocker.

He grabbed it and it thudded on the door in a very satisfying manner, it was clear that there was a huge echo from behind the door where there must be a large hall.

Footsteps could be heard approaching the door. Big, giant, thudding footsteps. They stopped near the door and a shutter slid open at the eyeline of Frank.

“Who goes there?” A voice emerged from behind the door, it was most confusing. The footsteps had definitely been those of a giant man or beast but the voice was rather, er, smaller than that.

“Who goes there?” The voice questioned again.

“A band of men on a quest to save all of Chesham from certain destruction,” said Frank, in a rather grand fashion.

“I suppose you had better come in then,” the smallish voice remarked.

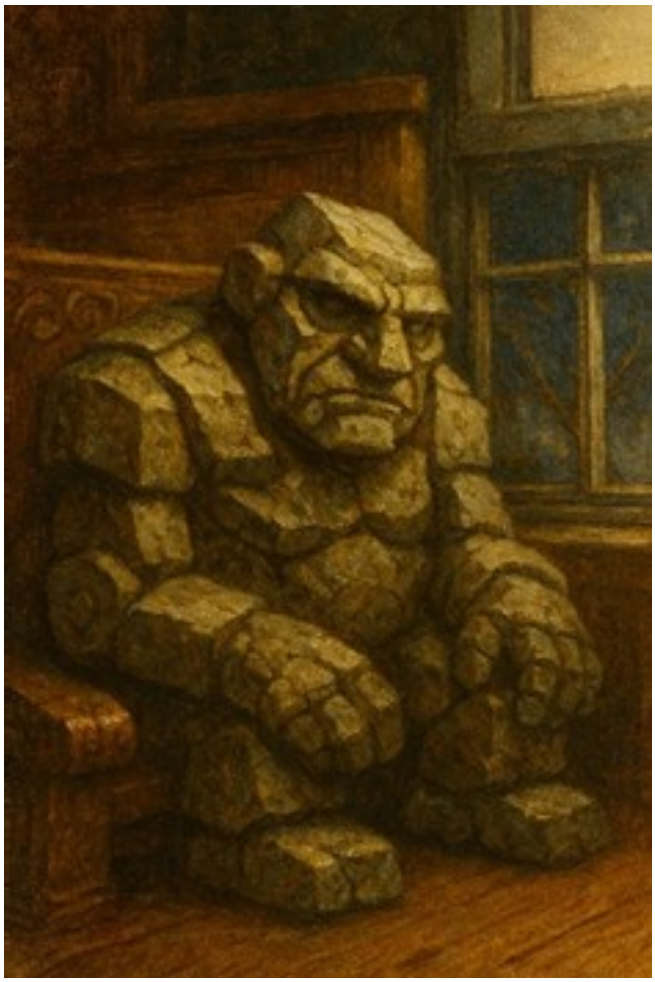
There was a sound of bolts being pulled back and locks being turned until eventually the door slowly creaked open. This revealed a dark hallway, almost pitch black, and gloomy. As Frank tentatively took a step forward the voice sounded again.

“Oi, watch where you are going!”

Frank stopped in his tracks and the others peered around his shoulders but could see nothing.

“I am down here!” The voice sounded again.

Frank looked down and there was the most remarkable object. A small man made completely of stone but moving as if it were a person. This was Jake, the Golem.



Legend has it that Jake originated from pile of stones that were used to create borders between fields, out as far as the Curious Stones by The Loop.

It is believed that a wizard wielding great magic had been to the Queens Head, drunk his own body weight in ale and then wandered off to The Loop for no reason that anyone can fathom.

He approached the curious stones with his, erm, wand out, and accidentally animated the stones into a Golem, he was named Jake by the magic drunkard, who quickly left him there in the darkness. No one knows how he came to be at at the Guild of Lanternmaking.

Now, normally Golems are very large but because the stone that Jake was made out of was in short supply, Jake ended up being a mini-golem, a cross he would have to bear for quite some time.

“Erm, so you are,” spluttered Frank, caught a little off guard, “it is very dark in there isn’t it.”

Jake the Golem turned around and took a few steps into the darkness, his feet making the most earth shattering sound with each step that he took, the band followed slowly into the darkness.

After a few steps, no one could see anything until suddenly a flash of light went up above them and suddenly there was the most incredible scene of light (that made everyone’s eyes go squinty for a minute).

A vast hall, far larger than the outside of the Guild looked like it could hold, with many, many lit lanterns hanging down from the wooden beams of the ceiling of this hall. They burned brightly, but most curious of all was the throne at the end of the hall.

The throne was the shape of an old miners lantern, and sat upon it, almost glowing was a man draped in a cloak, peering across at them, his face entirely concealed.



Jake signalled for them to approach, which they nervously did, staring around at the magic at work in this place, as the lanterns burned bright and true.

“Who are you?” Asked the cloaked figure, in a booming voice.

Frank stepped forward, taking a glorious sweeping bow, and everyone else very much stood back.

“My name is Francis of Pednor, retired merchant, lover of a fabulous lunch, owner of a glorious chariot and a man of incredible wealth.”

The cloaked figure countered, “I am the Guildmaster of the Lanternmakers, master of the light, head of this great, historic organisation, and also a lover of a fabulous lunch.”

“Well, at least we have that in common,” Frank retorted.

“State your purpose, Francis of Pednor,” the cloaked figure continued.

“We have been instructed to come here, on our mission to save the whole of Chesham. We seek a Magic Light, so that we may save our fellow citizens and get back to the pub as soon as possible.”

“I see,” said the Guildmaster, “for surely you have been sent by Dave the Bastard, is it true?”

“It is,” replied Frank, “he said there may be some sort of task?”

The Guildmaster laughed, a booming laugh, from within his hooded cloak.

“Go to the forge by the Market Square, obtain the fire that never must go out, bring it to me and a Magic Light will be yours – take Jake along, he will help you.”

Jake looked at his master and then at Frank, he hadn’t been outside of the Guild for many years, and he was quite concerned about what may lay ahead. He did not complain though and he shuffled forwards with a great boom with each footstep that he took. The others followed behind, out of the great hall and back into the darkness of the Chesham night.

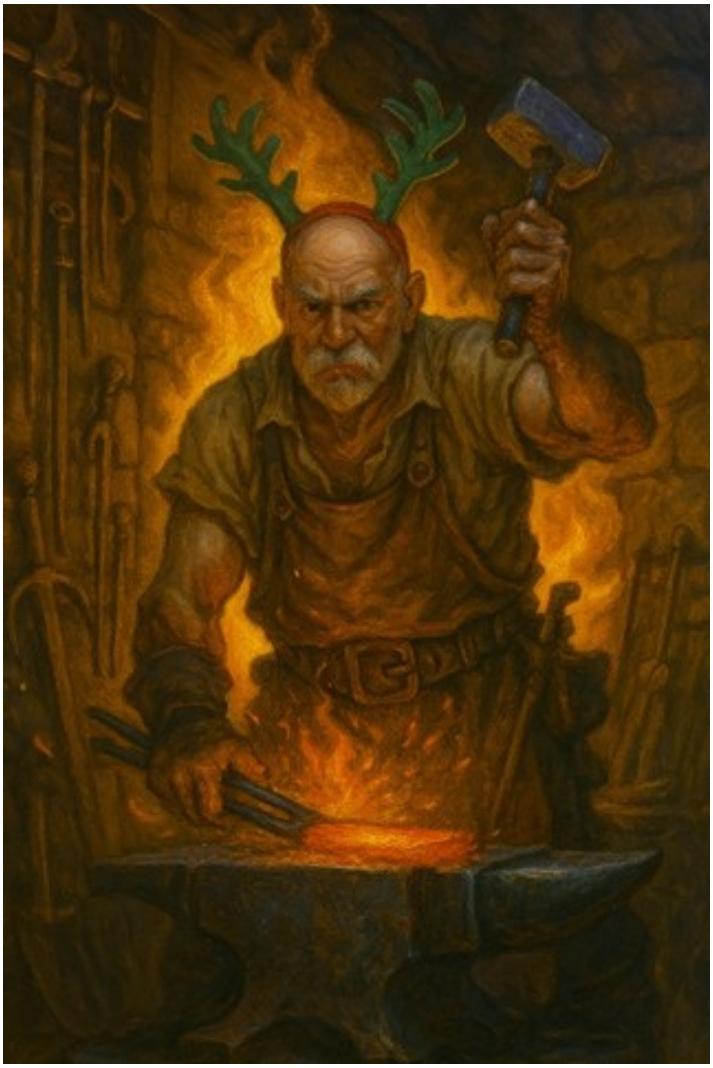
They walked along St Marys Way, past the clocktower in the Market Square, stopping briefly to allow some of the pesky flying dragons floating in the sky to go on past.

Soon a great fire could be seen and the sound of metal upon metal, as a large muscular man could be seen inside the forge, striking an anvil with a great hammer. He appeared to have some sort of antlers on his head but this did not take away the fearsome aura he was emitting.

This was Richard the Blacksmith, a tough character indeed, he had been making weapons (as well as artisan gates) for the people of Chesham for many years. Richard was a man of nature, in that he liked to catch nature and eat it. Rumour has it that he wears the antlers on his head to show that he has killed and eaten many deer, in reality Richard just thought it was fashion and looked good on him, no-one yet has disagreed.

Frank led them all to the entrance, with Jake crashing around with his loud footsteps just behind them.

Frank stood at the open entrance, the heat from the fire was incredible, Richard the Blacksmith did not look up and continued to swing his hammer down onto a red hot piece of metal that looked like it was being fashioned into blade.



A moment passed, and Richard did not look up.

“Ahahem,” Frank cleared his throat, and the Blacksmith stopped striking the blade.

“What do you want?” Barked the Blacksmith.

“Well,” Frank started, “bit of a long story but I was hoping you could spare me some of your fire that never must go out?”

Frank smiled as sweetly as he could in anticipation of a great favour.

“You want some of my fire that never must go out? For nothing?” The Blacksmith asked.

“Yes, that would fabulous,” Frank was not entirely reading the room.

Richard the Blacksmith put down his great hammer and came toe to toe with Frank, he was tall and extremely muscular, with his antlers making him appear even taller. He put his face nose to nose with Franks, who was starting to perspire from the heat and the tenseness of the situation.

“If you want some of my fire, you will have to beat me in an archery challenge, if you win then I will give you some fire. Now what will you give me if I win?”

Frank looked down at his Bolex, it was extraordinarily expensive and he didn’t want to risk losing it, he looked around at the others who were peering around the side of the doorway.

“Him,” Frank said, “you can have him if I lose, to do whatever you like with.”

Frank pointed a jewel encrusted finger at Bob, who looked around to see who it was who was behind him and then realised to whom the finger was pointeth.

“Me,” cried Bob, “why does it have to be me?”

“Too late,” said Frank and shook hands with the Blacksmith who ushered him out into the yard.

This was too delicious for Frank, if he won then he would be able to claim the bragging rights, win his item and show off for ages. If he lost, then Bob was sentenced to a lifetime of being, well let’s not think too hard about that now.

Richard the Blacksmith went over to the other side of his Forge and picked up an enormous black crossbow, which had a very, very pointy arrow loaded into it.

“Come with me,” he ordered, and they ventured out into the yard behind the forge.

The yard was festooned with sharp metal objects, waiting to be collected by customers, or to be melted down and repurposed.

Across the yard was a short fence, about the height of Jake, and upon it sat a target board, with circular rings on and a bullseye.

“You stand here with me, the rest of you get the other side of that fence,” the Blacksmith ordered.

Everyone, apart from Frank, moved to a safe distance behind the target and watched quietly, some of them could see a

reflection of the target in a shiny shield hanging on the Forge wall.

“Now, whoever gets nearest to the centre of the bullseye, will be the winner,” declared Richard.

The fearsome Blacksmith stepped forward with his crossbow, lifted it with one arm, looked in the opposite direction and fired. The bolt from the crossbow flew straight and true and hit the centre of the bullseye precisely.

A few of the gang clapped politely, however Bob was starting to realise the gravity of the situation when the Blacksmith winked at him. He turned around and fell to this knees, in a crouched, curled up position, dreading the worst.

Franks mind flashed back to the armoury, where he had obtained the Curvace bow from. The armourer had told him that if he whispered his target to the bow, then it will never ever miss.

Frank drew the bow up in front of him, and whispered gently to it. The arrow he had loaded into the bow was waiting to be fired.

For what seemed like an age, Frank aimed at his target, and then it happened.

The arrow flew straight and true at the target, it struck the bolt of the Blacksmith, splitting it in two, piercing the bullseye but unbelievably it carried on through the target.

Timmy did not know much about what happened next but his Orc instincts kicked in as he heard the rush of the arrow coming towards him, and his man reactions were telling him to jump, his gentleman area was in trouble. And leap he did, about five feet up in the air and the arrow whistled past underneath him, and ended with a thud and a yelp.

“My god that was close, I could have been made a eunuch there!” Timmy said, gratefully, not realising that he was

protectively holding himself out of sheer relief.

“Crikey, where did it go?”

The gang then turned around, and there it was, poor Bob had once again taken one for the team.

For in his concern for his future, where he had curled up on the floor facing away from the competition, he now had an arrow sticking out of his posterior.

“I can help with that,” said Russ, who put his foot on Bob’s back and quickly whipped the arrow out of Bob’s rump, Bob made a squeaky noise in response.

“Well, you have well and truly beaten me Francis of Pednor,” the Blacksmith said, holding out a meaty hand for Frank to shake, which he did indeed. “Come with me.”

He led Frank towards the fire and with a pair of tongs, put a pair of tongs into the fire. The fire must have been magical indeed, because he extracted a single flame that burned on it’s own at the end of his tongs.

“How am I supposed to carry it?” Enquired Frank.

“I can help with that,” and Jake came forward and held out a stony hand, “it won’t burn me.”

The Blacksmith placed the flame in Jakes hand where he covered it with his other hand for transportation back to the guild.

“Thank you,” said Frank to the Blacksmith as he swept forward out of the forge. The others followed suit, at least one of them limping.

As they made their way back to the Guild of Lanternmakers, Mick caught up with Frank, who was slightly ahead of the others.

“Frank, can I ask you a question?”

“Yes, Michael, please do.”

“When we were at the armourers, he said that you can tell the bow to hit any target and it will never miss?”

“Yes, that is correct.”

“Then how did the arrow end up in Bob’s bottom?”

“Funny that, isn’t it!”

The team wound there way back to the Guildmasters square through the gloom, occasionally seeing the silhouette of a dragon passing in the night sky. Every now and then Jake would look at the flame inbetween his two stony hands and it would light up his craggy face for a moment.

They returned to the Lanternmakers Guild, and the door opened as Jake approached, as if it were glad to see his return.

They once again peered back through the darkness, pierced by the enormous clonking of Jake’s miraculous feet, until once again the magical lanterns of the guild lit the room and the Guildmaster was once again illuminated, as if he had never moved.

“So you made it,” boomed the Guildmaster, “bring it to me.”

Jake stepped forward, and up the steps towards the Guildmaster, holding out his hand where the flame flickered and danced but did not burn the golem.

“You have done well, my little friend,” the guildmaster sounded almost proud of Jake, as he reached forward and took the flame into his own hand – he did not burn.

He reached beside the throne and pulled out an old mining lantern, and he placed the flame within the lantern and closed it’s old metal door, capturing the flame inside.

“Behold!” The Guildmaster boomed again, “your magic lantern is here,” he gave the lantern to Jake and as he placed it in his outstretched hand, he held the golem’s hand with both of his for a moment.

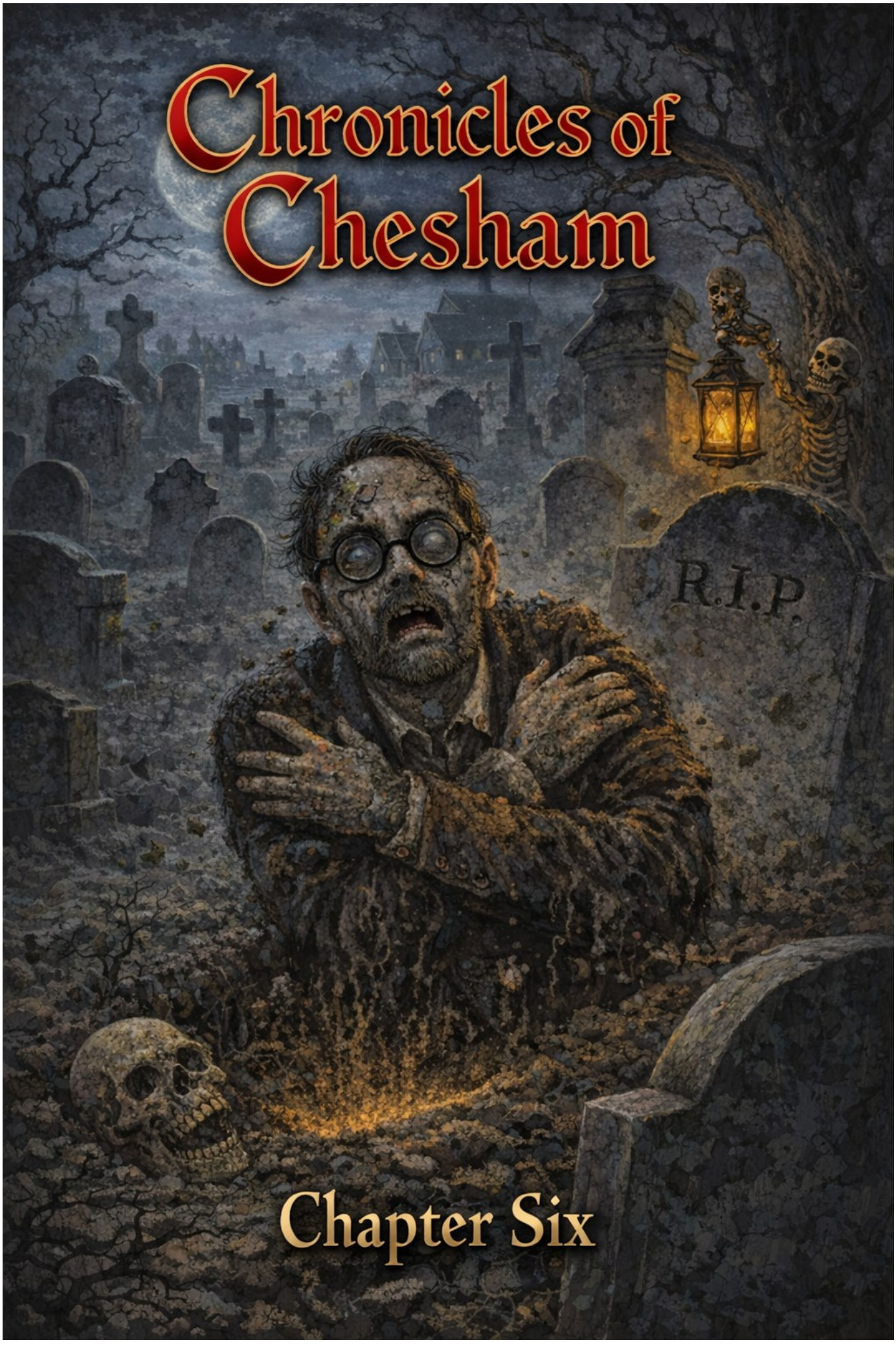
“Take the golem with you, he may prove useful and he has served his time here.”

“What?!” Said Jake.

The Guildmaster released Jakes hand, and replied “you must go now, and help these people. I fear they may fail without you.”

Jake nodded, and turned around and led the group out of the guild, back into the square, feet pounding and crashing all the way.

And as the door closed on the guild and they were all back in the square, one thing was on their mind. They could murder a pint.


Chronicles of Chesham
R.I.P.
Chapter Six

Chapter Six – Fur of Glis Glis

In the saloon bar, the group gathered around their favourite table to discuss matters so far, the blind was drawn to the windows, because this is what you did when there were matters to be discussed. More room had to be made, as their new accomplice Jake the Golem was now in tow.

The fire was roaring loudly in the darkness, to such an extent that everyone there suspected that DOB, the local pyromaniac, must be around here somewhere.

“What is a Glis Glis?” Asked Ben.

“I know!” From nowhere, DOB popped up, as if from under the table, seemingly having recovered from his previous ordeal.

“It is a furry animal, a type of dormouse but much bigger, people used to eat them back in the day, they can be found in the countryside but beware that they have evolved somewhat over the years, what with all the eating them and that kind of caper, it has been rumoured that a few of them got it on with the werewolves over by the curious stones and that now, if the moon is full and bright, they transform into an evil, nasty form of themselves.”

Mick slid the blind up slightly and a bright full moon shone into the saloon bar.

“Don’t you ever have any good news?” Moaned Tim.

“Oh dear,” sighed Ben finishing his pint.

DOB continued, “I’ve heard that they can be found in the church, on this very street, the Church of St Marys, hiding in the rafters, waiting ….. waiting…..”

“Waiting for what?” Said Ben, grimacing slightly that his mission was not likely to be as easy as it had seemed.

“Waiting ….. waiting …….” DOB continued.

“Is it another premonition?” Asked Ben.

“No, he is just very drunk!” Remarked Richard.

“Well said Ian,” Frank concurred.

The Church of St Mary’s was a foreboding place, especially on a dark night with a full moon when you are looking for nasty, bity creatures.

None of the Shouty Wednesday crew were attendees of the church, and no-one but no-one went there at night. It used to be lit up with its spire and a Chesham flag flying high, but those days were long gone.

It was very spooky, an old building from an old age, with a graveyard of the very, very long gone. Rumour had it that the priest, and guardian, of the church was somewhat eccentric, and was rarely seen in public. A strange man, known as The Cleric. It was rumoured that he had fallen somewhat to the dark side of his practices and beliefs and was now a practitioner of witchcraft and the dark arts.

Pub Lore Fact

If you are not familiar with the concept of a roader, then please allow me to explain. A roader is your absolute last pint of ale before you leave the pub. This is the absolute law, until someone else says that they are having a roader and you are just about to finish yours. In those circumstances, you are entitled to another roader and that is it. Unless of course someone else is having a roader and you have not finished your roader after the roader. It is absolutely carved in solid stone pub law, that if you have had your roader and someone else proposes a roader then it is not your fault that a roader has been proposed, you were forced to accept and so were late home to whoever has the misfortune to look after you and are drunk. It is also absolutely carved into pub law, that despite having been in the pub for three or four hours, if someone has a brilliant idea five minutes before you are due to finish your roader, then a roader is required to discuss the idea, which absolutely no-one will remember tomorrow. Roader means one for the road, fortunately in this parallel universe of Chesham there are no cars, and the roads aren't that great either, but it can take a very, very long time to get anywhere when the roader rules are applied.

End of Pub Lore Fact

Six pints later, they left the pub.

And so, the gang left the Queens Head, with the short walk to the church, the dragons swirled and circled like shadows in the

night sky, sometimes to be seen clearly against the brightness of the full moon.

Eventually they paused at the mews leading to the path to the church, Ben was leading but there was a tangible atmosphere of apprehension, everyone had heard stories about this place, but no one had been, especially not at night.

They wanted to progress silently but even on his stoney tip toes, Jake was not able to walk quietly.

“Come here you,” said Bob, who produced a spare pair of Grocs that he had been carrying about his person. “You can wear these.”

A small tear welled up in Jakes eye, as Bob placed the Grocs on each of his stony feet. This was an act of kindness that would not be forgotten in a hurry.

Jake could now walk perfectly silently, but he knew that at some point someone was going to take the mickey out of him for his footwear.

Ben opened the wrought iron gates slowly, it was medieval and gothic with twists and turns of black painted iron and exceptionally pointy bits. Bob looked at them and was a bit concerned that his track record so far would mean he would end up on one of the points.

Ben pushed the gate open and ushered the group through, where he quickly assumed the lead again. There were gravestones all around them of long forgotten Cheshamites, who had

the money to be able to afford a stone to mark their demise.

On through the gravestones, some as tall as a man (and all taller than Jake and Bob), and a mist was forming and swirling around the stones in a sinister manner.

The mist was now becoming a fog, and Ben raised his hand for everyone to stop, there was something that he had seen.

One of the graves began to start moving, the earth was vibrating and then all of a sudden amid a cluster of dirt flying up in the air, an undead man rose bolt upright from the waist, with his arms crossed across his chest, it wore ragged clothes, and had wretched dark skin but also quite cool glasses that made it look very clever indeed.

The group stepped backwards from this creature nervously,



Richard had his hand behind his back on the handle of his knife, Frank a hand just rested on the bow strapped to his back. Russ had unbuckled his double headed axe, and Timmy began to build up some momentum with his morning star, building up speed in a circle. Mick rested his hand on the heel of his sword. Bob, who kept a small knife in the back of his lovely hair, decided that this was not worth the hassle of having to put it all back

up again and moved slightly behind Mick.

This sorry creature was known to the group, this was Saurabh.

Saurabh would occasionally come into the saloon bar at the Queens Head and would always just have half an ale. This was exceptionally annoying to the rest of the Shouters, and was gravely frowned up. Saurabh was a bookish and clever man, and was well known for his ability to help the wealthy residents of Chesham pay less tax to the treasury of Lord Jasper (the nobility of the town, keep up!) and it was for this reason, and only this reason that he was tolerated.

Saurabh seemed to have a particular knack of annoying DOB. This was because DOB thought that he knew every fact in every conversation that ever occurred in the Queens Head, and if he didn't then he would make one up and talk very convincingly about the fact until everyone seemed to agree that it must, in fact, be true.

Pub Lore Fact

This is an important part of pub lore, "anyone speaking with authority about something, even if they know absolutely nothing about the topic, shall be believed unless another person present is a greater authority and can demonstrate this, or at least speak as if he knows more than the other".

End of Pub Lore Fact

This was the problematic part, Saurabh was clever, and he would consistently challenge DOB on his many “facts”, to the point that DOB became very annoyed (the beer didn’t help). It is rumoured that the last time Saurabh was seen at the Queens Head, some months ago, DOB had left shortly afterwards and Saurabh was not seen again.

“Do not go here,” the undead accountant wailed, “there is great peril, and evil in this graveyard.”

“Tell us of this evil,” ventured Ben, who was unarmed and walked ever so slightly towards him, who was still buried in the ground to the waist.

“If you stay here, you will meet The Cleric, and he will kill you if you do not pass his challenge.”

“Tell us of this challenge, undead one,” asked Ben, who felt that they were starting to bond now.

“Ooooooohh, the challenge is dangerous, and The Cleric can call upon great evil powers to bring your greatest fears to life!”

“He’s going to stop us drinking?” Asked Mick, everyone nodded and looked horrified.

“Far, far worse than that, for he will ….”

There was suddenly a swishy noise followed by a sickening squelchy noise as Timmy had swung his morning star straight at Saurabhs head, that had knocked it clean off.

“What did you do that for?” Ben asked Timmy.

“He was getting right on my wick,” countered Timmy.

“But he was going to tell us about the challenge,” Ben protested.

“He’s talking nonsense, there is nothing worse than stopping us drinking.”

Jeff nodded his head sagely in a kind of “fair enough” kind of a way, and there were a few further nods and grunts to confirm that this was actually a fair point.

Saurabh’s head, which was now about ten gravestones away was making muffled noises, but was so badly damaged that no one could hear what he was saying, meanwhile his body remained rooted in the grave, waving its arms and wondering where its head had gone.

“Let’s get moving, shall we,” suggested Russ, and they headed off towards the church, leaving the stinking headless corpse to fend for itself.

On the approach to the church, slightly uphill in the darkness, there was suddenly a flash of lightening from nowhere. Everyone jumped back.

In front of them was what they knew must be The Cleric.

He wore a priesty mitre, and held a staff and looked exceedingly grumpy, colours of white, gold and green in his robes and a sceptre in his hand.

”I am The Cleric,” boomed The Cleric.



“Really?” Asked Ben, trying to discombobulate The Cleric.

He looked confused for a second, then retorted in loud order “Yes – I am!”

Sensing some disorder, Frank piped in “You don’t look like a cleric!”

Oh dear, oh dear – none were to know that The Cleric suffered from confidence issues, but sensing weakness, Mick piled in.

“What’s your real name?”

The Cleric was very much thrown, and rather timidly answered “Erm, …. Kevin actually”

Ben, seeking to gain the upper hand ventured “Yes, well we are here to get some fur of glis glis, so hopefully that will be okay with you?”

Jeff rolled his eyes at the sense of weakness, and then Kevin the Cleric realised where he was.

His eyes grew bright green, he started to hover slightly above

the ground and the lightening began to pierce the ground around them.

“Listen here you lot, if you want access to the church to look for the sacred glis glis, you will have to pass my challenge first!”

Timmy started to subconsciously swish his morning star and said “At last, someone who can tell us what the bloody challenge is!”

This took Kevin the Cleric back a little bit, he was not used to apathy like this and was one who liked to retain control, he was sure that he would shock them with the challenge.

“To pass, you must beat me in a round of Crackerjack!”

There was a gasp from the gang, as they realised the potentially heavy price that was to be paid.

Crackerjack was an ancient game, designed in a time where wit was low, and people really didn’t have very much to do.

The nature of the game was such that a coin would be flipped, and the first player must guess correctly whether a head or a tail had landed. If the first player guessed correctly, then they could kick the other player in between the legs without interference, and this whole process would repeat until one or the other gave in.

Bob immediately declared himself out, on the basis that his gentleman area had been antagonised enough in recent times, everybody nodded and agreed.

The terms of the battle were clear, the Cleric could battle anyone who had two testicles, this did not matter how the individual identified, a couple of testes was all it needed, no need to identify as anything else – everyone was happy.

“I shall smash the balls of any competitor who is stupid enough to challenge me!” Raged the Cleric.

There was a team conflab, Bob, Ben, Frank, Richard, Russ and Timmy didn’t fancy it. Mick was wearing full armour so volunteered.

He went forward towards the Cleric with some confidence, until the Cleric unrolled a scroll of rules and stated clearly: “No armour may be worn in this combat, it must be removed.”

Mick looked back at the others with his best “I don’t want to get kicked in the balls” face and they accepted him for who he was, it was amazing.

Jake ventured forward with his heavy feet, and The Cleric surveyed his opponent with some scepticism.

“He is made of stone!” Protested The Cleric.

“Is that a breach of the rules?” Asked Ben.

The Cleric searched his scroll and then smugly declared “No, but he has to have some, you know, nuts.”

Everyone looked very intrusively at Jakes bare undercarriage and were starting to see the point being made until suddenly Jake declared “Wait! Behold my precious stones.”

Jake scrunched his face up and made several noises like he was trying to have a massive poo. Everyone watched as he strained with the effort until suddenly the most satisfying popping noise occurred, not once but twice.

And there, for all to see were two perfectly round (but stony) man pebbles, clear evidence that he was ready to pass the tes-tes, er, test.

“What do you think of them?” Remarked Jake, proud as punch that he was able to show his manly crown jewels.

Kevin the Cleric looked at his scroll and began to sweat, “Erm, well, you see the thing is these rules were written a long time ago and er… er”

Ben interjected, “not against the rules though is it?”

“Oh bugger,” declared The Cleric.

Jeff produced a coin and asked (with some sarcasm it must be said) “Heads or tails Cleric?”

The Cleric, realising that this may be a life changing event, muttered “Heads, I am calling Heads.”

Jeff flicked the coin in the air, and it landed on the back of his hand, which he then concealed with his other hand, then had a peek. Jeff began to chuckle, “It is heads, off you go.”

Jake braced himself, pebbles out, hands behind his back, ready for the blow from the Cleric. The Cleric, emboldened, ran towards Jake and launched a shin of leg for all he was worth into Jakes gentleman area.

“Aaaaaagh, my leg,” screamed the cleric, as his bare shin struck Jakes perfectly smooth but stony hard groin. Jake blinked, he didn’t love it but it had been so long since he had felt anything in that area that a slight bit of action was quite welcome.

The Cleric was doubled over on the floor in pain, clutching his shin and ankle and moaning about outdated rules for a modern world.

This time Ben piped up, “Time for round 2.”

Jeff flipped the coin again, and this time asked Jake “Heads or Tails?”

“Tails,” declared Jake, and tails it was too.

The Cleric slowly dragged himself to his feet, and faced Jake. Jake kicked off his Grocs menacingly. Every man present apart from The Cleric, was absent mindedly holding their crown jewels in anticipation of the awful scene that was about to unfold.

Frank sniggered nervously.

The Cleric stood, with his hands behind his back, braced. Ready for a full right foot of mini-golem stoniness to whack him straight in the scrotum.

The Cleric’s mind was racing, he had wanted children even though he was a man of the cloth now, he knew that this would not be possible after this. He said a small prayer under his breath and waited.

Jake scraped the earth beneath his right foot like a bull, and

then ran toward The Cleric, as he approached at speed he swung his foot as hard as he could and he made contact.

The Cleric collapsed in a heap, Timmy, Richard and Russ were all sick in their mouths, and for Jake this was the greatest accomplishment of his entire life.

“I concede,” wept The Cleric, “I am not doing that again” and the crew swept up Jake onto their shoulders like he had just won the World Cup, this was the greatest feeling Jake had ever had, and couldn’t wait to kick some other idiot in the bollocks to get this level of adulation again.

Defeated, The Cleric dragged himself off in the direction of Saurabh, and the group slowly approached the Church.

There were several trees outside, and then that is when they saw it, in the trees. The Glis Glis.



It hissed and growled, and the colour drained from Ben's cheeks as he realised that this was not going to be easy at all.

It bared it's teeth, hissing and was at least five feet from head to tail.

Then, unexpectedly, it dropped to the floor.

Bob, sensing that it would somehow know that he was the one to cause peril to, started to run back towards Church Street. The Glis Glis gave chase.



Bob ran for his life, the whole length of Church Street and then into the Queens Head, where he slammed the door behind him, the Glis Glis was shut out.

All of this had happened in such a flash that most of the group had been left behind at the church, where they were pillaging the holy water from inside of the church.

The Glis Glis was pawing and snarling at the door that Bob had slammed shut but even more unfortunately for the Glis Glis, Richard the Blacksmith had decided to stop off at the Queens Head and have an ale, or ten.

Madame Manuella looked out of the window and pointed at the Glis Glis, and within a minute or so, Richard the Blacksmith was out in Church Street to assess the situation.

Richard looked at the Glis Glis clawing the door to the saloon bar, and then the Glis Glis stopped and looked up at Richard, he could see it gulp slightly.

Within a nanosecond, Richard picked up the Glis Glis, broke its neck , skinned it and with his bare hands turned it into individual burgers, leaving the fur intact in a small rug type affair.

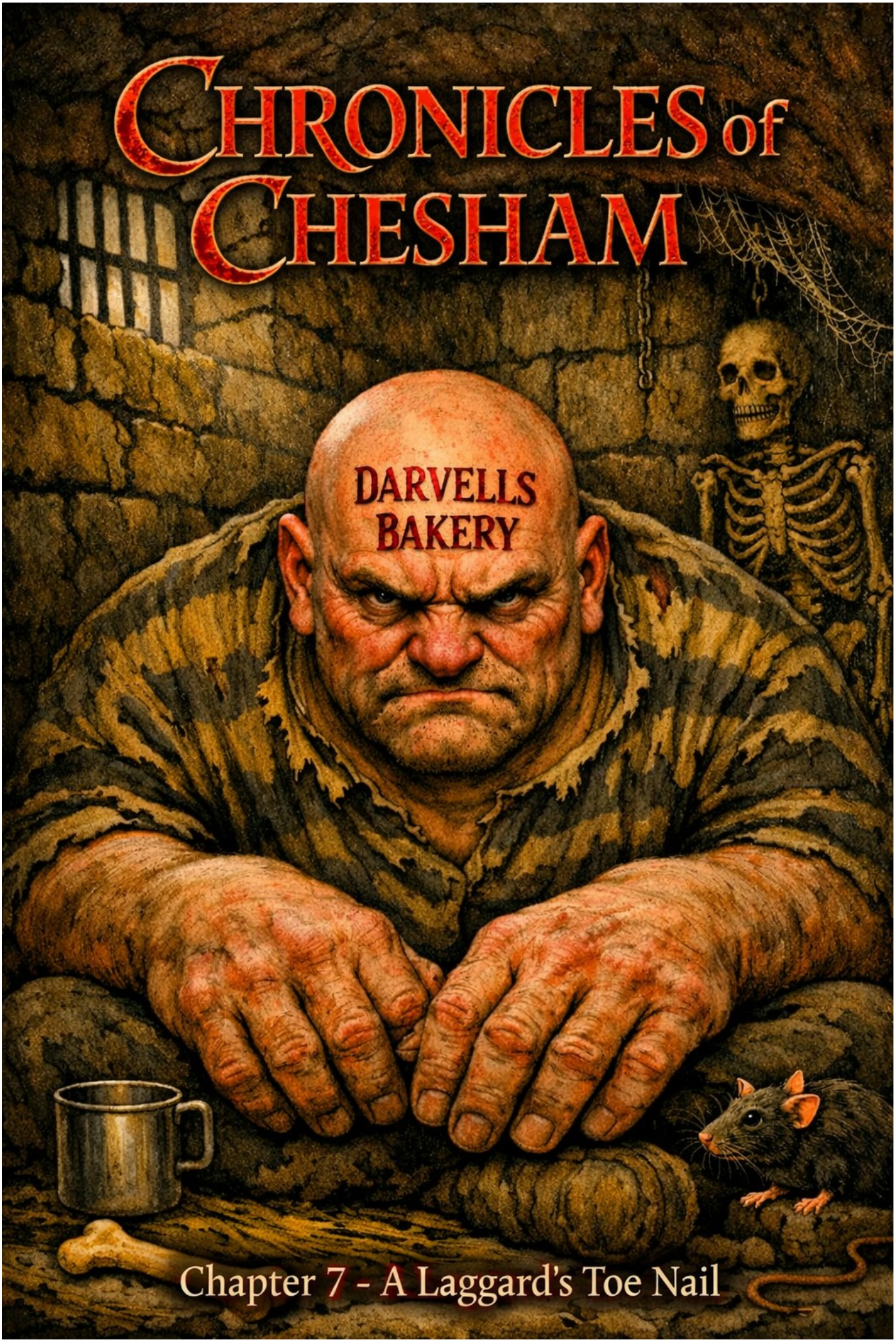
The crew had by now made their way back to the pub, and Richard the Blacksmith happily declared “All yours, hope you didn’t mind?”

“I don’t mind at all,” said Ben, “can I buy you a pint?”

“Well I was just going,” said Richard the Blacksmith.

“Well maybe just a roader?” Countered Ben.

Everyone knew what that meant.


CHRONICLES of CHESHAM
DARVELLS BAKERY
Chapter 7 - A Laggard's Toe Nail

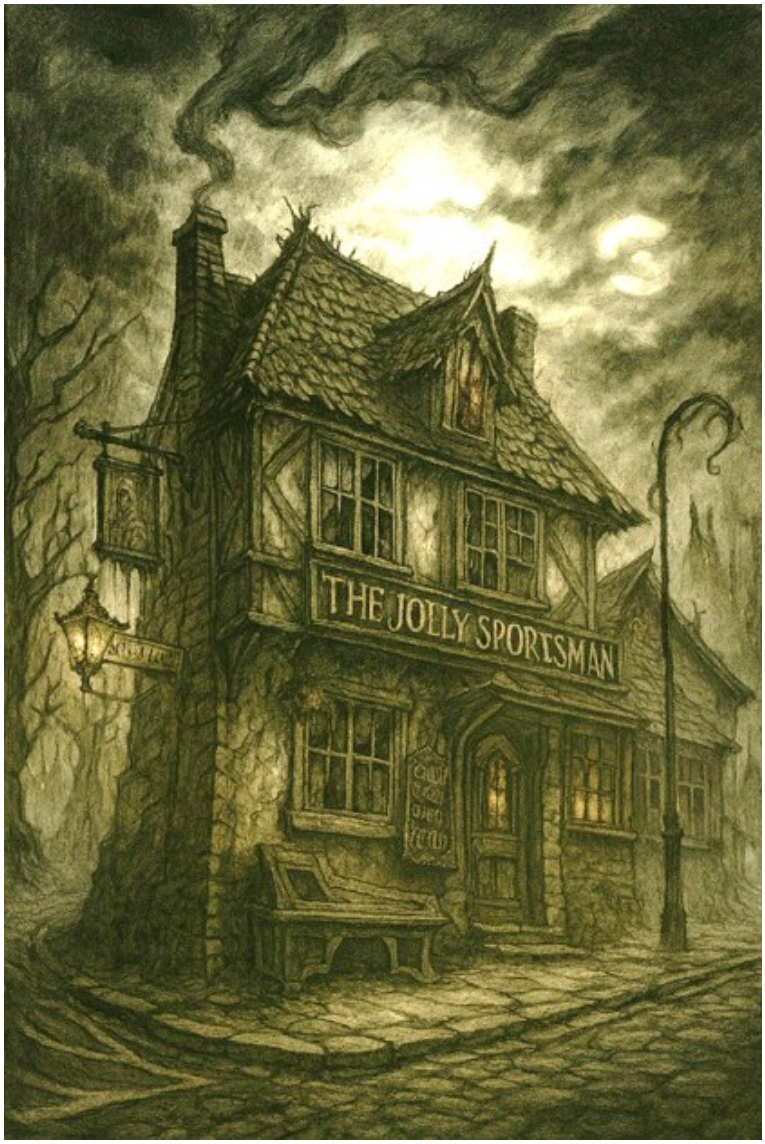
Chapter Seven – A Laggards Toe Nail

Dave the Bastard had been very clear about the Laggards Toe Nail, when he was telling Timmy what to do.

“It needs to be from an actual Lag, you know, a prisoner – you will have to get into the gaol.”

Everyone had heard of a prison break out but a break in? That was going to take some doing.

The Chesham Gaol was situated to the east of the town, not far from the Jolly Sportsman hostelry, where a man could be a man and a woman could be a man too. They had exciting pub games, such as axe throwing, and castration roulette, and there were plenty of people in there who would have experience of the Chesham Gaol.



Timmy rounded everyone up and they headed off to the Jolly Sportsman.

Timmy, it is fair to say, had never really been to the Jolly Sportsmen and so was not entirely sure what to expect,

he was hoping that they were Orc friendly.

The gang made their way from the Queens Head, along Church Street, past the market square and the clocktower, dragons circling above in groups of two's and three's.

They walked down the high street, past the Drawing Room (one for the future), and where the George and Dragon would eventually be established (also for future adventures).

Finally, they arrived at the Jolly Sportsman, and could see the Chesham Gaol looming behind it.

Russ was excited, he loved a bit of axe throwing and had heard that this sometimes even extended to dwarves.

Bob and Jake, being of the more vertically challenged amongst the group, were a little more apprehensive, not wishing to end up as the darts for the evening.



As they entered, they could see trolls and other ne'er do wells in the bar and sat around the pub.

Jeff went to the bar to order some ale but it was standing room only and some bar craft was needed.

Pub Lore Fact

Pub lore dictates that you must, as a customer, be aware of the natural order of the people at the bar. You are expected to survey the scene and take note of those drinking at the bar. They are not in the queue, so they don't count and will be served attentively by the bar staff if they want a drink in any event. Then there are the people in the queue, pub lore states that you must have a basic knowledge of who was before you, give them the eyes and acknowledge them or forever be branded a complete wally for not respecting the order.

Then, there are the bar staff, the good ones know who is next, and will acknowledge newcomers with a nod, but they can get busy, so the customers need to self-regulate to a certain extent.

If you know someone is before you, then you must direct the bar staff to the one before you, this will in turn endear you to the bar staff who will likely serve you next, even if you are a little out of turn.

What you must not do though, under any circumstances, is push into a bar queue with no regard for your fellow drinker, this will not do, and in a place like Chesham will surely lead to violence.

End of Pub Lore Fact

So, Jeff was at the bar, using his bar presence, leaning on the bar with a gold coin in his hand to express his intent.

Three, four orders had gone on, and Jeff was clearly next, when a huge troll approached the bar next to Jeff and shouted “Oi, I am next, get a move on.”

This was a terrible mistake to make, Jeff, although an engineer and definitely not a wizard, would not take kindly to such rudeness, and squared up to the huge troll, lumbering close to the ceiling and rippling with muscles.

“I think you will find I am next,” Jeff calmy explained to the troll.

“Oh, you think so, do you,” the troll flexed its chest muscles and cracked his knuckles in both hands.

“Yes, I do,” insisted Jeff, who then made a small wave of the stick that he had inside his robes that were definitely not wizard robes and was definitely not a magic wand.

The troll clutched at his buttocks, and then realised that he was about to either have a very borderline fart or completely unload in his breeches. He ran to the nearest toilet and Jeff calmy turned back around to the bar and said “I think it is 9 ales, one in a jug” the bar maid duly complied.

With ale in hand, Jeff handed out the ales, and one of the locals in the pub approached the group. He was a full goblin, a greeny, bluey hue, with teeth protruding from his bottom lip like small

tusks.

He spoke to Richard/Ian. “Hello friend.”

Richard replied, “Hello,” giving nothing away.

“I think I might know your mum,” he said.

“I think a few people did, to be fair,” sighed Richard.

“What is your business here? Can I help?”

“Maybe,” replied Richard, “we are looking for people who have knowledge of the gaol, we are on a mission.”

“You need to come out the back to the see the guv’nor, but he will need some convincing, he is a very suspicious man,”

Richard conveyed the news to the others and they all went out the back of the pub.



In the hot tub, was the most extraordinary looking man, sitting in a heated hot tub with his entourage around him. He was a large man, bald with an enormous belly and wearing thick gold

chains around his neck, he had numerous tattoos and from where the gang were standing, through the thick smoke blowing from the huge cigar he was smoking, they could see that he was completely naked in the hot tub. He had a tankard of ale resting on the side of the hot tub, and around the edges were two trolls, and three other ne'er do wells.

The large bald man surveyed the motley crew in front of him with great suspicion.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" He spat, whilst perfectly holding his cigar in place in his mouth.

Knowing this was his task, Timmy stepped forward,"I am the man that requires your attention," Timmy put forward.

"Get in, no clothes."

"Er,er pardon?" Asked Timmy.

"Do as you are told or clear off."

"You won't like it if I get wet in there," replied Tim cautiously.

"Just do it, or you can get out of here."

The actual reason that The Guv'nor (also known a Biscuit) insisted upon this was because he had heard that some of Lord Jaspers secret police had taken to using magical listening devices to record conversations with local villains in order to incarcerate them for the rest of their lives, and due to his various nefarious (and sometimes hilarious) activities he didn't want to take any chances.

Timmy was uncomfortable, but managed to slip his kit off discreetly, using his hand to cover his modesty.

“Now, what do you want?”

“I need to know how to get into the gaol,” Timmy asked, looking slightly uncomfortable.

“The gaol?” Replied the Guv, nor.”

“The gaol,” Timmy replied, his eyebrows were now wiggling slightly, “we are going to need to be a bit quicker.”

The Guv’nor eyed him suspiciously, “and what’s in it for me then?”

Timmy’s eyebrows were now waggling about like two drunken caterpillars on a club 18-30 holiday. “What do you want? I can give you a free pass on the Chesham transport system, I’m a driver!”

This seemed to satisfy the Guv’nor, and to a number of stifled laughs in the background from the gang he said “You’re on.”

Mick and Bob in particular were struggling not to laugh at the deal, knowing full well that the Chesham transport system had hardly been open for a single full day since the orcs unionised.

The Guv’nor explained what Timmy needed to do, step by step, as Timmy’s eyebrows continued to waggle, and his eyes were growing wider and wider, was that …. No …. He looked like he was smiling.

“What the hell is wrong with you?” Snapped the Guv’nor, and

In this instance, what appeared to be a giant sea serpent leapt out of the hot tub and stood completely upright in the hot tub.

There were gasps, there was pointing and the Guv'nor leapt clean out of the hot tub backwards, causing Timmy to be completely submerged with this snaky object the only thing that could be seen. Was it winking?



Which brings us to the little known facts about Orcs. Orc actually stands for Oversized Reproductive Cord, yes that means that Orcs have very large ..er .. chaps. However evolution has been kind to them, and the modern Orc is able to function because nowadays the Orc pork is water activated, when dry it is perfectly normal.

"That's Timmy's willy," pointed Jeff, as Timmy began to emerge from the hot tub.

"I told you, you wouldn't like it," said Timmy, trying to tuck his trunk into his trunks.

At this point every man there, and they were all men (sexist), did the same thing, and thought of their own limitations in

comparison with old Nelly pants over there. And then they moved on.

Everyone went inside the pub for a pint to thrash out a game plan. Timmy wasn't entirely sure, but he felt that he was getting served a lot quicker by the bar maids since the "hot tub incident", as he brought the ales over to the group and they planned their next move.

They headed to the nearby Gaol, it had previously been a performing arts centre owned by Lady Elgiva, who bequeathed it to the people of Chesham, many years ago. It was subsequently reclaimed by Lord Jasper and turned into a miserable prison for the ne'er do wells of the area.



The Olde Chesham Gaol has many infamous inmates, including many an orc and goblin, as well as more evil characters. The long term inmates were such delights as Harold the Poker, who did terrible things with a …. use your imagination, and Colin the Cattle Worrier, who had a particularly nasty affection for the farms of Pednor, but by far the weirdest and undesirable was a prisoner known only as The Spanker.

Rumour has it that he was an orphan that was dropped off on the doorstep of St Marys Church and had been taken in by the Cleric and the Nuns of Church Street. He was a vile child, who spoke in a soft voice, like a serial killer who didn't understand that he was doing wrong, and in order to control him he was punished, over and over again, by the nuns and the Cleric, who could not understand his desire to kill small animals, and other creatures in the most bizarre of circumstances.

It is rumoured that he had even captured and tortured a young dragon, and numerous Glis Glis.

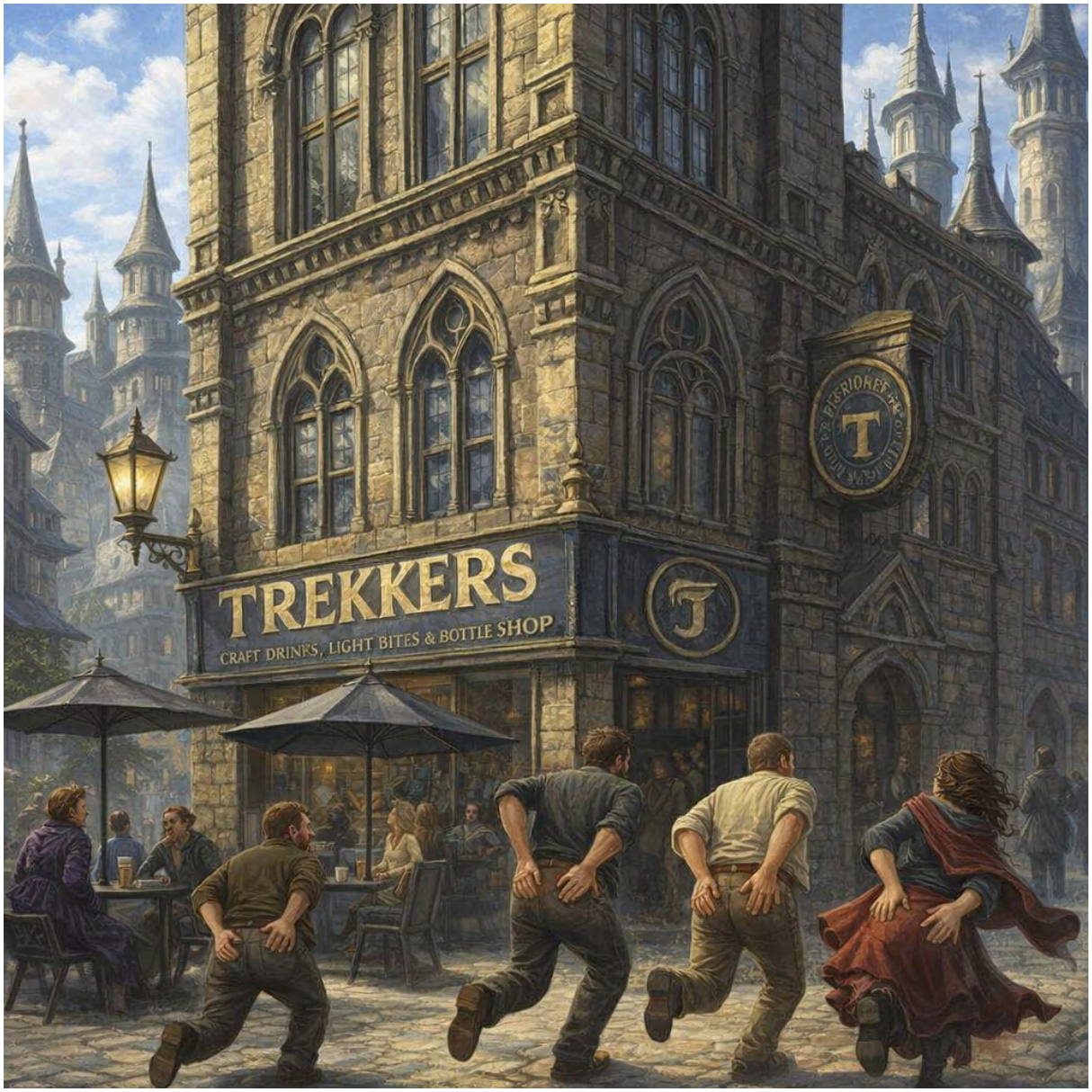
The purpose of the Cleric was clear, he had to address this perversion, and through cruel punishment, and repeated beatings he managed to reduce the urges of the now young adult, to an addiction to randomly spanking people on the behind.

He eventually became too big and uncontrollable, even for the Cleric, and so was cast out from the Church, into the wilds of Chesham.

It did not take long, and on a particularly long, hot summer it happened.

Known locally as the “great spanking of 22” (others called it the fifty shades of May), he had gone on a wild rampage through the main square, everyone in the market got it, large powerful hands like shovels, swishing this way and that, he was now a large muscular, powerful man. Into Trekkers, bang, bang, bang, poor patrons clutching their heated rear ends in agony as the chaos continued.

Right through Trekkers, Brazil’s, bang, bang, bang – total carnage.



After swinging his way through Jermyn Street, the allotments, he eventually made the fatal mistake of running into the Forge, where Richard the Blacksmith was working away over a red hot fire.

The Spanker stopped in his tracks and surveyed the scene, Richard the Blacksmith looked up and sized him up.

The Spanker was probably about the same size as Richard the Blacksmith, however he (unwisely) fancied his chances and advanced upon the Blacksmith, much to the surprise of Richard.

As The Spanker approached, Richard the Blacksmith, quick as a flash, pulled a hot piece of ironwork out of the fire that he had been working on and thrust it into The Spankers forehead, causing him to scream in agony and drop to the floor. Richard the Blacksmith promptly put his foot on his neck, and the Guard came to take him away. The Spanker has remained in the Chesham Gaol ever since, he may never be released.

Probably just as unfortunately for The Spanker, was that the hot ironwork that Richard the Blacksmith had pulled out of the fire was actually an iron imprint to be used by the local bakery to burn into the crust of their bread, so he now had Darvell's Bakery seared into his forehead for the rest of time (Darvell's – you are welcome!).

Back to the Gaol, The Guv'nor had been clear, there was a specific prisoner that they needed to get to, Gunter Ausfahrt. The Guv'nor had been in Chesham Gaol on many an occasion and had the misfortune to have been cell mates with Gunter.

Gunter was a man of many a disease and a total lack of hygiene, and had been thrown in the Gaol for the rest of his days by the secret police of Lord Jasper, for being a smelly, horrible, unhygienic obscenity, apparently a crime in Chesham.

This also meant that Gunter never, ever cut his toe nails, apparently they were twisty, and dirty, and infected but definitely an easy win for the object of this particular exercise.

The Guv'nor described how to get to the cell through a ventilation shaft that could be accessed from the side of the Gaol, but it was very small and it would only accommodate the smaller members of the team, and with a push Timmy, who had been very proud of his exercise regime whilst he has not been working.

And so it was, in darkness, they approached the Gaol. Frank, Ben, Mick, Rich/Ian and Russ took point looking out for the Guard, keeping to the shadows to avoid attention and out of the sinister light of the fiery torches that burned around the building.

The three stood beneath the ventilation shaft entrance, it was not closely guarded because not one person had tried to escape that way before, and certainly not one person had tried to break in.

"Right," said Timmy, "Bob, you stand next to the wall, Jake you get on his shoulders."

Bob and Jake did as they were told, and Bob was beginning to regret having a solid stone man (even a little one), standing on his shoulders. With what must be described as a quite sensational piece of athleticism, Timmy ran towards the two, jumped up onto Jakes shoulders and swung his morning star straight at the shaft cover, which shattered into a hundred pieces. He then clung to the edge of the shaft on the side of the building and swung his way into a very tight spaced shaft, barely big enough for him to go forward on his hands and feet.

Timmy dangled a foot (Jake thought it was a foot but Timmy was not completely dry yet), and followed suit into the shaft, with Bob essentially holding onto Jake's leg, they were now all in the shaft.

There was some awkwardness to this, the shaft was very dark, and the three heroes were crawling on their hands and knees. This led to unfortunate bumping into each other, where head and backside were in highly risky proximity. Leading to a succession of "ouch," "I'm sorry," and "do you mind?" This was not the only problem.

<u>Pub Lore Fact</u>

If you are a drinker of ale, then you must be alive to the fact that ale is a feisty drink with many moving parts, and when ordering ale you must inspect it to make sure that the barrel from which it came is not at an end. More fool you if you ignore this advice and drink a cloudy one, and an uncomfortable visit to the latrine is in your near future if you drink ale that is "gone".

End of Pub Lore Fact

Jake, prior to his time in the Lantern Making Guild, had not been that much of a drinker, and he was not particularly aware of the need to check your ale. For the purpose of this current predicament, it was a tad unfortunate that Jake had, indeed, consumed an ale at the dog end of the barrel, not knowing that he should inspect it.

It was also doubly unfortunate, that as a golem he didn't currently wear any clothes either.

As they crawled through the ventilation shaft, Timmy had been instructed to keep going until he reached the second grill in the ceiling over a cell.

As they made their way through the darkness Timmy could hear a curious sound, it was like a whistle followed by a sound like pebbles being thrown. At first Timm\y stopped when he heard it, which caused Jake to stick his stony nose into Timmys bottom. Not wishing a repeat of this, Timmy kept going, as did Jake.

Unfortunately for Bob, he was well aware of what was happening, and as he followed, nose to stony cheek behind Jake, he heard the whistle and then felt a dust cloud of pebbles shoot him straight in the face. This was, however, a minor discomfort compared to the horrendous smell.

Oh – the hoppy, lively, smell of a bad pint, right in the mouth for poor Bob, who was now choking and cursing his luck once

Again. “Have you had a bad pint?” Complained Bob to Jake.

“I am not sure what is happening,” said Jake, as he convulsed slightly and fired another dust cloud straight into Bob’s face.

“Oh god, how can this get any worse?” Poor Bob wondered.

And, when wondering if things can get worse, the cruel Gods of Chesham (more in future episodes) were listening and did indeed decide to make things a lot worse indeed.

The mission was to crawl through the shaft, get to the second ventilation grill and then drop down into the cell of Gunter Ausfahrt. This did mean, however, going gingerly over the first ventilation grill. This was not so problematic for Timmy, who was quite lithe and managed to bundle his way over the top of it, noting that although there was some light below, it was indeed a dingy cell over which they were crawling, wondering who or what lurked in there.

Jake followed suit, however the first grill had seen better days, and was certainly not designed to take, even a diminutive, stone chap over it. As Jake expelled toxic gases and crashed over the first grill, he severely weakened it.

Bob had decided to hang back a bit, fed of getting repeated mouthfuls of Jakes digestive system, and then he encountered the first grill. He tried to negotiate it gingerly but it was too late, Jake had fatally weakened it and as Bob shuffled over it, it gave way and with a blood curdling scream, Bob fell through into the darkness, where he landed with a thud.

Timmy heard the scream in the distance but had by now reached the second grille. There was poor light and it was only seconds later that Jake arrived and once again stuck his nose accidentally into Timmys Orcy sphincter.

“Ow,” protested Timmy.

“Sorry about that, my eyes are not so good in this light, used to Lanterns you see.”

“Don’t worry about that, “ said Timmy, who was now loosening the grille, which came off very easily due to it’s age. Timmy dropped down into the dark of the cell, followed by Jake, and immediately vomited, the stench was unbelievable, they had found Gunter Ausfahrt.

Back with Bob, he at least felt relieved that he had managed a soft landing, he was on a mattress, filled with hay, that broke his fall, there didn’t appear to be anyone in the bed, and Bob for one sweet, sweet moment said to himself, “I don’t believe it, I have landed in an empty cell.”

Then a very high pitched voice in the darkness spoke, “Oh no you haven’t!”

Bob was now very concerned, he was unsure he would be able to jump back into the ventilation shaft, and so knew that he would have to confront his new “cell mate”.

A high pitched voice came from the darkness, “We must be dreaming,” like Sean Connery in James Bond but a lot more serial killer to it.

“It has been so long since we had company,” said the voice from the darkness, “welcome to our home, we are afraid you will have to take us how you find us.”

“Who is here?” Asked Bob, who was becoming very worried indeed.

“Just little old us, we have been here for a very long time indeed, so nice to see someone.”

Bob’s mind was now racing, who would be a good person to meet in here, scrub that, there can’t be any good people to meet.

“Are you an Orc or a Goblin?”

“Tee hee,” came the high pitched voice, “guess again, we like this game.”

Who could it be, Bob was trying to think of his preferred options.

“Do you like farmyard animals?” Bob asked desperately.

“Oh no, he died last week, hee hee hee.”

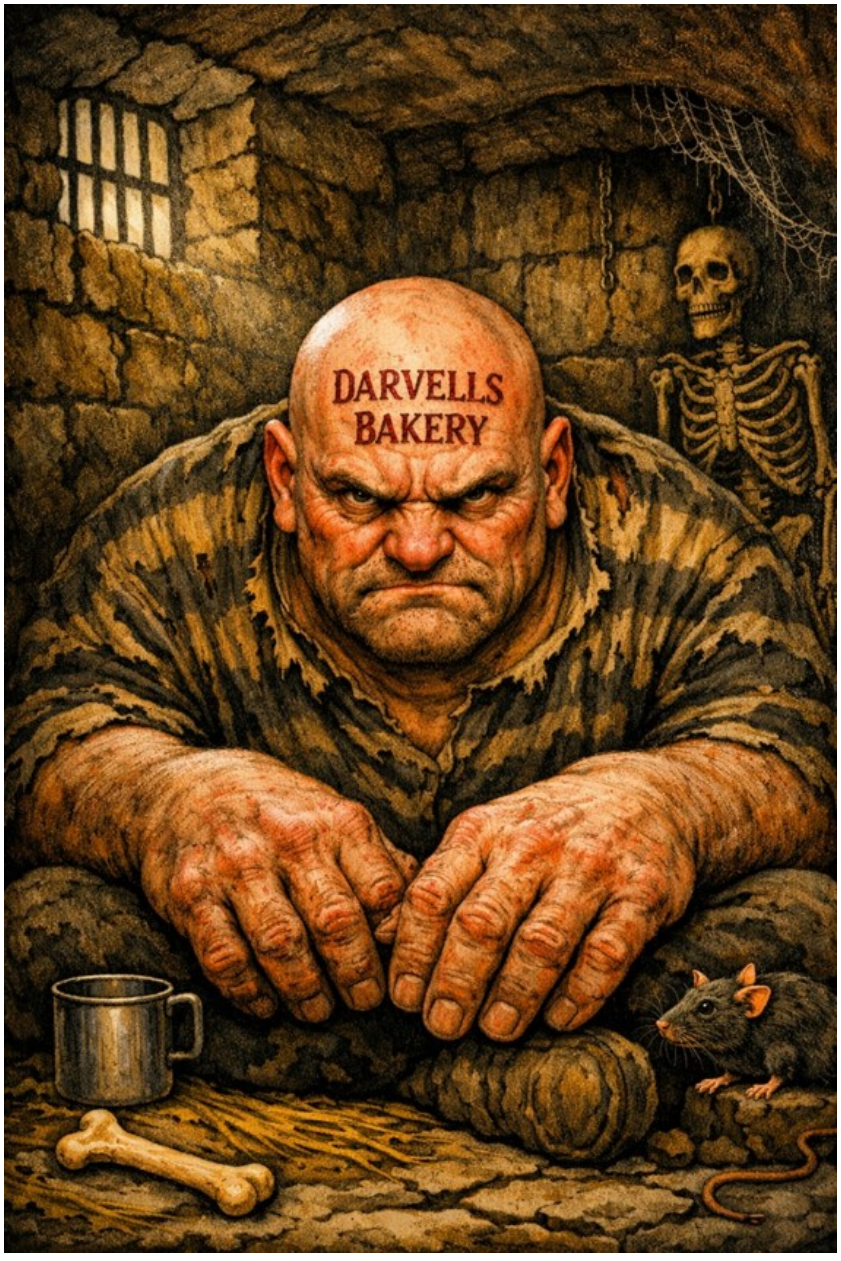
“You haven’t got a poker have you?” Bob was starting to realise the gravity of the situation.

“Oh, dear lord no, we don’t need one of those,” came the reply.

Bob was now frantic, “petty thief maybe?”

“You can call us Spanky,” the very annoying high pitched voice retorted. Bob immediately developed the same condition as

Jake from the ale, he knew this would not be good, and as his panic set in, a candle was lit in the cell next door and shone through the grill in the wall and there he was. As the light began to shine through and flicker, Bob could see the scar on his forehead, clear as day, “Darvells Bakery”. He was huge, bald and muscular, a skeleton behind him must be the remains of his last cell mate, who had peculiar damage in the pelvis area. His hands were like great shovels, Bob shivered, he was in a cell with The Spanker. Oh how Bob had wished he had got the cattle worrier.



Meanwhile, Timmy and Jake were now looking at a fast asleep Gunter Ausfahrt, the most diseased, smelly and horrible specimen in the whole of Chesham.

He was snoring, and his feet were exposed.

Winding out from his disgustingly minging feet were curly wurly toe nails of abject depravity.

“Give me the knife,” Timmy quietly asked Jake.

“I don’t have the knife, I have nowhere to keep it,” Jake replied, letting Timmy observe his rocky nakedness.

“Oh bugger, where is it?”

“Bob keeps it behind his lovely hair,” Jake replied.

Timmy gulped, “Have we got anything, anything sharp at all?” He looked around the room but there was nothing.

“I haven’t even got any teeth or nails,” Jake explained softly.

Then it occurred to Timmy, and his little Orcy face went a little more green than usual, he was going to have to bite the toe nails off.

He leaned towards the disgusting twisty, stinking nails, he gagged slightly.

Now Timmy was not to know at this point that not only was Gunter smelly and disgusting, he also had a weird sexually transmitted disease which meant he could not wear shoes anymore.



Furthermore, it was so rare that no-one really knew what the risks and consequences were, should contraction occur.

Timmy leaned forwards again, and rested his lips upon the nail of the big toe of Gunter Ausfahrt.

He bit, and the nail cracked, but Gunter turned slightly in his sleep, he was having a dream, and he had put his toe fully into Timmys poor unsuspecting mouth.

“Oh yah, das is good,” murmured Gunter, as his sceptic big toe swished around inside Timmys mouth, as Timmy tried to munch on his toe nail.

To be fair, Jake was struggling to watch, he had been in the Guild of Lantern Making for a very long time and had definitely never seen the equivalent of the local leper getting a toe sucking from an Orc, he was also still suffering from the effects of his ale and didn’t know whether to hurl or poop, in the end he did both.

At the same time, Jake could hear some rather bizarre noises coming from the cell next door, he could hear what sounded like a very noisy man crying, and at the same time a very loud slapping sound, once every five seconds or so. He dismissed it as he looked back at the scene, Timmy in action with Gunter was something that he was not going to forget for a long time to come.

Then he heard it, “CRACK”, the sound of a nail that had not been cut, washed or loved for ten years had now broken off in

Timmys mouth, who placed it in his pouch and then threw up all over the cell. Gunter woke up, stunned after his wonderful dream, Timmy was not impressed.

“Let’s get out of here!” Shouted Tim, and Jake knew instinctively knew what to do. He took ten paces back to the other side of the cell and although initially he was going to try and jump up into the ventilation shaft, that is when he heard it.

“Please help me!”

It was unmistakably Bob in the next cell, where the slapping sounds were coming from, and Jake changed tact and launched himself, stone on stone, against the cell wall. He made it through in one go, dust and brick everywhere, and before him was the second weirdest sight he had seen of the day. Bob was bent over the lap of this huge man, with huge hands, advertising the local bakery on his head, Timmy followed behind and just looked and stared, he had no sick left in his body.

“Leave my friend alone,” Jake pointed his stony finger at The Spanker, who was quite taken aback by the whole situation and dropped Bob to the ground.

“Let’s get out of here,” shouted Timmy who, in a heartbeat, grabbed the poor injured Bob and leapt onto the shoulders of Jake and took them both, miraculously through the ventilation grille that Bob had fallen through, putting Bob in front and shouting, “Now move.” And move they did, Jake looked menacingly at The Spanker, who liked a challenge but knew he

would be on a hiding to nothing with Jake, a man (small) of stone.

“Put me up there before I change my mind and cause you grief,” Jake threatened.

The Spanker had never seen such a thing, and obediently complied and lifted Jake up to the grille to the shaft.

“One more thing,” The Spanker asked of Jake.

“What?” Jake asked impatiently.

“Tell him, I love him.”

“Er… ok.” Jake replied.

The Spanker was way too big to follow and bring up the rear, so remained in his cell, awaiting for the inevitable arrival of a guard, what with all the commotion. Then he saw the broken wall, and Gunter Ausfahrt lying confused in his bed.

“You look like a really naughty boy,” The Spanker winked at Gunter.

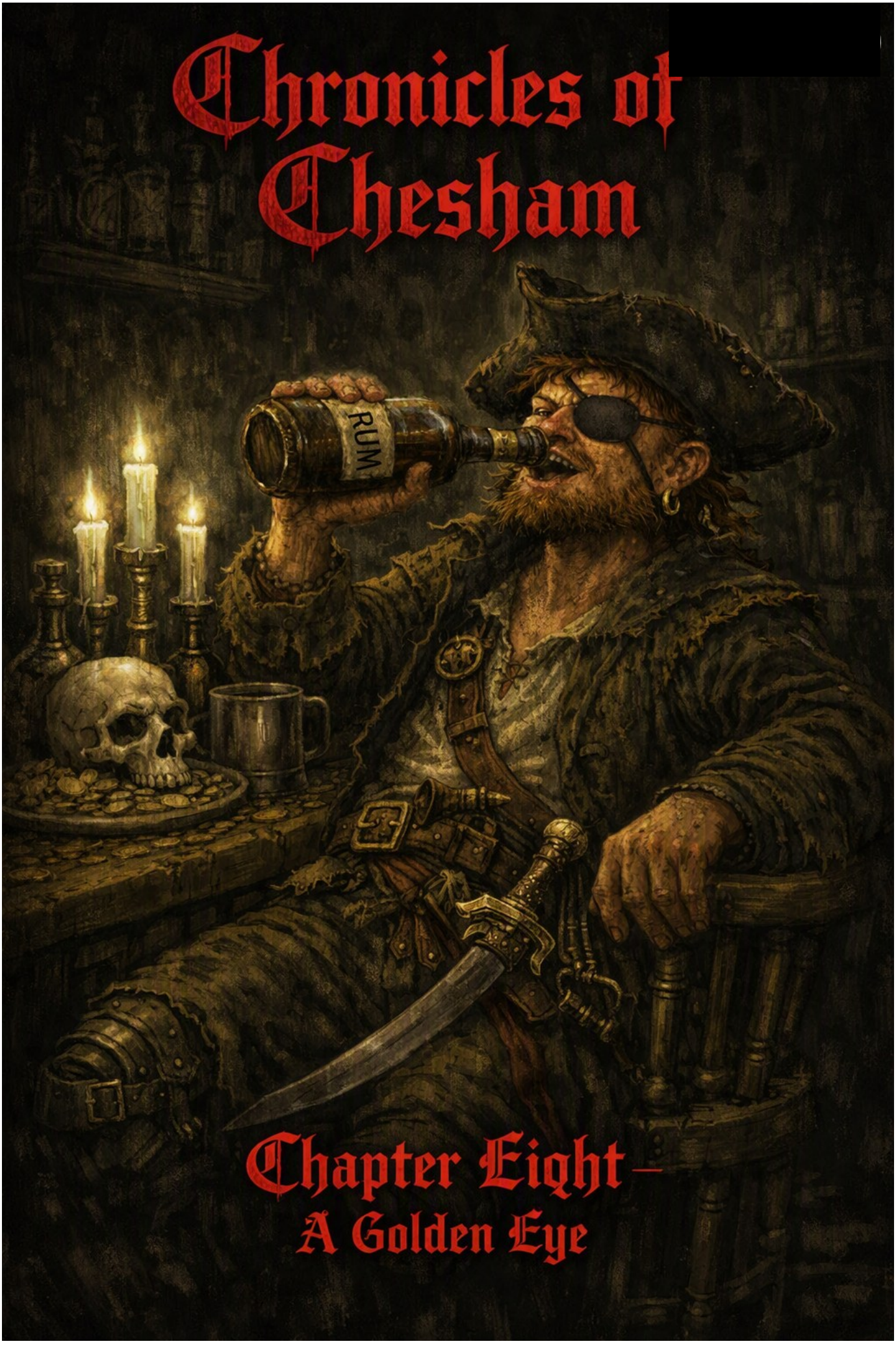
Gunter passed out, who knows what happened next.

Our heroes fled back through the ventilation shaft, with a distant sound of someone being slapped echoing in the background, until they reached their point of entry, and they each dropped down one by one, Timmy was gagging but had the nail in his pouch, Jake was heavily traumatised by the events, and Bob kept rubbing his poor buttocks, he had been spanked within an inch of his life and he was starting to wonder what else

would happen, what with the way the tasks had gone so far.

They creeped out of the grounds, looking for the rest of the gang but they were nowhere to be seen, they had got bored and gone back to the Jolly Sportsmen to have another beer.

Nobody was surprised.


Chronicles of Chesham
RUM
Chapter Eight –
A Golden Eye

CHAPTER EIGHT – A GOLDEN EYE

The team reformed the next day (not too early) in the Queens Head, ready to plot their next move. Bob had recovered somewhat, Timmy had an unpleasant swelling on his tongue and wasn't able to talk much, and Jake had developed some small grey lines on the side of his head, which everyone put down to stress.

Mick the Watchman was in charge of this one, and was commanding control of the saloon bar table. He explained to the group what his plan was.

Mick always wore his armour, he loved it, and over the years had customised it to suit the different tasks of being in charge of the entrance to Chesham.



Mick was also keen, after perhaps an ale or two, on exposing his buttocks to his friends, and others. This was obviously a bit of a faff when you are wearing armour, so he cleverly had a trapdoor fitted to the back, with first class hinges, so he could give 'em an eyeful should the feeling take him.

He worked most of the time from his tower, at the entrance to Chesham, where he would question people trying to enter. This would be perfectly acceptable, however Mick possesses strong political views about free movement and contributing to the local economy, meaning you were guaranteed a hard time if you didn't have a good story.



Mick had spent so much time in his watchtower that he knew pretty much everyone in Chesham, and their comings and goings, very handy if you know someone has been up to no good and you need a favour in a hurry.

Mick the Watchmen was, at the end of it, very protective of his town and his way of life, even a way of life that people outside of Chesham would not have wanted in the first place.

Mick did not know it yet, but when the Gods eventually introduce social magidia into the mix, he was going to love it.

Back to the plot, Dave the Bastard had explained that in order to find a golden eye, Mick would need to locate the dread pirate known as Ryan the Ruiner. Word had it that he could be found of an evening (and almost any time) in the Generals

Arms.

Word also had it that Ryan the Ruiner was an extremely unpleasant man, with a reputation for spoiling epic nights out with his poor behaviour and extreme potty mouth.

He was known to have sailed the high seas for many years, in command as the captain of the feared sea vessel, the Jilted Johnny. It is rumoured that he had plundered and sunk many merchant ships, including one that a certain Dave the Bastard had sailed on.

“If you find him, you give him one from me!” Dave the Bastard had said, Mick was not entirely sure what that meant but promised that he would when the time was right.

It was also rumoured that Ryan the Ruiner had been invited to reside in Chesham at the invitation of Lord Jasper himself, due to providing so much gold and wealth from his missions on the high seas, that had allegedly been sponsored by the Lord of Chesham.

Mick the Watchman, looked around the table in the saloon bar of the Queens Head.

“We know that the Pirate drinks in the Generals most of the time, and that somewhere on his person is an eyeball made of gold, according to the Dave the Bastard.”

Mick went on to explain that he apparently keeps it on him at all times and is a momento of an epic fight he had with another pirate over the correct pronunciation of a rarely used expletive

, sounded similar to anchor apparently. It happened in a tavern in a far and distant place, known as Ports Mouth.

It was said that Ryan the Ruiner split him in two with a spoon, and then gouged the golden eye out by bare hand. He took the eyeball from his dead body and is said to be very proud of it indeed.

“We are all going to need to go in on this one boys, safety in numbers, and wait for a chance to isolate him, and then get the eye. Ben, Frank, you can chat up the locals at the bar and create a distraction, Russ you come with me and when the pirate has had enough and needs to go to the bog then we can follow him off and get his golden eyeball.”

Everyone nodded their agreement, they would go in mob handed, get the party started and when a distraction had been created, they would strike with military precision (no laughing please).

“Jeff, you can hold the whip.”

<u>Pub Lore Fact</u>

The “whip” is not an actual whip, it is however a contribution from each person in the drinking group towards their own drinking expenses. This is as opposed to the “round” system, where everyone buys in turns, which can become unfair if you are the last one to pay for a round and the drinking is already complete – hence the whip system was born.

There are many complex rules about who must be the “whip

master”.

Firstly, they must be a trustworthy individual, who will not trouser the whip money when no one is looking or keep the change from the rounds for themselves.

Secondly, the whip must be kept in a vessel or pocket that is separate from the whip masters own personal funds, so that they are not blended or confused.

Each person must make an equal contribution to the whip and the whip master must announce when the whip is running low, so further funds can be contributed.

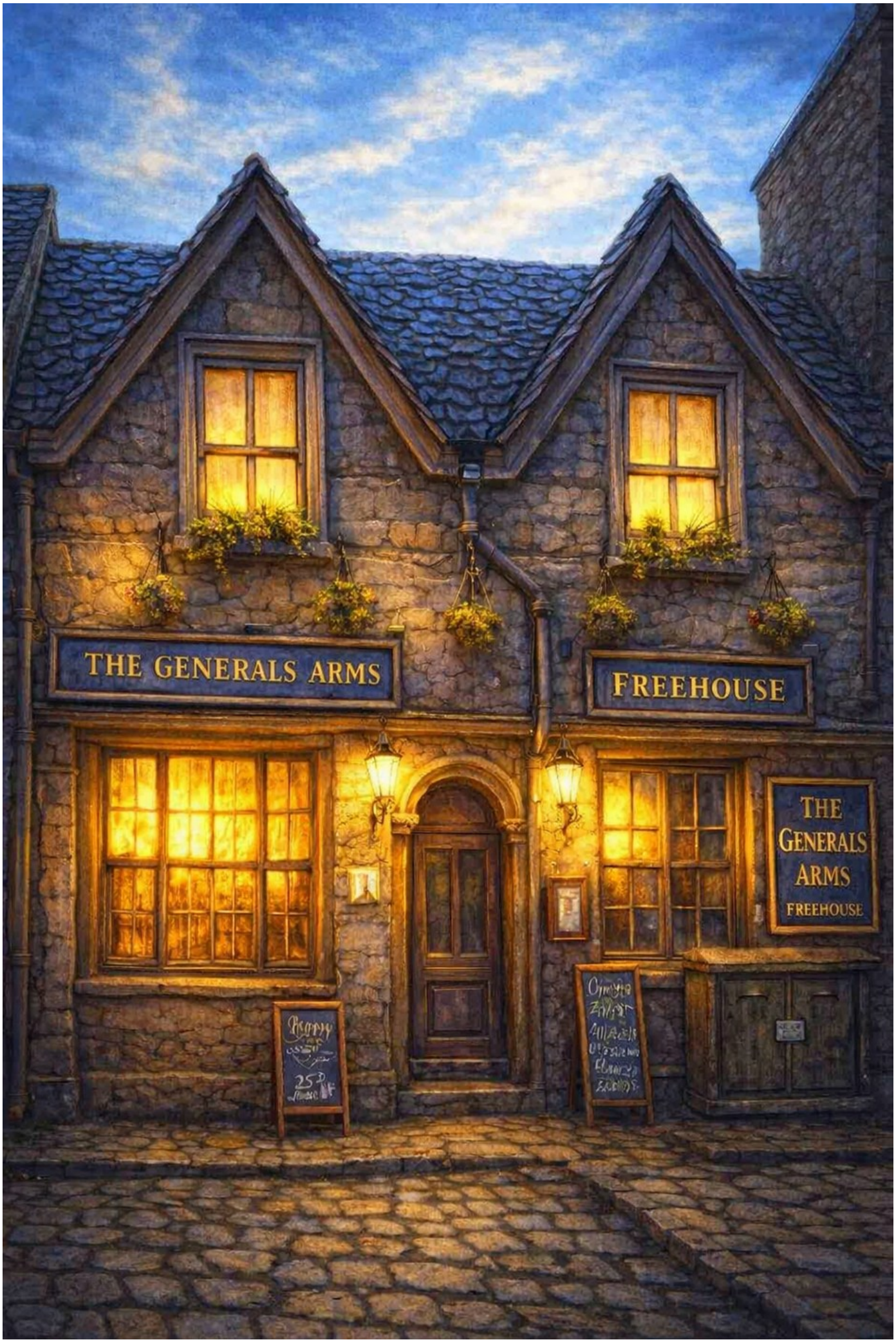
If you are in the whip, you must not operate outside of the whip without discussion first.

End of Pub Lore Fact

Jeff grunted and they headed off up Church Street, over the River Chess, past the town square, it was dark, as usual, and the occasional squawk of a nuisance dragon could be heard in the evening sky overhead. They headed past the main square, as the clocktower began to toll an eerie toll to indicate that night time was drawing upon them once again.

And finally, after passing Trekkers, the Drawing Room and Brazils, one by one, they arrived outside of the Generals Arms.

The Generals Arms was mainly frequented by Guards from the Barracks, which was not far from the main gates, and Mick the Watchman knew a few of them quite well, the Palace of Lord Jasper was not far away.


THE GENERALS ARMS
FREEHOUSE
THE GENERALS ARMS
FREEHOUSE

The Generals (as it was known), was a busy pub with a long bar down the left hand side as you went in and many, many seating areas where both the Guards and the locals could enjoy reasonably priced ale.

It was also a purveyor of the Chesham sausage, one of the finest and proudest products of the town, created by the Master Butcher Gerry Martin.

The sausage had taken over as one of the main exports from the town after the industries Boots, Brushes, Beer and Baptists.

As the gang held their final briefing outside of the pub, Jeff collected the whip from everyone, and they entered as a group.

The bar was smoky, and dark and a smell of ale hung in the air, mixed with the tobacco and other numerous aromas too exotic to identify.

Around the room there were clusters of different groups, mainly guards, but also some heavy looking types, bent over their tables in deep conversation about whatever their business was, not for the consumption of others.

And there, further down the bar, sat the Pirate, Ryan the Ruiner, scourge of the seas, the filthiest of mouths and apparently the possessor of a golden eye.

He had a splendid pirate hat, a patch over his left eye and a solid gold earring. His right leg had been lost some years ago and was now replaced with an iron peg (with rather wonderful hinge work). A large dagger hung from his belt, and he was

swigging rum directly from a brown bottle, spilling some occasionally on his raggedy brown tunic and trousers.



Across from Ryan were two henchman, Keith and Ron. They were former crew members of Pirate Ryan, and were both burly, and the owners of many tattoos. Keith had an almost permanently intoxicated look on his face, which bore scars from his days at sea, plundering, he was tall but muscular. Ron was shorter, stockier, and had a look of insanity set deep within his eyes, as if he could kick off at any moment, these were dangerous men. They were listening to a local singer, who wore the most outlandish clothes, but goodness he could belt out a tune.

We are reliably informed his name is Tony Hadley, in an episode about Gold? Who would have thought it.



Jeff approached the bar, a little further away from the pirate, and instilled his presence (see previous pub lore lesson), he turned around and gathered the orders, for he was the whip master, and this was his job.

Orders came thick and fast and ales were distributed.

Frank and Ben, in their fine merchant's attire, were a little out of place here, but they strolled over to a group of drinkers that were located near the pirate.

Jeff gave Ben his pint, to which he loudly announced to his new friends.

"My name is Benamri, and I am not leaving here until I have got gout!"

Everyone cheered.

Most of the Shouty Wednesday crew had either had or currently suffered from gout, this could lead to long conversations about the kind of treatments that each of them were using.

Russ was currently upping his whole grain intake, Jeff was eating more nuts, Franks was using a little blue pill that Rich/Ian had seen him taking, he said it was definitely for gout. Ben had heard that more liquid was required for his, so he was using ale.

With all of the cheering, the pirate pulled a face, but that might be how he always looks.

Frank was engaging with the nearby crowd, who were admiring his Bolex time piece, perhaps in order to rob him later. Ben was too busy knocking back his ale to join in just yet, but was listening.

“I am still so annoyed about the BU vote, the result was madness …” this was a risky strategy, the vote to leave the BU (Buckinghamshire Union) was very contentious indeed and a cause of much angst within the local community.

<u>Pub Lore Fact</u>

It is alright for regular drinkers who know each other to have different views, and to debate vigorously about why there are right and everyone else is wrong (see previous pub lore), and to argue convincingly, even if you are almost certainly wrong, is to be applauded. However, when raising a highly contentious

issue, upon which there will almost certainly be violence if not handled correctly, then there is a stage at which you have made your point, now drop it.

End of Pub Lore Fact

Frank continued “If they had only taken the “do not drink” labels off of all of the rat poison bottles before the vote, then we would have had a much better outcome.”

This was dangerous territory indeed, rat poison in Chesham is nuclear grade due to the size of the rats, and Glis Glis, and an accidental sip is certain death.

This was also dangerous because Jeff had now returned from the bar, heard what Frank had said and was starting to get very tetchy indeed.

“Don’t start that again, you need to accept democracy, the people spoke, move on.”

“Yes but look at the people here Jeff, would you ask them for advice on anything?” Frank countered.

The locals were getting annoyed, and to add fuel to the fire Ben had broken the whip rules and had bought a huge tray of rocket shots for his new friends, who were all imbibing at a rate of knots. Ben was well known for doing this in the Queens Head, where he would receive many a disappointed look for breaking the whip rules.

We must now survey the scene, Frank is winding up the locals

on a contentious subject, Jeff is stoking the fire by giving them words of support (you could call it that), and to be extra helpful, Ben was giving them lethal spirits, so they are now angry and drunk.

As a slight aside, Mick the Watchman was also struggling with the conversation, but he knew he had work to do, so put it down in the back of his mind as one to even up on at another time.

Mick knew it just needed a spark, and pointed at Frank and shouted “He believes in uncontrolled immigration as well.”

Kerpow – the room exploded.

Fists went flying, feet went kicking, cudgels were drawn and drinks flew up in the air.

Ben moved quickly, and dragged Frank over the bar, as if he was attacking him. Glasses started to fly, and the Ben popped up from behind the bar and pointed at a complete stranger and said “He wants us all to have our laws passed by Beaconsfield.”

And the distraction worked. Ben dragged Frank backwards behind the bar towards the exit and out of the pub to safety.

The pirate had indeed moved away from the commotion, he was secretly a BU supporter and didn’t want to get involved so did what all half intelligent men do when they don’t want to get involved, he went for wee.

Mick and Russ stealthily followed after leaving a few seconds,

down to the back of the Generals and waited outside the gents.

“Right Russ, I am making an assumption that he is not going in for a number 2, so you go right hand side and I will go left hand side and then we will grab his arms and flatten him, then we can search him, get the eyeball and get the hell out of here.”

“What if he wees on me?” Enquired Russ.

Mick rolled his eyes at Russ and didn’t even acknowledge the question with an answer.

They stood either side of the door, Mick motioned for Russ to go in, and like a commando Russ went through the door like a shot. Mick was close behind him, and there in all of his piratey glory was the infamous Ryan the Ruiner.

Russ moved to his right hand side, as Mick had proposed, Mick was to the left. Ryan the Ruiner acknowledged both men with a slight nod of the head whilst going for what was really quite a noisy wee.

Russ was trying to see what was going on, but it just looked like he was trying to look at the pirates privates, who responded by turning slightly away from Russ and towards Mick.

Unfortunately, Mick was also trying to see what was going on, and upon turning also caught the eye of the pirate, who was now starting to feel like both men were trying to take a look at his pieces of eight.

On and on the urinating went, Russ suddenly realised that both

him and Mick were just standing there and not even pretending to use the urinal. Then he saw it. Glimmering, glistening and shiny – it was the golden eyeball, just sitting beneath where the action was happening in the pirates pants (quite clean actually and surprisingly supportive).

You may at this point wonder why Ryan had decided he would keep the golden eye in his pants and not in his perfectly vacant eye socket. Too obvious you see, lots of people had heard that he had the artefact in his possession and some had even tried to peak under his eyepatch but that was never where he kept something of great value in a town like Chesham.

Russ was excited, and to be fair, what happened next was not particularly well thought through.

Russ snatched at the golden eyeball, but only succeeded in turning round the pirate who was now doing his business all over Russ's trousers.

"What's your business you $%* little $&&%" spat the pirate.

Mick realised what was happening and pulled both the pirates arms back behind his back to secure him. This meant that there was an uncontrolled item in the package area and the momentous pee that the pirate had stored up was going all over the place, including all over Russ, who was now violently tugging at the pirate pants to get the eyeball out.

"At least buy me a drink first," complained the pirate.

At this point, one of the pirates henchman, Ron, entered the

gents to a scene of a man in a suit of armour restraining a pirate, and another man trying to scoop a glistening golden ball from his undercarriage.

The burly man opened the door and shouted “Keith, get in here.”

Keith, shouted back and his footsteps could be heard approaching, “What do you want Ron?”

“You, in here, I am saving Pirate Ryan.”

Yes, I know there was a long build up to that one – you are welcome!

Both knuckle draggers were now in the bathroom, and as they bore down on Mick and Russ, Russ finally had a breakthrough, and scooped the eyeball out but it went flying up in the air and Russ leapt like a lord to grab it, like a basketball star but shorter and fatter, and the dread pirate Ryan fell to the floor.

There was only time for Russ to shout triumphantly “I’ve got it Mick,” when the two burly pirate supporters bore down on them.

Two things then happened.

Firstly, with the pirate on the floor and ,in need of urgent movement, Mick with his full weight of armour side stepped and trod straight on the pirates parts, he let out a blood curdling scream. My goodness his day was not going to plan was it.

Secondly, in a move so elegant it could have been on a strictly ballroom show (and would have got at least a 9), Mick and Russ in perfect unison kneed their respective Ronnie and Keiths straight in their erogenous zones and piled out of the bathroom and down the stairs to the main bar.

Carnage was continuing amongst the locals, with tables and bars and even Chesham sausages (mmm delicious though) being flung. The pair ducked down with their hands covering their heads and ran straight for the door out into the night on the high street, where the rest of the gang were waiting. Keith and Ron were now fighting with the locals, and couldn't give chase.

All of them decided that it would a good idea to get out of dodge, and move as quickly as possible towards the Queens Head to recover.

Bob had asked to see the golden eye, and had stopped to look at it whilst everyone else went on ahead.

As they were making their way, Bob noticed a shadowy figure lurking in the shadows of an alley. The shadow called out to him, "psst, come here."

Bob stopped in his tracks and the others were so desperate to get to the pub that they were now fully leaving him behind.

"I've got something for you," said the shadowy figure. Bob was now intrigued and moved into the alleyway to investigate further. It was then that he saw the owner of the voice, this was Jamie Dodger.

Bob had not had the pleasure of meeting Jamie. The alarm bells perhaps should have gone off immediately, he had a small gremlin by his side, horrible little thing about the size of a cat. Jamie was also wearing very retro threads, from a bygone era, perhaps where he wished to still be by some account.

Jamie was also known to be a little bit, you know, what's the word …. Well if you want something that you can't get down the market then he is your man, a bit of a geezer.



"What have you got?" Enquired Bob, hoping sincerely that it might be a luck potion of some description. And then, the demeanour of Jamie Dodger changed.

"The golden ball," said Jamie, "I know you have it, I have been watching" and he drew a pretty nasty looking curved knife.

Bob was not used to being robbed but started to reach slowly for his lovely hair where he kept his knife. This was far too slow though and the gremlin moved like the speed of light jumped up and bit Bob straight on the nose.

“Ah, get it off,” Bob was waving around the place trying to extract the gremlin from his snozz, and the golden eye fell to the floor. Jamie wasted no time and scooped it up, leaving the imp chomping on Bob’s poor nose still.

Jame ran down the alley back towards the Generals Arms, he knew he could get a good price from the Pirate.

Bob, by now, had managed to throw the gremlin over a fence and was hurriedly chasing after the Jamie Dodger.

Jamie cut into the yard of the Generals, closely pursued by Bob, who was desperate to retrieve the hard earned eye. Then it happened.

Smack, “ow,” said Jamie, who had fallen on the floor and broken his spectacles after colliding with a large man in the yard of the Generals.

“You ought to be careful,” said the large man, who was packing up some sort of musical equipment into a barrow, he had decided to end his gig early due to all of the excitement.

Bob arrived, “Tony Hadley?”

“Yes?” said Tony Hadley.

“Did he drop anything?” Enquired Bob, “he just robbed me.”

Tony Hadley smiled, bent down and picked up the golden eye-ball and gave it to Bob.

“Is this yours?” Asked Tony Hadley to Bob.

“We know this much is true,” said Bob who thanked Tony Hadley and gratefully placed the golden eyeball in his knapsack, and before turning to leave, gave Jamie Dodger a small kick.

Bob rushed off to catch up with the others, and they soon arrived back at the Queens Head, where they informed Dave the Bastard that they had well and truly given the Pirate Ryan one, as he had requested.

Quite.


Chronicles of Chesham
Chapter Nine

CHAPTER NINE – BARK OF SILVER TREE

The bark of silver tree task had been bestowed upon Jeff, the engineer (not a wizard).

Dave the Bastard had explained to Jeff that the Silver Tree was known to grow along the Loop of Pednor, not far from Church Street but not as far as Herberts Hole.

“If you find yourself in Herberts Hole, then you have gone too far and haven’t been paying attention,” Dave the Bastard had told him. “And be careful of the wildlife, some of them have become infected by the bats.”

It was still dark outside, and Jeff led the intrepid explorers away from Church Street, and into the even darker beginning of the Pednor Loop. As the gang moved further away from the lamps that lit Church Street and into the gloom, Jeff thought he could see a lady, somewhat in her older years, but with a perm of blue hair. She wore practical clothing for long walks and appeared to be holding two sticks, for balance. She was examining a plant with some red berries on it and appeared to be stripping the berries from the vine and putting them in a brown leather satchel.

As they approached Jeff cleared his throat, and asked “Everything alright madam?”

The woman looked startled, and then rather cross as she turned towards the crew and snarled “I reserve my right to

forage!”

Timmy clutched at Jeff’s arm and whispered in his ear, “Don’t mess about with her, she’s a rambler.”

Ah yes, the ramblers, a relatively new phenomenon in Chesham, people who liked to exercise their rights to use public footpaths and annoy private landowners with their exquisite knowledge of where they are allowed to walk without impediment – you don’t start an argument with these people, for you will surely lose to their untamed wit, intelligence and gravitas.

The team pushed on carefully past the rambler, until they were into the loop proper. It was dark and cold and miserable but at the same time somehow beautiful.

Up ahead in the distance, the full moon was creating a glow on small batch of trees – these surely must be the silver trees.

Jeff hurried forward, eager to get his task completed and get back to the pub. He led the group into a small clearing, where he could have sworn he heard a goat bleating. As the team entered the clearing, they could see the beautiful shine of the silver tree bark, they had made it.

Jeff made his way towards the nearest tree in order to strip some bark when suddenly …

CRACK, a whip struck Jeff on the hands and he yelped and moved backwards, they all looked up to see what had



happened and the most curious sight met their eyes.

Laying across one of the lower branches of the tree was a curious red creature, with horns and a tail, but wearing the most curious clothing of shiny leather, almost plastic. It had thigh high boots on and a leathery basque but was clearly a male of the species – this was an imp.

“Uh, uh, uh,” said the Imp. “I own this clearing, and you will not touch a single part of it, not at all.”

Mick stepped forward, “You can’t just claim this clearing, this is an area of outstanding natural beauty, there are rules!”

“Only my rules darling, I do what I want.”

This was making Mick very cross indeed, and he vowed to contact his local council representative.

Jeff decided he would engage, “What are you anyway?”

“I am Gee, the Imp – magical creature of mischief, and bringer

of doom on those that oppose me."

"You're a Gimp?" Asked Jeff.

"What? No, my name is G and I am an Imp."

"You look well Gimpy to me," muttered Jeff.

Mick was by now raging and had decided that he was going to bash this creature into next week.

He ran towards it, sword raised but with a click of it's fingers Mick finally found himself lying on his side with his arms and legs somehow magically bound by leather straps. Even more worryingly, he had a leather strap around his face and a round orange ball in his mouth. Rather embarrassingly, the "maintenance" hatch at the rear of his suit of armour had swung open and everyone could see his backside. Everyone had seen it before anyway.

"Are you sure you're not a gimp?" Asked Jeff.

"What? No, no I am not."

Jeff realised that this annoying creature was probably too

powerful to overcome so decided perhaps another tactic was required.

"Look, we need some bark of silver tree or some echoey, crazed supernatural voice is going to destroy the whole of Chesham, what do you want for it?"

"Oh, an exchange, an agreement, a contract. I will tell you what I want, I want a mad squirrel – not all of it, but enough that I

can use to conjure a portal to the Imp domain."

"Gimp domain!" Muttered Jef.

"What! No," protested the Gimp, erm Imp.

"How do you even know that a squirrel is mad?" Enquired Jeff.

"You need to check his nuts!" Countered the Imp.

"There is a Sumo competition on at the Temperance Hall, the lead competitor is Gila, the Giant Squirrel. You must go there and defeat him, and then bring me part of him back."

Sumo was a relatively new competition for Chesham, imported from foreign parts (probably Amersham), and involved very, erm, large individuals wearing special pants and slapping each other until one or the other fell out of the ring. There were not many Sumo experts in Chesham, although looking at the Shouty Wednesday Crew, any one of them could have made a pretty good contender.

And so, after untying Mick, they left, back along the Loop, out of the darkness into the dimly lit Church Street, until at the very end they arrived, they were at the Temperance Hall.

Now Temperance Hall was not a place that was frequented by the Shouty Crew, mainly because it belonged to a society that did not believe that alcohol consumption was in any way a good idea at all, you could say that this was a clash of philosophies with our adventurers.

Knowing that this was going to be a dry one, Ben had taken the very sensible precaution of getting 8 Ales to take away from the Queens Head, and they stood outside and finished their beer and discussed tactics.

“I am not sure if I am the one for this job,” said Jeff.

“I can do it,” said Russ,”I came third in the hand to hand combat finals when I was 9, how hard can this be?” Russ looked very proud of his ancient achievement but it was broadly agreed that Russ had a round quality and low centre of gravity that could be very useful indeed. They entered the hall.

As the opened the door, quite by surprise what looked like a troll in swimming trunks came flying out of the door and across the street. They all peered into the hall.

What was before them was quite a sight, in the middle of the hall was a ring, and around the edges of the ring were spectators, the great and the not so great residents of Chesham, in all their glory, placing bets on who was going to win the next round.

And in the middle of the ring was the biggest black squirrel that anyone had ever seen, it was enormous. It stood some seven feet high, had a huge bushy tail and wore very unusual underpants. They were quite tight, so much so that a hairy round ball of fluff was stick out of each side of the front of them, squirrel nuts. There was no question in anyone’s mind that this squirrel was indeed, quite mad.



This was Gila, the Mad Squirrel. It is believed that Gila had been smuggled into Chesham as a young pup by the Pirate, Ryan the Ruiner and had escaped into the wild where it had become infected by a magical fluid somewhere near the curious stones. It now made it's living by fighting all comers in Temperance Hall, and had never lost a single round.

Russ was beginning to regret his decision to fight the squirrel, he had somewhat imagined that it would be a tad smaller, and less mad looking.

"Who is next," shouted the squirrel, much to every ones surprise (a talking squirrel, whatever next).

"It's me," Russ said, trying not to sound too frightened.

Russ stepped into the ring, and stripped down to his pants, Jeff put an arm around him and placed a small object in his hand.

"Russ, get this gadget on the back of his sumo pants, and press the button."

Russ looked down at the curious object which was essentially a clip with a button on it. He looked at Jeff, "You are an engineer, aren't you."

"Told you," said Jeff as Russ stood up and rubbed chalk into his hands.

A crowd had now amassed but all Russ could see was the two hairy squirrel gonads, straining under the squirrels attire.

They looked at each other, the squirrel narrowed its eyes, Russ narrowed his eyes.

The squirrel pulled a growly face, Russ pulled a growly face.

Russ was not aggressive by nature but in his fight or flight instincts he was sure he was not going to end up with a face full of evil heaving squirrel nuts.

The squirrel shouted in a deep booming voice, “I am going to kick your ass.”

They ran towards each other, and incredibly Russ remained in the ring as they made contact, he pushed against the squirrel who was extremely taken aback by the low level of gravity that Russ had attained and was starting to slide backwards.

The squirrel grabbed the back of Russ underpants and gave the a sharp tug upwards, an evil verminous wedgie that made Russ yelp in quite a girly voice and sent him slightly cross eyed.

Russ was not having this, and also reached around the squirrel and pulled his sumo pants upwards, the squirrel (who had previously had a deep voice) also yelped in pain. Whilst administering the counter wedgie, Russ slipped the device that Jeff had given him onto the Squirrel sumo pants and pressed the button.

The squirrel began to pause and look down in panic, the contraption that Jeff had given to Russ was pulling the squirrel sumo pants tighter, Russ stood back as the squirrel began

clutching at the pants, as they got tighter and tighter, and had completely forgotten that it was in a fight. Clawing and scratching in desperation, two main things were now

happening.

First, as the pants tightened, the eyes of the squirrel were

beginning to bulge, but in tandem, the hairy knackers that were poking out either side were starting to bulge too, and Russ could see that something was going to give, and then it

happened.

The contraption gave one final squeeze and the left testicle of the squirrel flew completely off across the room, Russ ducked out of the way but Mick was watching incredulously with his mouth open, and it was clear that the trajectory of the hairy nutball was flying straight towards Micks wide open mouth. It was then that Frank burst into action and flung himself through the air, arm straight and fist clenched and he managed to punch the squirrel nut out of the way of Micks mouth.

“Oh my god, thank you” said Mick, very relieved not to have had an unwanted snack, “where the hell did it go?”

“Over there,” chuckled Frank.

Mick, and then the others turned to where Frank was pointing, and there was Bob. Bob had also be watching incredulously but had been so sure that the squirrel projectile was going nowhere near him had no thought to close his mouth.

“erf it oot, erf it oot” muffled Bob, as Russ wandered over to where Bob was and plucked the furry ball out of Bob’s poor unassuming mouth. Bob started to spit and splutter and claw at his tongue with his hand.

The squirrel had passed out with the agony and was laying on the floor in the ring, the punters all knew that the nights festivities were over and were starting to leave and file out of the hall.

Russ gave the piece of squirrel to Jeff, “Let’s go,” said Russ and they too headed out into the night.

They headed back up Church Street, and towards the loop to find the Imp again, as they entered lower Pednor. The crew were passing the River Chess, when two animals jumped down from a branch and landed in the road directly in front of them.

“Oh my god, it’s two wild infected beavers,” said Timmy.

Timmy was right, Dave the Bastard had warned that the bats in the loop had been infecting the local wildlife and here stood two nasty looking animals that looked quite thirsty for blood.

They had protruding teeth and nasty looking red eyes but these were voles, luckily for the boys this had been a beaver free zone for some time, they would have to go back to the market square for that sort of thing.

These were not just voles, they were a vampire variety, a mutation caused by their infection. Where they would normally

have been about a foot long, these were near three feet with horrible looking and deadly teeth.

Jeff looked at them hissing, curiously. Mick stepped forward and as they continued to hiss and spit and blocked the path forward.

Then Richard/Ian had a brainwave, “Hang on, we got some holy water from the church that will sort out these two, Ben … you had it, where is it?”

Ben looked sheepish, “I haven’t got it mate.”
“What? Why not, where is it?” Enquired Richard.

“I drank it,” confessed Ben.

“What? Why?” Said Richard.

“I was hungover!” Said Ben

By now, Bob was wondering if his staff would count as a stake. Frank wondered if daylight was far off, Russ made and X factor sign, and as all of the classic anti-vampire techniques were being deployed there was a quick swish, splat, swish splat.

The crew looked up, and there were two horrible flattened voles, Timmy had been using his morning star again because he had got bored with everyone else.

“That sorted that then,” said Timmy proudly, “they will regenerate but it will take time after being that squished.”
They got back to the Imp clearing, and there he was in all of his

splendour.

“You have it?” Asked the Imp.

“Here it is,” said Jeff who handed it over and the Imp, rather curiously placed it straight down his leather pants.

Jeff took some bark from the Silver tree in return and the gang moved to go back to the Queens Head.

“Going so soon?” Asked the Imp.

“Yep,” said Jeff dismissively.

“It’s not easy being an imp, you know, it is very lonely – people judge me for how I look and what I wear and it is hard to have a conversation with strangers, can you stay a little while?”

Mick, being a part time softy and having also spent a lot of time on watch on his own was sympathetic. “Come with me.”

And so the Imp went with Mick and the Crew who took him to the side of the Chesham Gaol.

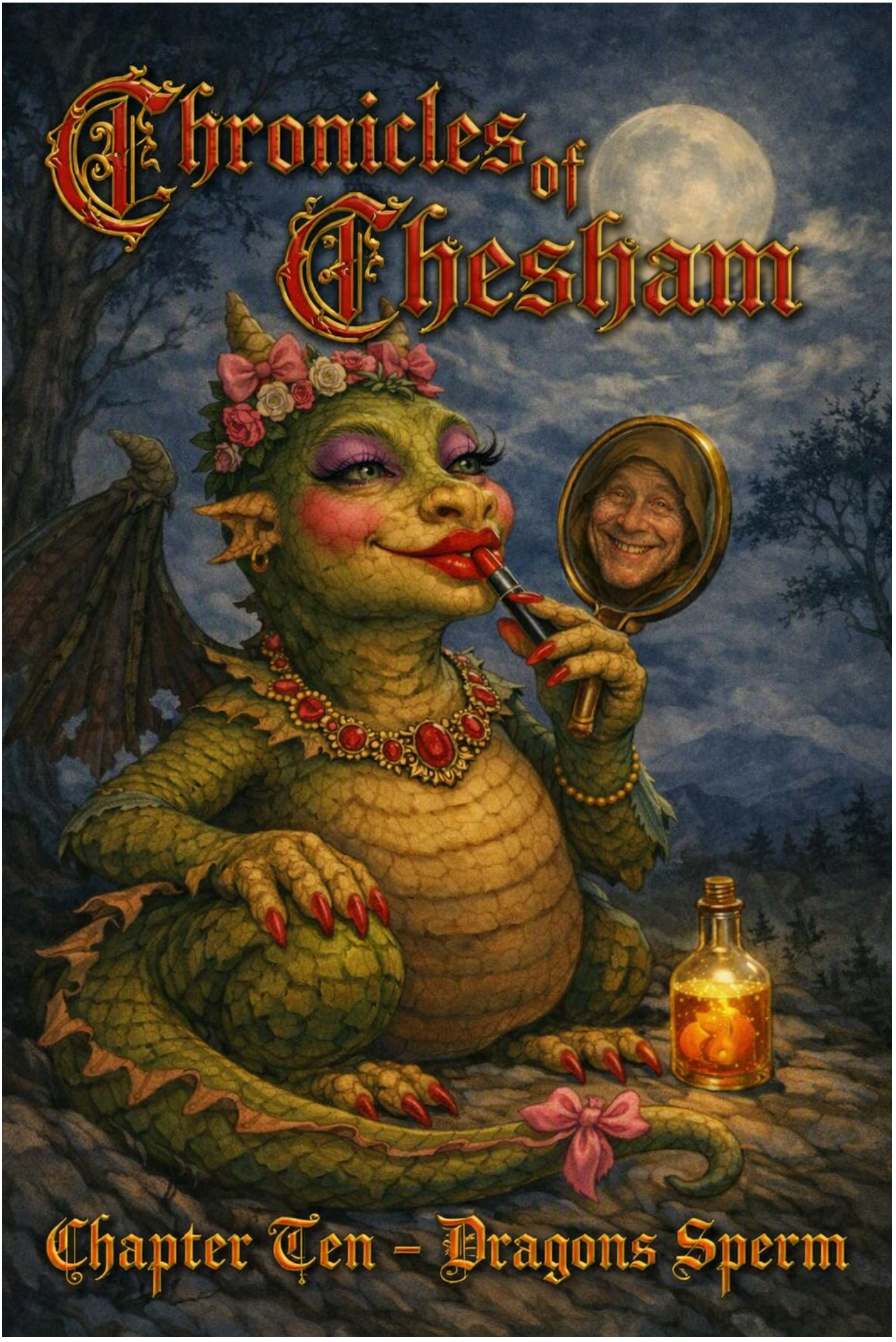
Mick helped the Imp climb into the shaft entrance and gave him instructions.

The Imp crawled along until he found the entrance to the cell he had been looking for.

“A visitor! How lovely,” cried the Spanker.

And they lived happily ever after, for one night at least.

The team returned to the Queens Head.


Chronicles of Chesham
Chapter Ten - Dragons Sperm

CHAPTER TEN – DRAGONS SPERM

Bob was unsettled, he was not only wondering why his luck had been so bad over the last few days, and whether he was to sustain another unsightly injury, but he knew his task was coming up and the words of Dave the Bastard were ringing in his ears.

“You need to go to the apothecaries, there you will need to ask for a changing elixir, it will make you look like one of the dragons, a girl one. The girl dragons don’t have any body hair, so you will need to get yours removed, there is a place on Broad Street that will do that for you. Then you must go to the top of Lowndes Park, overlooking the loop, this is where the young ones nest. There will be some trees there. Once you are there, take the elixir and then you need to do the traditional dragon mating dance, and things should take care of themselves after that.”

Bob was at a loss, not only did he need to pretend to be a girl dragon, and get made as smooth as a baby’s bottom, he would also have to do some sort of dance that had never been performed by a human before, and in all of this he would need to avoid getting heinously injured – things were not looking good. At least, he thought to himself, he didn’t have to touch his lovely hair.

“I suppose we had better get on with it,” muttered Bob, as he led the group outside of the Queens Head and towards the

North West of the town, where the Aisle of the Apothecaries stood.

The Aisle of the Apothecaries was the place to go if you had an ailment that would not go away. It consisted of a number of different outlets, you could go for the old school far east treatments, with Elements, or Healing Point, more modern but less hardcore fayre at Bolland and Harriet, or cutting edge at Sandals, the Chemicalists (who also did a rather fetching meal deal).



Dave the Bastard had said go to Sandals, so the team wandered in through the front door to see the Chief Chemicalist.

The Chief Chemicalist was a bookish looking lady, thick framed glasses and a pristine white coat would give the impression that

she was the last bastion of discretion and professionalism.

Unfortunately, this was not the case, her name was Karen and she was a terrible gossip – the last thing that you want if you are placing your most diabolical health secrets in her hands.

The shop was large, and contained all sorts of remedies, potions and almost magical ingredients.

“Frank!” Karen greeted our most eminent retired merchant. “You’re a randy bugger, have you run out already? I only renewed your supply three days ago.”

Frank was a little taken aback, he normally came to the Chemicalist on his own, and was always extremely discreet about his purchases.

“Erm, no not for me today, my cough medicine is still in plentiful supply,” Frank countered quickly.

“Cough medicine? No I mean the medicine for your co… oh yes, good oh.”

Then her sights were set on Ben, “Gout alright at the moment Ben?”

“Good as new, my lady,” said Ben cheerfully.

“How is the O.R.T. going Timmy?” Karen enquired of the Orc cheerfully.

“Still problematic in water, I am afraid,” replied Timmy.

“What’s O.R.T?” Mick asked Timmy suspiciously.

“Organ reduction therapy, I’ve been getting terrible back ache.”



“You need to come and see me about that tongue young man, it doesn’t look right to me,” Karen whispered to Timmy very loudly.

Mick took a subconscious step away from Timmy.

“How about you Bob, how’s your rickets?”

“I haven’t got rickets.” Protested Bob.

“Why do you always stand like that then?” Karen chirped.

“That’s his crocs,” Russ piped up.

The Chief Chemicalist went through the team one by one, Russ had irritable foul syndrome, Richard/Ian and his manky gums, Mick and his buttock rash from over exposure, Jeff and his in-grown sphincter until her eyes rested upon Jake.

“You’ve got piles,” announced Karen.

“Have I?” replied Jake, somewhat surprised, “How do you know?”

“I can see it in your eyes!” Retorted Karen. “Right now, you lot, why are you here?”

Bob stepped forward, “Dave the Bastard said I need to acquire a change elixir, to impress a dragon.”

“Boy dragon or girl dragon?” Karen’s eyes narrowed suspiciously.

“Erm…….” Bob hesitated.

“It’s a boy,” Frank interjected beaming with delight.

“You need to take this, rub it all over and count to ten, it will last for about five minutes,” Karen handed over a dark bulbous glass flask containing a very murky looking liquid, sealed with a cork. Bob put it inside his cloak.

After making some purchases for other minor ailments, and with Timmy examining his tongue for a minute in the mirror, they all headed off. It was time to make Bob smooth as a wet cobblestone.

Going back through Market Square, and avoiding the swirling, circling dragons up above, the gang soon arrived outside Tannin, the beauty parlour.

Beauty was not always an easy thing to come by in Chesham, however Tannin had an exceptional level of service, offering full body treatments, massages and even the infamous tanning beds.

The tanning beds were a miracle to behold, you must lie there, quite naked, whilst a swarm of fire flies swarms over you until you have become quite orange. Bob was quite a fan of the tan on the quiet, but preferred to get his done by the sun in the sky – quite a challenge if you live in Chesham.

The boys decided that they would pop back into the Jolly Sportsmen for a pint, whilst Bob made his way to the Tannin parlour.

He soon arrived and after negotiating the sliding door, met a lime green ogre, this was Dora.

If Dora had had an Olympic sport, it would have been the shot put, she was muscular, but also quite large and was not necessarily the best advert for the business that she was operating.

“What you after treacle?” Growled Dora, she didn’t mean to growl but it was just her way.

“Erm …. I need to have a hair removal treatment ….” Bob enquired nervously.

“Right Ho, come with me.” She beckoned him through to a back room where there were two flat but raised beds, one was already occupied by a small tanned man who was laying on his front, bottom bare for all of the world to see. Circling him were the fire flies that Bob had heard of, gently cooking this stumpy soul with their flame.

“Get on the other one, he is just finishing.”

Bob lay down face first on the bed, but was interrupted by a rather nasty coughing noise, he looked up and it was Dora.

“You need to take your clothes off treacle,” Dora spat, not intentionally.

“Oh …. Can I leave my Grocs on?” Ask Bob tentatively.

“Shy one eh, alright .. just the Grocs.”

Bob did as he was told and was then back on the table, au natural apart from his beloved Grocs.

“You want hair removal, yes?” Dora asked.

“Er, yes please, is there a choice of treatments?”

“Just one, close your eyes,” Dora said as soothingly as possible, which was not very soothing at all.

Beauty treatments were relatively new in Chesham, and so the technology was a little basic to say the least. Whilst Bob scrunched his eyes up nice and tight, Dora has gone out to a cupboard where she had an enormous roll of leather. She unrolled it and then applied a sticky substance all over it, which was actually obtained from the surface of the tables of the many pubs in Chesham, the stickiest substance known to this universe at this time.

Bob could suddenly feel it on this body, as Dora began to wrap him up like a small human tortilla in the stick leathery substance, Bob yelped as Dora tucked it in between his buttocks and his much maligned undercarriage, until Bob was laying on the Bed looking rather like the Imp on a dressy night out.

Bob knew that this was not going to be good, he was now laying on his back looking up with his arms and legs bound, rather like a cocoon that was well past its sell by date.

Bob looked into Dora’s eyes, and uttered “Please make it quick.”

And with that Dora threw Bob six feet in the air but as she did so she tugged the leathery bindings hard, Bob was spinning in mid-air as the bindings unravelled, tearing every hair in every crevice and part of his body out with a pain that he could not

possibly have imagined, until thud, he landed face down on the bed, sore, traumatised but smooth as the day he was born (his lovely hair intact).

It was over, Dora looked at him and in her most sympathetic voice (which was not sympathetic at all) said, “Get your clothes on, you pay me at front counter.”

Dora left, and Bob looked down for his clothes, and as he did he heard a round of applause erupt from the other bed. Bob hid his modesty and looked over to see who it was between the fire flies. It was DOB.

“Well done, best one I have seen yet,” marvelled DOB.

“Don’t you get enough fire in the Queens Head?” Asked Bob.

The answer to that was quite obviously, no.

Bob got himself dressed, and paid Dora, who would have smiled sweetly to thank him if she was able to. Bob managed to extract the team from the Jolly Sportsmen, and they marched off across town, until they got to Lowndes Park.

Lowndes Park was actually rather beautiful during the day, but it was now quite dark again. When the dragons had been reintroduced they would frequently nest at the far end of the Park, which had the highest altitude and also was an easy launchpad for the adolescent dragons to learn how to circle and hang in the sky.

The gang trekked past the pond, and up the steep incline

towards the trees that sat at the top of the hill. This would have been a lot easier if most of them had not 8 pints in the Jolly Sportsmen, and were now beginning to regret their life choices.

Onwards they staggered until they stood at the top of the hill overlooking the country side, as the terrain evened out, a cluster of trees could be seen, and within that a clearing within a circle of trees.

Whilst they were making their way, Jeff was giving Bob some advice on his dragon dance. Jeff had some experience with dragons, and had once considered becoming a breeder. It was in this capacity that Jeff was able to offer some advice.

“The young teenage dragons are the ones that you need to find, they can’t really control themselves and are firing off all the time, they just need some inspiration. The girls wiggle their tails around a lot and flutter their eye lids.”

And then they saw it, about ten feet long from head to tail, skulking in a nest of broken branches, and looking very moody indeed, it was a teenage boy dragon.

The gang kept low, and Bob slipped off behind a bush to get “ready”.

He slipped out of his clothes and glugged down the elixir of change, then it happened.

First Bob's feet expanded, and then turned green and into scaly claws (luckily he had the foresight to remove his Grocs first). Then his body stretched and scaled began to grow across his body, at the same time his mouth grew into a snout and his bottom began to shake until a long scaly tails shot out from the base of his spine. His eyelashes grew and in no time at all he was a fabulous girly dragon.

Whilst at the Apothecary, Bob had given this some thought. If he was to be a girl dragon he wanted to make a good job of it and so he had made some minor purchases of lip-stick, a mirror and a flower hairband.



Once he had got the bug there was no stopping him and so he added mascara and scarlet woman nail polish, he was going to knock these boys for six.

After applying all of his purchases, he came out from behind the bush to reveal himself to his fellow shouters.

“I’ve seen some sights come out from behind a bush in my time but this one takes the biscuit,” marvelled Jeff.

The crew pointed Bob towards the male dragon, and he shuffled off to the edge of the clearing.

It has been decided that Jake had the best wipe clean surface out of all of them and he had been given a small cup to catch any, erm, projectiles in. Jake followed closely beside him.

Bob deposited himself in front of the dragon, and began to flutter his eyelids. Nothing.

Then he put his hands on his hips and swung his tail from side to side. Nothing.

Then he puckered up his lips and made kissing noises towards the dragon. Not a sausage, no movement in the gentleman area at all.

“Have you been drinking?” Enquired Bob, disappointed at the lack of attention. The dragon didn’t even bat an eyelid.

Also disappointed was Frank, who was becoming increasingly frustrated at the lack of action.

“Bob, you need to be more, you know, ooh ooh ooh,” Frank was pumping his fists as he said this and beginning to thrust a little too, albeit he may not have realised.

Bob tried, but he had suffered so many injuries to his lower

body in the last few days that he just couldn't muster the oomph.

Then it happened, Frank in a fit of frustrated rage jumped into the clearing in front of the dragon. He began gyrating and saying to Bob, "look like this, ooh ooh ooh," Frank did not know it but he had just invented the Chesham twerk.

This was not the only thing that was happening, the dragon was watching Frank and it was clear to the crew that he was getting very excited indeed, he was now upright moving from foot to foot and appeared to be absent mindedly clutching his tinkle.

"C'mon Bob, put your bloody back into it," roared Frank, now incredibly annoyed at his fellow shouters lack of passion and drive.

Bob, by now, had begun to realise what was happening, as Frank continued to gyrate and move his booty (he would surely be going to the next Shake Your Booty dance in Chesham market square at this rate, Mr Freeman – you are welcome).

Then Richard the half goblin said what everyone but Frank was now thinking, "He likes boys, not girls," and as if to put an exclamation mark on the end of the statement it happened, the dragon – with a roar – fired his cannon.

Jake had managed to get close to the scene and had his little cup held out with outstretched arms, without going into graphic detail, there was more projectile than cup and whilst the cup was well filled, Jake had also received a new outfit.

He shrieked a little stony man shriek and ran away as fast as his grocs could carry him.

The rest of the crew beat a hasty retreat, Jeff grabbing hold of Franks arm mid twerk.

The dragon itself was now exhausted and settled down in its nest, a small whisp of smoke emitting from his nostrils like he was smoking a cigarette.

The gang returned through Lowndes Park, and down to Church Street, where they decided that it would be a good idea to go for a pint of ale.

So, back in the Queens Head, Bob was still in lady dragon mode, but he didn't seem to mind, even though it was only supposed to last five minutes, and he perched near the bar waiting to be served.

At this point he was approached by a local man, he looked like a nice chap, but had consumed many, many pints of ale, and was looking at Bob oddly.

<u>Pub Lore Fact</u>

If a drinker has consumed many, many ales then it is the responsibility of the rest of the group to ensure that said drinker does not believe his beer goggles. Beer goggles transform even the most certified minger into an absolute stunner, which can result in serious hangxiety when waking up in the morning and the stunner has reverted back to minger mode. It does however, lead to hilarious ongoing stories for the rest of the group

who will probably just end up encouraging the drinker anyway. Beer goggles apply to all sexes, and probably species too, perhaps we should ask the worm.

End of Pub Lore Fact

“You come here often treacle?” Enquired the drinker of Bob, who was blushing slightly and inadvertently fluttering his lovely long eyelashes.

“Most Wednesdays actually,” replied Bob. Luckily, it was too late, and the local man had collapsed in a heap at Bob’s grocs. “Maybe next time,” Bob muttered.

Bob had not had the pleasure of meeting Jamie. The alarm bells perhaps should have gone off immediately, he had a small gremlin by his side, horrible little thing about the size of a cat. Jamie was also wearing very retro threads, from a bygone era, perhaps where he wished to still be by some account.

Jamie was also known to be a little bit, you know, what's the word …. Well if you want something that you can't get down the market then he is your man, a bit of a geezer.



"What have you got?" Enquired Bob, hoping sincerely that it might be a luck potion of some description. And then, the demeanour of Jamie Dodger changed.

"The golden ball," said Jamie, "I know you have it, I have been watching" and he drew a pretty nasty looking curved knife.

Bob was not used to being robbed but started to reach slowly for his lovely hair where he kept his knife. This was far too slow though and the gremlin moved like the speed of light jumped up and bit Bob straight on the nose.

“Ah, get it off,” Bob was waving around the place trying to extract the gremlin from his snozz, and the golden eye fell to the floor. Jamie wasted no time and scooped it up, leaving the imp chomping on Bob’s poor nose still.

Jame ran down the alley back towards the Generals Arms, he knew he could get a good price from the Pirate.

Bob, by now, had managed to throw the gremlin over a fence and was hurriedly chasing after the Jamie Dodger.

Jamie cut into the yard of the Generals, closely pursued by Bob, who was desperate to retrieve the hard earned eye. Then it happened.

Smack, “ow,” said Jamie, who had fallen on the floor and broken his spectacles after colliding with a large man in the yard of the Generals.

“You ought to be careful,” said the large man, who was packing up some sort of musical equipment into a barrow, he had decided to end his gig early due to all of the excitement.

Bob arrived, “Tony Hadley?”

“Yes?” said Tony Hadley.

“Did he drop anything?” Enquired Bob, “he just robbed me.”

Tony Hadley smiled, bent down and picked up the golden eye-ball and gave it to Bob.

“Is this yours?” Asked Tony Hadley to Bob.

“We know this much is true,” said Bob who thanked Tony Hadley and gratefully placed the golden eyeball in his knapsack, and before turning to leave, gave Jamie Dodger a small kick.

Bob rushed off to catch up with the others, and they soon arrived back at the Queens Head, where they informed Dave the Bastard that they had well and truly given the Pirate Ryan one, as he had requested.

Quite.


Chronicles of Chesham
Chapter Eleven – Natterfright

CHAPTER ELEVEN – NATTERFRIGHT

Russ had been given the task of finding a Natterfright, an animal he had never seen or heard of before.

Dave the Bastard had given his instructions to Russ.

“Those Natterfrights can be nasty buggers, so you need to be careful. You can find them on the far side of the loop, across the fields where The Surgeon lives, he’s the one that made them, he is completely mad. Who’d have thought of stitching a giant snake head, a sausage dog body and a skunks back end together and start breeding them …..”

Erm, yes … whom indeed (awkward)?

“Wait, what?” Enquired Russ, more than a little surprised.

“Yep, and to top it off he gave the blasted thing bunny ears.”

Dave the Bastard went on to explain that The Surgeon, a complete recluse had invented the animal through a series of bizarre experiments. Apparently, there are other “creations” that were lurking in the grounds of his mansion, but nobody ever went there for fear of ending up on his operating table and being welded to some other poor creature.

The Surgeon himself had not been seen for years, apparently his real name was Jon, and he used to run one of the many Taverns in the locality, however he got into an argument with a witch over whether he was serving a bad pint (see relevant pub lore fact for details) and she cursed him for the rest of his life.

He walked out of the pub and was never seen again but he had apparently been a man of some wealth, as he had hidden himself away in a large house where he studied the dark arts (are there any others?), and began to make his creations in the



seclusion of the furthest reaches of the loop.

“They have got some sort of magic in them, I heard that some sort of clever zombie had bitten into one of them and now they are all infected like the undead, you are going to need silver to kill it.”

“Bloody Saurabh,” thought Russ.

Back to the Queens Head, Russ gathered the crew in the saloon bar, and everyone was having an ale to celebrate, erm,

something.

“We are going to need some silver, anyone got any ideas?” Asked Russ.

“Well ask a merchant, why don’t you,” piped up Ben.

“Er, I think I just did,” remarked Russ, in a rather puzzled fashion.

“I KNOW!” DOB jumped up out of nowhere, as if from under the table.

“Can you stop doing that!” Said Timmy, “it is not doing my ticker any good at all.”

DOB ignored Timmy and continued, “You can get silver from the Vault, you know, Vault Seventeen.”

Vault Seventeen was a relatively new drinking hole in Chesham, it had previously been a bank, with very deep and secure vaults, however it had fallen into disrepair and so was salvaged by the new, mysterious owners and turned into a place of drink and dance, and sometimes a cheeky quiz night (very popular with the locals). It was rumoured though that deep below where the fun was happening, there was still silver and perhaps even some gold, sitting in the furthest part of the vault – and this was where the crew would have to get to.

“You could have a cocktail while you were there too, they are very good” said DOB. Everybody stopped drinking.

<u>Pub Lore Fact</u>

When men drink together, there is a general unwritten rule that beer will be consumed. This could come in the form of an ale, a stout or even one of those fancy fizzy beers that are emerging.

They may, if they have had many, many, many ales, have a spirit or a shot.

Men must not consume drinks like cocktails, which are

primarily designed for ladies (sexist), unless they wish to find themselves expelled from their drinking group until they have learned their lesson.

Ten men in a pub drinking cocktails is not an acceptable

situation."

End of Pub Lore Fact

Everyone was now looking at DOB, who realised that he had made a serious error.

"I .. just meant that …. Some of them are quite nice, you know …. fruity….."

DOB trailed off and Jeff said the words that everyone was

thinking, "Go on, off you go and take a good look at yourself in a mirror."

DOB exited the saloon bar and was seen heading off up the road.

Russ laid out the plan, and they finished up their ales without even having a roader, after the terrible statement of DOB.

Russ was a late addition to the Shouty Wednesday team, he had arrived from a faraway town and was not well versed in the ways of Chesham. Nobody really knew what Russ did for money, he did something because he was sometimes late on a Wednesday, and nobody else did that. In truth, Russ had a very boring job that involved him making up pointless rules on behalf of the Palace of Lord Jasper, and then taking them to the Town Council who would then implement them.

He was particularly pleased with the no parking zone he had put around the Queens Head, nobody could afford their own chariot apart from Frank (and he wasn't going to leave it there) and Ben (no chance of him driving anywhere, too drunk), so it wasn't entirely necessary.

Russ led the merry band out of the back entrance of the Queens Head and across the bridge past the River Chess, and through the Market Square. It was dark, as always, and the dragons were still circling, this time in pairs, in the night sky.

They got to the Vault, and they could hear that there was some sort of commotion going on inside.

It was an imposing building, and still looked like an actual bank, with a large, formal looking door, and arched windows.

The poster outside said that it was knife throwing quiz night, and everybody fancied a bit of that.


VAULT SEVENTEEN
Pochimiets
POTENT SALE
Thieves' Guild
ANNUAL

“Listen up,” said Russ in his best attention grabbing voice, “Richard, you come with me towards the back, and we will try and find an entrance to the vault, the rest of you keep the staff busy by drinking as much as you can and playing the knife throwing quiz game, got it?”

“But what about Ian?” Enquired Frank, Russ ignored him.

Everyone agreed, and they slipped inside Vault 17.

What a sight to greet the eyes. It was dark but there were glowing green lanterns around the main area which was dominated by a stage. Opposite was a bar that had four members of staff tossing drinks around to each other and making concoctions of who knows what. The main atrium was full and all eyes were fixed on the stage.

There was a tall man, on the stage in a fancy red and gold tunic top, he was Bill the Bull, and he was the quizmaster. He was nearly as wide as he was tall, and he spoke with an accent that was most certainly not Chesham.

Beside him was a large board with different sections on it, what in some other universes would be called a dartboard. Most notably, in the middle of the dartboard there was attached (somewhat against her will), a pixie. She had blonde pixie hair, and a small green pixie dress, aside from this she was looking a bit rough and was smoking a cigarillo- this was Lila, the pixie.

Bill the Bull was explaining the rules of this game to the



audience.

“Roll up, roll up, come and play the greatest game in the town,” Bill had them in the palm of his hand, “one copper piece a go and if you answer the question correctly then you can throw a knife at the board. The higher the score with the knife, then the bigger the prize. You mustn’t hit the pixie though, there is nothing in this game for one in the head, all you will get is your bus fare home.”

Timmy was slightly irked by this last comment because there was no way he was going to be driving this evening.

The punters began to queue up to take turns, including Bob who fancied his chances at both general knowledge and throwing a knife.

Meanwhile, Russ and Rich had got to the back of the entertainment area, where it was quiet, and they saw a door with the sign “Authorised Personnel Only”. Ooooh this was tempting, and Rich pushed slowly on the door and they could see steps leading down to the underground below.

As they descended the steps became damp and moisture was gathering on the stone walls, strange fungi on the walls provided a dim blue light, and further and further they descended.

After much descending, they came to a large iron door with a wheel on it, for turning a great iron lock.

Russ looked at it and said to Ian (Sorry Rich) “This must be about two feet thick, maybe we can attack the hinges?”

Rich looked doubtful, but inspected the hinges carefully. He then shrugged and hoiked down his shorts and started to wee on the hinges.

“What on earth are you doing?” Asked Russ in a rather exasperated voice but at the same time trying to keep his gaze at eye level.

<u>Pub Lore Fact</u>

If you are a chap going for a wee in a public house, then it is acceptable to make small talk with your neighbour if they are also weeing at the same time. This comes with strict rules, that you must know that person, or if you don’t know them then you have something so extraordinarily funny to say then it simply cannot wait. Eye contact must be maintained at all times, and periphery vision must not be used to see another chaps, chap.

<u>End of Pub Lore Fact</u>

“I’m loosening the hinges, they look like they could break” said Rich optimistically.

Rich/Ian had had a lot to drink that day, and he was going for a wee that was almost a rival to Ryan the Ruiner. This was making quite a commotion, and unbeknownst to Rich – had caused the inhabitant, and guardian, of the vault to be awoken from its slumber.

As Rich was on the death throes of his very long urination, and was having a shake (one is never enough is it), the door to the vault flung open, and there before them was an odd sight – this was the Vault Keeper.



The Vault Keeper, known by no other name, was the guardian of the vault. A little over three feet high, he wore a bowler hat, and waistcoat, shirt and tie, suit trousers, and little shiny shoes.

He had pointy ears like a leprechaun to look at and held a clipboard and pen in his little hands.

Curiously enough, he was also wearing marigolds.

It was not to be known to Russ and Rich that this particular Vault Keeper had a high level of OCD, and had heard Rich sprinkling away to his hearts content on the hinges to the vault.

“What do you want you filthy fly knackers?” Enquired the Vault Keeper, rather aggressively.

Russ thought the diplomatic route might be the way forward, “Erm … we are here to get some silver to fashion an arrow to kill a Natterfright, which we believe is undead, in order to save the whole of Chesham from destruction.”

“Oh, why didn’t you say so,” said the Vault Keeper, “come in.”

He turned and walked into the darkness, and Russ and Rich followed – rather nervously, but also unable to believe their luck.

It was now completely dark but the pair heard a snap of fingers, and Rich could hear Russ yelping and then a light came on above a chair, to which Russ was now strapped, with a glowing orange orb, sat directly above his own (now shrinking) orbs of power (really depends upon how you look at it). The Vault Keeper was stood to one side, his eye glowing with evil intent.

“Did you really think it would be so easy? Did you really think you could walk in here and take what you want?” The Vault Keeper was not shouting, but his eyes were glowing an evil green with every word that came, louder and louder.

Rich/Ian answered “Er .. yes, that is exactly what I thought…”
“You fool – now you must pass my test or your friend will never



dance the can can again!”

He laughed evilly, but Russ stopped looking at the orb for a minute and was wondering if he had ever danced the can can, he hadn’t but now he really, really wanted to be able to if he got through this.

“You must pass my test…..” said the Keeper.

“What test?” Asked Rich.

“An evil and dastardly difficult test…..” said the Keeper.

“Yes but what is it?”

“Evil, dastardly and exceptionally difficult, ahahaha” he laughed evilly.

“Yes, but what you little nob..” Rich was getting annoyed, Russ was trying to signal to him with this eyebrows to keep it civil, but to no avail.

“Behold!” The Keeper said producing a scroll from thin air.

“You must defeat me in oral combat.”

Everybody stopped at this point, and Russ and Rich raised their eyebrows at each other, Russ pointed his eyes towards the burning orb above his lap and Rich conceded with a nod.

“I mean you have to read this, and quickly, if you fail then your little friend will have marshmallows for man parts. Then the scroll will choose one for me and then you until one of us fails. If you win, I will give you what you seek.”

Rich grabbed the scroll, and then cleared his throat, and began to read.

“Brisk brave brigadiers brandished broad bright blades, blunderbusses, and bludgeons—balancing them badly.” Rich smiled, and made a drop the mic movement.

He threw the scroll to the Keeper who then said “A tutor who tooted the flute tried to teach two young tooters to toot. Said the two to the tutor, ‘Is it harder to toot, or to tutor two tooters to toot?” The Keeper then did a little spin, and then pointed at Russ’ crotch and made a burning sign with his fingers and threw the scroll back to Rich.

The tongue twister trial went on and on, each becoming steadily more difficult until Rich looked at the scroll and a bead of sweat ran down the side of his face. He began to read …

“A skunk sat on a stump and thunk the stump stunk, but the stump thunk the skunk stunk.” Rich gasped at the end (as did Russ) and threw the scroll back at the Keeper who was now visibly sweating. He looked at the scroll and began to tremble.

“I am not a pheasant plucker, I’m a pheasant pluckers son and I’m always plucking pheasants til the pleasant fucker comes …

Oh no!”

Rich and Russ looked at the Keeper in triumph, and the chair and the orb disappeared and they were all once again standing by the door to the vault.

“What do you desire?” Asked the Vault Keeper, slightly saucily it should be noted.

“Silver,” said Rich, “just some silver.” The Vault Keeper waved his hands and a large leather pouch of silver coins appeared in Rich’s hand. “You will need these,” said Rich as he passed them to Russ and they went back up to the main atrium.

In their absence, chaos had ensued in the Vault. The competition had initially started quite well, everyone was enjoying their ale until someone, Ben to be precise, in direct contravention of pub lore had ordered everybody a ballbuster cocktail, lethal, and as everyone drank them the competition began to get out of hand.

Bill the Bull had to stop Timmy pulling the pixie off the dartboard in a heroic attempt to save her (she didn’t want saving), which had resulted in her pulling a knife out of the board and throwing it at Tim, who deftly moved out of the way and caught Bob square in the right nipple. Ben then jumped on stage, wanting to join in, but was thrown off by Bill the Bull. Sadly, Ben had not let go of the dartboard and it also came flying across the room with him, much to the annoyance of the other punters who were now starting to push and cajole each other.

Sensing the danger, Rich and Russ ran through the atrium to the exit, shouting at the others to join suit. And by hook or by crook, they managed to get outside to the cold night air.

Russ surveyed the group. Despite a harrowing experience, Russ and Rich were intact, some parts a little toasty but generally okay.

The Ballbuster cocktail had taken it's toll and the others were not great not injured, apart from Bob who had a thin dagger sticking out of his nipple, but was so drunk he decided he would leave it there in case he started a trend.

They traipsed across the square to the forge, where Richard the Blacksmith was busy working away. He watched as they entered, but he knew the Shouty Crew now and he greeted them all with a meaty handshake as they entered the boiling hot room with its fiery furnace.

"What can I do for you?" Asked Richard the Blacksmith enthusiastically.

"Can you make an arrow out of this silver," asked Russ.

"What's in it for me?" Enquired Richard the Blacksmith.

"Erm …. Would you like to be part of Shouty Wednesday?" Russ looked around at the others at this point who were all very drunk but had heard the question and were nodding in an approving fashion.

"I would love that!" Exclaimed Richard the Blacksmith, and Russ

could have sworn he saw a small tear well up in his eye. “Give that here.”

In no time at all, Richard the Blacksmith had fashioned a silver arrow, and passed it to Frank. Everyone agreed that he had the right equipment for the task and they set off, with Richard the Blacksmith in tow, to find the Natterfright.

The gang wobbled their way to the Pednor Loop, where it was once again, dark and cold and moist. On and on they trekked, the Loop was a mysterious place but they needed to reach the far end, where nobody would go, for there was nothing there but deathly quiet.

They cut across some of the fields to where they thought the Surgeon’s house might be (Public Footpath No.9 according to the Ramblers, those mad bastards).

As they pushed on, the magic light began to, erm, throb. Frank held it aloft, and there was a definite drop in temperature, and the sound of a large beast padding up ahead in the darkness. They walked gingerly forward, and the magic light throbbed some more, like the bright twinkly throbber that it was.

Then they saw it, it must be … the Natterfright.

The full moon lit it up its scaly head, which was that of a giant snake, its body was long, maybe six feet but low to the ground, and thick in circumference. At the back there was a large black and white tail, of a giant skunk. The tail on its own was some five feet in length.



This would have looked a fearsome creature indeed, if not for the bunny ears protruding on top of its head.

“I am not sure whether to kill it or stroke it, “ muttered Russ, until it opened its mouth and a long serpent-like tongue tasted the air. It approached slowly, and the gang placed their hands on their weapons, as it drew closer.

Everyone started to walk backwards as it approached, but Bob

had become distracted by trying to get the knife out of his lovely hair, it was in a tangle and he hadn't noticed that the Natterfright was drawing closer. Bob suddenly realised what was happening and grabbed the knife out of his nipple (with a little yelp) and help it like a weapon. Then he felt himself being dragged backwards, and lifted upwards.

Frank had seen what was happening, and had decided to do something nice for Bob and get him out of harms way from the impending Natterfright. Sadly, in doing so Bob had got his Grocs caught in the ground and this made them both fall backwards, and the Natterfright pounced.

What happened next was most unfortunate, the Natterfright jumped in the air, but not towards the grounded Bob and Frank, it went straight up in the air and did a 180 degree turn so that its tail was now pointing towards the group. The rest of the crew knew exactly what was happening with a giant skunk tail pointed towards them and fell back, however Bob was squashing Frank on the floor, who had both the silver arrow and the bow. The Natterfright backed toward them, and as the others looked on in horror, a spray of septic tank quality stink fired forth towards Bob and Frank.

With no thought for his own personal safety, Frank bravely grabbed Bob and held him in the air like a human shield, and Bob received the full payload over his entire body, and more concerningly, in his mouth.

Oh gods of Chesham, why in the mouth?

The spray went on for about three or four seconds, and Frank then hurled Bob towards the Natterfright. This was also very unfortunate, as Bob had lost his senses from the smell and stumbled forward towards the still erect tail of the Natterfright. Bob lost his footing and everyone looked on in horror (and some in amusement) as Bob tripped forward and thrust his head straight into the Natterfrights bottom. Oooh, nasty.

The Natterfright wasn't entirely sure what to make of this, this being the first time it had experienced such a thing, and it turned around to face our intrepid adventurers.

Frank had got his wits about him, and loaded the silver arrow into his bow, he whispered his target and the arrow flew straight and true, into the Natterfrights heart, and piercing deep into it's body. With a terrible wail, the Natterfright

collapsed in a heap, and the muffled yelps of Bob could be heard, as his shoulders and legs were flailing around with his head firmly stuck in the bottom of the Natterfright.

Richard the Blacksmith stepped forward, grabbed Bob's feet and the tail of the Natterfright and with a satisfying pop, his head came clean out.

Bob was a mess, however more unfortunately for him the silver arrow had gone clean through the Natterfright and was sticking out of the top of Bob's head like an antler.

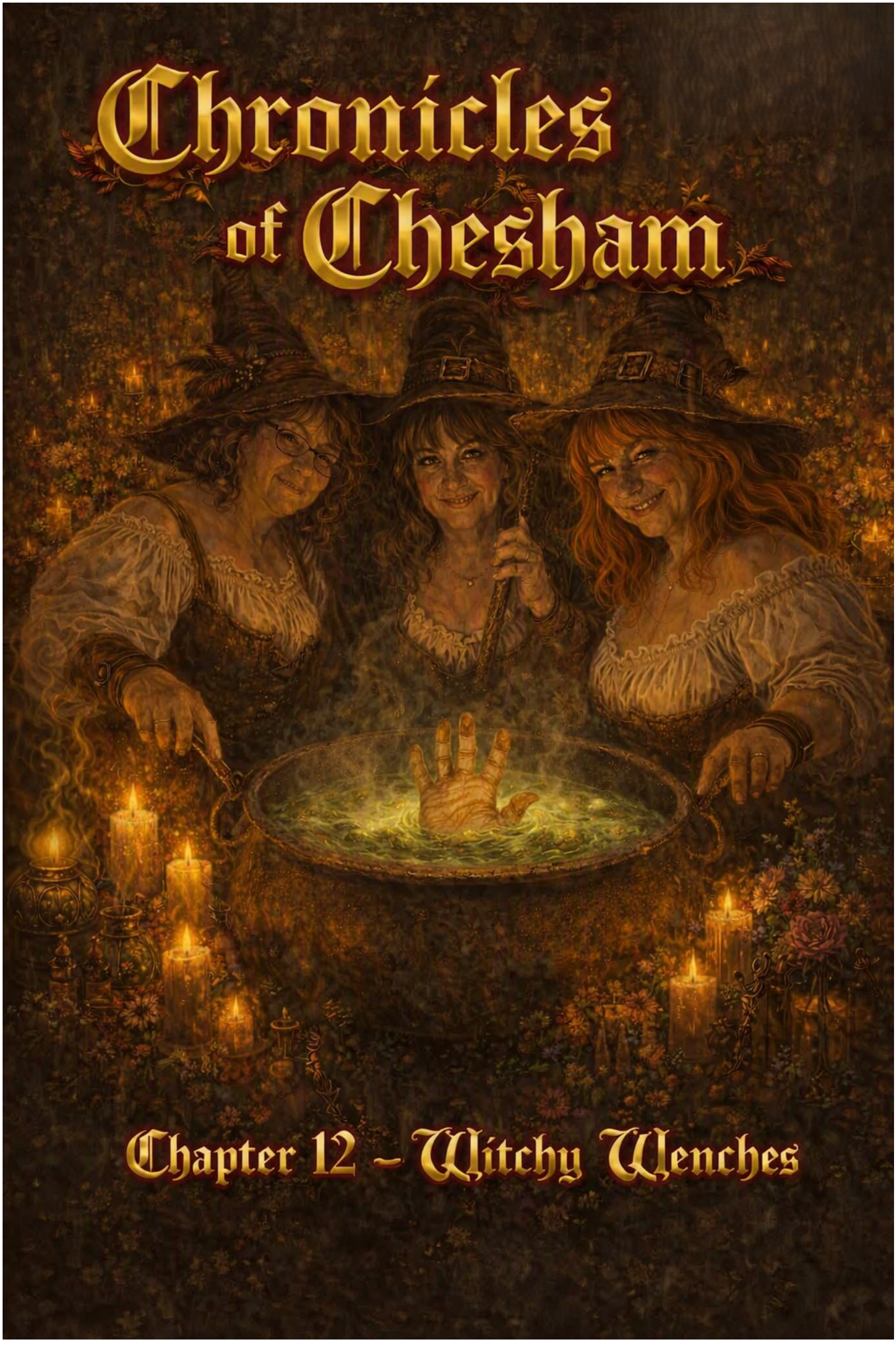
"Get yourself another one of those and you could be like me!" Exclaimed Richard the Blacksmith, but Bob pulled out the arrow

and proceeded to be sick on the floor. Frank was laughing so much that he was worried he may injure himself.

The Blacksmith produced a huge sack and grabbed the body of the Natterfright and placed it in the sack, and threw it over his shoulder.

“Time to get back to the pub and see what we have got,” said Russ.

And everyone held their noses and made sure that Bob was downwind from them as they made their way back to the Queens Head for the final planning of their quest.


Chronicles
of Chesham
Chapter 12 – Witchy Wenches

CHAPTER TWELVE – THE WITCHY WENCHES

In the saloon bar, the Shouty Crew, with their new members Richard the Blacksmith and Jake the Golem, observed their collection. There were now so many of them that they were struggling to get around the table and Russ had to sit on Dave the Bastards chair whilst he was not there.

Bob was not there either, Manuella had taken him out to the back yard for a good scrub to try and get the Natterfright Skunk smell out his lovely hair.

In the meantime, Mick had been helping himself to some tiger nuts and liquorice sticks from the bar – world famous (or in Chesham anyway) for generating man gas, to enhance his next buttock exposure experiment.

And with just hours to spare, the booty was on the table (ha ha), erm. . .the artefacts were there for all to see.

The tooth of worm, from Chesham Bois. Rumour had it that the giant worm had since developed alcohol dependency issues, and could be seen crawling from bar to bar in Chesham High Street, looking for aggravation.

The Magic Light, which had brought Jake the Golem to the Shouty Wednesday Crew, it spluttered and flickered with its light that may not go out, and taught everyone that being small and stony can have its advantages.

The Fur of Glis Glis, found at St Mary's Church under the protection of Kev the Cleric, who may never play a game of

Crackerjack again.

A Laggards Toe Nail, freshly bitten from Gunter Ausfahrt by Timmy, whose tongue has never really been the same, and neither has Gunter to be fair.

A Golden Eye, from Dread Pirate Ryan the Ruiner, who has vowed a dastardly revenge on the thieves who took his prize, although he couldn't say that he completely hated the process involved.

The Bark of Silvertree, after bargaining with the powerful Gimp, er Imp, er whatever – last seen in with the dreaded Spanker of Chesham Gaol.

The Natterfright, the evil creation of the Surgeon, and purveyor of significant stench, its body tied up in a sack on floor.

And the Dragons Sperm. This was not on table, it was decided that it would be too unhygienic and so was in a small container in Bob's pocket.

"Okay men," said Mick the Watchman. We have got to work out what to do with this lot, the voice said take it to Herberts Hole (hee hee).

At this point Dave the Bastard entered the Saloon bar, Russ jumped to his feet, he did not want to get caught sitting in Dave's seat, and as the Bastard approached his chair, he eyed Russ up and down in a most disdainful way.

"Sit down you cretins," spat Dave the Bastard.

Manuella, by now, had given up scrubbing Bob and he was returned to the Saloon bar (although his hair did look lovely after a good scrub).

“You need to go and see the Witchy Wenches ….” Dave the Bastard started, but then he saw at the far entrance to the saloon bar a young woman holding a baby, clearly in the wrong place.

“GET THAT THING OUT OF HERE!” Shouted Dave the Bastard at the woman, who panicked and turned around and fled screaming.

Pub Lore Fact

The saloon bar is the place in the pub where the men go to talk (Sexist!), and although occasionally women may enter, upon permission being granted by the men, children were definitely not allowed, no babies, not toddlers, and especially no teenagers. Breach of this rule is a serious violation of the rights of men to be men (or women) and this last bastion of man solace would be defended at all costs.

End of Pub Lore Fact

“Where was I?” Dave the Bastard wondered, “Oh yeah, you need to go and see the Witchy Wenches – they can be found in the Guild of Witchcraft on the Guildmaster Square.

You need to give them all of the items, and they will provide you with what you need to take to Herberts Hole,” there was a

brief snigger from the group, “you need to be careful though, they are not only extremely powerful, but extremely beautiful and beguiling, like Sirens except with more clothes. They can also be deadly, many a man has gone to the Guild of Witchcraft and never, ever made it out again. This is what you can expect from fierce, strong, independent women.”

Dave the Bastard seemed to be smiling into his ale at his last comment, and nobody heard him mutter under his breath, “they will cut your balls off….”

For the part they did hear, everybody nodded their agreement. Apart from Manuella, they had not really seen any strong, fierce independent women in this quest, and they were worried that they were getting a bit behind the times. They had also heard the word extremely beautiful, which triggered a somewhat strange reaction, they all went to the bathroom at the same time and formed an orderly queue in front of the mirror.

Bob was first, he combed his hair with his hands to make it even more lovely looking.

Frank rubbed some lotion into his bald head, and slightly greased his eyebrows.

Timmy pulled his trousers out and sprinkled a little bit of water down there, just enough to pad himself out a bit.

After some press ups (Rich/Ian), stone buffing (Jake), Armour

shining (Mick) and Antler polishing (Richard the Blacksmith). Ben felt that he was looking good enough already, and Jeff and Russ didn't seem that bothered.

They returned to the saloon bar, looking good, and Ben made a proposal.

"If we are going to meet these beautiful Witchy Wenches, we are going to need some courage – come on everybody, three roaders and then we go."

The roader rule had been enacted, and everyone got their ales down.

Pub Lore Fact

Consumption of ale is not directly related to being more attractive. In fact, quite the opposite, very enthusiastic imbibing of ale will definitely result in the consumer feeling better looking, and to the consumer everyone else will get better looking, but for everyone else the drinker will remain at best the same, or, as is more likely, looking a whole lot worse. The desire increases but the delivery shortens (thank you Shakespeare).

End of Pub Lore Fact

The full crew now headed out, back to the NorthWest of the city, back to the Guildmasters Square. It was still large and dark and wet.

Just up from the Guild of Lanternmakers stood the Guild of Witchcraft, a secretive guild that was not well known to the


GUILD OF
WITCHCRAFT
Potions
Spells

world of men.

The Guild was identified by golden letters between to half moons above the two large oak doors, dimly lit by lanterns either side. A broom stick was embedded in each door, but by far the most curious thing was black cat's head mounted on the doors, with a large iron ring in its mouth. Its eyes were quite shut.

Sensing danger, Bob was not inclined to make his hilarious knocker joke from the Guild of Lanternmaking.

Ben stepped forward, and grabbed the iron ring and gave it three loud knocks, in doing so the eyes of the cat flickered open to reveal mystical green eyes.

"What do you want from the Witchy Wenches?" the cat spat.

"Erm … we need their help to save the whole of Chesham from total destruction?"

"Sound reasonable," the cat replied, "you had better … come in."

And with that the doors creaked open to reveal a small corridor, lit candles but not just any candles, they smelled like heaven, of course they were luxury candles, Witchy Wenches like Rituals (one for the ladies there), one massive candle flickered in a wagon wheel suspended from the ceiling by iron chains, Bob could just read it "Mo Jalone", fancy! As the team progressed the corridor opened out into a hallway, which also smelt

glorious and as the crew filtered into the hallway – before them was a sight to behold, the Witchy Wenches.



There were candles all around, and the cauldron was bubbling with ethereal menace, a bluey green.

In with finery of pointy hats, and ruffled white blouses (off the shoulder, phwoar) paired with brown tunics (very fashionable this time of year), there stood the glorious beauty of the witchy wenches, Jude, Lynne and Janet.

The three of them had been born into witchcraft since birth,

orphans who were left on the steps of the guild as babies, and raised to carry on its secretive traditions of providing potions and spells to all who could pay the right price.

The men were dumbstruck, so much so that no one noticed a

hand reaching out of the cauldron, that Janet rather expertly pushed back in with a wooden spoon.

“What is your business?” Asked Lynne, in a husky voice.

This was having quite the effect on Rich/Ian, who was subconsciously flexing his pectoral muscles back at Lynne, who winked.

“We need your help with all of these items,” said Bob, “we need to take them into Herberts Hole (Haha), Dave the Bastard said.”

Jude looked at Bob, and fluttered her eyelashes at him, Bob didn’t realise that he was starting to swish his lovely hair from side to side, almost in slow motion.

“If we don’t, then we are all in mortal danger!” Russ ventured forward, rather wishing he had made a bit more of an effort now.

“You look like you can handle mortal danger,” Janet replied, whilst also pushing the hand back into the cauldron for a second time.

“Er…. Yes, that’s my middle name,” Russ countered, rather poorly.

“I have had enough of all of this fannying around,” Jeff stepped forward.

“A wizard!” Exclaimed Lynne.

“No, I am an engineer, “ sighed Jeff.

“But you have wizardy hat!” Said Janet.

“And a wizardy robe,” remarked Jude.

“Just fashion, that’s all,” retorted Jeff, “now put the items in the cauldron and recite the utterance of the gods so we can get on with it.”

“Are you sure you are not a wizard?” Lynne asked suspiciously but to no avail.

“Very well,” Jude exclaimed, “put them in the cauldron.”

One by one, they cautiously approached and dropped the items one by one into the bubbling cauldron. When all items were

delivered, the Witchy Wenches joined hands and began to utter in tongues, the flames on the candles grew brighter and larger and then the hand came out of the cauldron, and then an arm, and then a head.

“I recognise that head,” said Timmy, “It’s DOB!”

As the crew squinted to see if it was the pyromaniac, quick as a flash janet said “No, it isn’t,” and pushed him back into the cauldron.

They began to chant again and this time, an object shot out of the cauldron, high into the sky, spinning, until it came hurtling down towards Bob.

Bob put his arms up to protect himself, and as the object made contact, Mick pointed and shouted, “Look!”

Bob was crouching with his arms above his head and he looked around with one eye, he hadn't been injured, and he brought his hands down and looked at what he had in his hand, he had caught an egg.

"Be careful with it," whispered Jude, "you must not break it, when you enter Herberts Hole," (Haha), "you will know when the time is right to use it. Now go, go and save us all."

Rich/Ian had stopped flexing his pecs now, and nodded in the most manly way that a half goblin could at Lynne and moved off, slightly tripping over his own feet in the process, which ruined his coolness for a bit. Russ winked at Janet, who acknowledged it but was by now busy trying to push DOB back in the cauldron. Bob swished his hair, took one last look at Jude and they all made their way out of the Guild to go and find Herberts Hole (haha).

Out into the loop, and once again across the fields they went, the silhouettes of the dragons in the sky against the full moon, as our intrepid explorers went further and further into the darkness of the Loop of Pednor.

Frank, who was leading the way now paused. Everybody stopped.

"Listen," Frank whispered, " there is something in the hedgerow."

The all squinted, looking for a rabbit or badger but one could

not be too careful, this was not far from where the Surgeon lived, and nobody wanted to have another nauseous experience like last time, especially Bob. Then it happened.

“Yah,” a noise came from the hedge and suddenly into the path in front of the crew jumped six small gentleman, slightly smaller than Bob and Jake even, if that could be believed.

The wore only leather pants, and each one held a small spear, in their dear little hands.

Each had a bone necklace, and skin that was worn from exposure the elements. One stepped forward, he had a bone through his nose.

“Who goes there?” Asked the strange little man.

Frank answered, “We are on a mission to save Chesham from total destruction, and urgently need to get into Herberts Hole.” Someone sniggered again, and Frank looked around in a quite cross fashion.

“You are trespassing!” Exclaimed the miniature menace.

“Who are you?” Asked Frank, who was getting more than a little annoyed now.

“We are Pagan Pygmy Protectors of Pednor! And you shall not pass.”

“Oh come on, we have been through such a lot, and all we want to do is get into Herberts Bloody Hole,” said Frank, now becoming exasperated.



“If you try to pass, we will kill you!” stated the Head of the PPPP.

“Come on Frank, he is all fart and no shit,” Richard the Blacksmith helpfully put forward.

“We will kill you dead,” the head pygmy ventured again.

“Well that isn’t very good grammar, is it?” Frank snapped back. “If your going to kill us then we will be dead, you don’t need to add dead on to the end of the sentence, it doesn’t add anything.”

The Pygmy looked confused and looked around his pygmy tribe for help, they all shook their heads and looked at their bare feet, one or two scraping the ground back and forth in embarrassment for their leaders lack of verbal prowess.

“That doesn’t matter,” he snapped back, “prepare to die!”

With that he launched himself at Frank, taking him completely by surprise, and sat on top of Franks chest, slapping him around the face from right to left.

Everybody else in the crew stood back and watched, they didn’t want to interfere, this was a little guy and maybe Frank was going to start hitting him back, alas this did not happen.

Richard the Blacksmith had seen enough and stepped forward and grabbed the pygmy by his ankle and held him up in the air at arms length.

“Let go of me, I was killing him – I will kill you too,” spat the Pygmy.

“You have got one chance to be nice, or there will be trouble,” the Blacksmith warned.

“I will end you, men – seize him.” The pygmy leader issued the order but his loyal men were looking at the size of the

Blacksmith, and had also noticed that Timmy was starting to swish his morning star around menacingly. Mick had drawn his sword, and Russ was now holding his double axe in both hands. Even Bob had got his knife out from his lovely hair, and Rich/Ian had his goblin knife ready to go.

On seeing this sight, they didn’t really fancy it, and decided that retreat was the honourable option and started getting back into the hedge.

“Where are you going, you traitors?” Protested the pygmy

leader, “Nevermind, I will kill you all on my own.” Quite a

statement from someone being held quite upside down by his ankle.

“Get rid of him, Blacksmith,” growled Frank, and with an

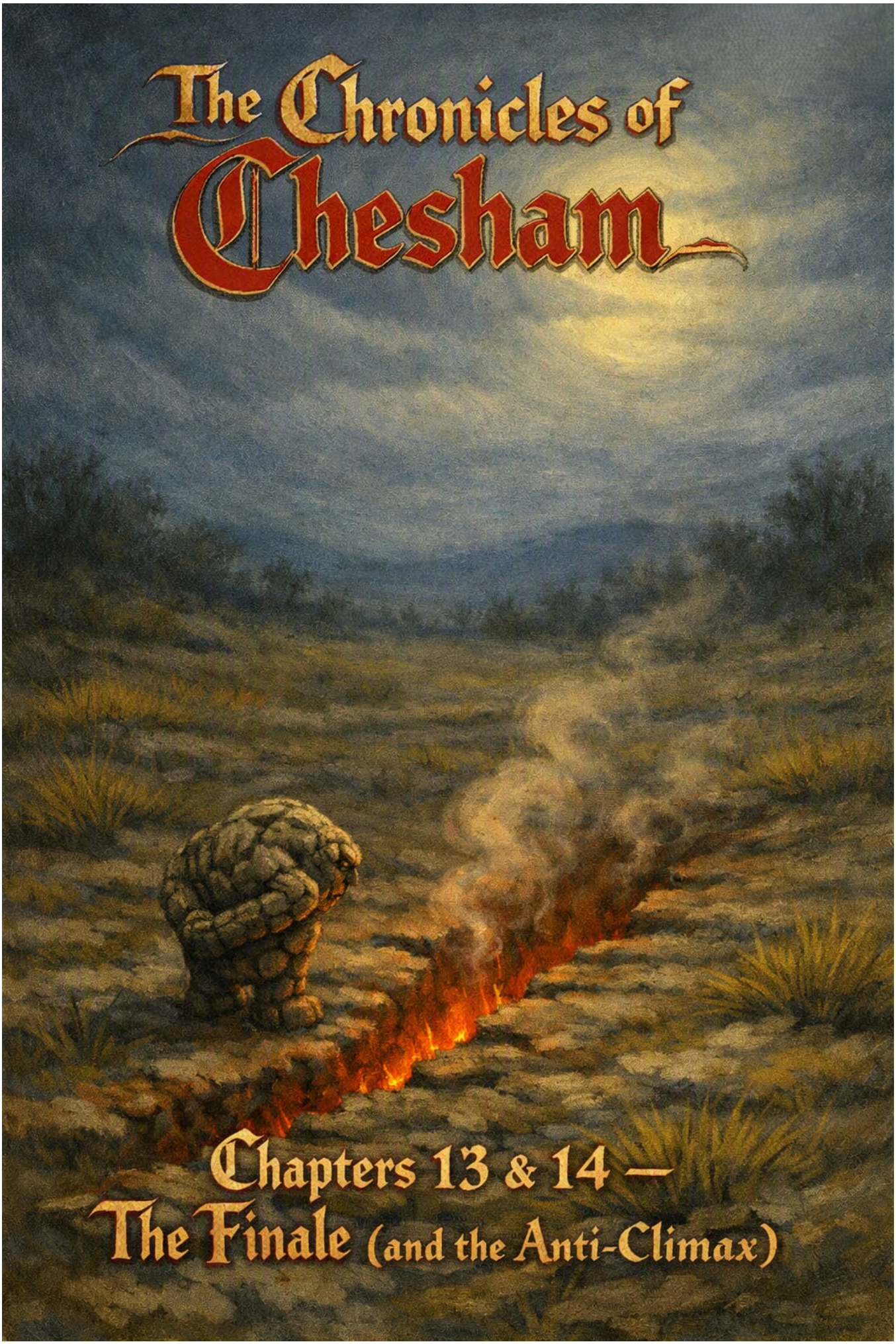
almighty toss, he hurled the pygmy way over the hedge into a nearby field, who was still screaming “I will killlll youuuuuuuuu.”

“Could become a game that,” Russ thought to himself.

After what seemed like an age of uphill marching, the band saw it before them, a gaping fissure in the ground – slightly glowing

red, and occasionally belching natural gas into the ether.

They had found Herberts Hole.


The Chronicles of
Chesham
Chapters 13 & 14 —
The Finale (and the Anti-Climax)

CHAPTER THIRTEEN – THE ENTERING HERBERT'S HOLE

Jake was inspecting the ground, his little stony hands held behind his back as he peered into the hole.

"Why is it called Herberts Hole?" Asked Jake of the rest of the crew.

"Nobody knows," said Jeff, slightly disappointingly.

They were looking at a slash in the ground, some ten feet in length, with what appeared to be two ridges either side, every now and then it would expel gas with a sound that was familiar to the gang as being similar to the side effects of a bad pint.

And then there was the smell, a smell so bad that even a Natterfright would think twice before going near it.

"We are going to need to go in there, aren't we?" Questioned Ben, and said aloud the thoughts of his comrades.

The words of Dave the Bastard were ringing in Richard the Half Goblins ears.

"When you get to the hole, don't bugger about, hold your breath and jump straight in – no one really knows what is on the other side but I lost a dog in there once and have never seen it again."

Richard sighed, "We are just going to have to go for it aren't we!" And much to the surprise of everyone in the group, he pinched his goblin nose, ran forward and did the kind of bombing jump that would later be outlawed in all public

swimming baths in Chesham (after they had been invented), whatever next? Smoking? Heavy petting? No manners whatsoever.

Rich disappeared from view and moments later a large puff of green cloud burped from the hole, as if it had consumed him. Everyone else looked around, until Ben pulled the cork out of a sneakily concealed flagon of ale, took a few glugs and after throwing it to Frank ran forward and dived into Herberts Hole, shouting “Geronimooooooooo”.

One by one, using their own artistic flare (and a little ale each from the flagon) they entered the whole. Jake tip toed in, Mick jumped upright in like a pencil, Frank pushed Bob in and each and every one of them took the plunge.

On the other side of the whole, as the gang were making there way into the unknown, Rich the half goblin was experiencing the “other side”. He had effectively jumped into rear end of an ancient creature, and was now flying through a dark internal intestine – the wrong way for the ancient creatures liking I should add.

Herbert was in fact a gigantic, magical creature from another world, that had crash landed into the countryside near Chesham many centuries ago, getting quite stuck. The Gods had watched this event and found it rather funny and so had rather cruelly left the immortal Herbert stuck in the ground to get on with things by himself. Over the coming years, the

ground had shifted and grown around him making him even more secure in the ground and the crater he had created upon impact was barely noticeable apart from his giant sphincter that was there for all to see.

The sphincter that the shouty Wednesday crew were now jumping into.

Richard squelched and wriggled his way through the dark

spongy tunnel, and he could hear the others squelching along somewhere behind him, until he entered a large dark opening, he poked his way through and found himself standing on fleshy surface, with a grim, dark, odorous liquid sloshing around at his ankles.

One by one the team emerged into the opening, until all of them stood in a spongy circle, the floor undulating under their feet.

“What is this?” Said Jake, as Ben found some matches and lit a small torch. As the room lit up, there was quite a sight.

For a start, all of them were covered in a revolting, brown sludge. They were not aware that they had just climbed the wrong way up a ancient monsters digestive system, and they were in fact just covered in …. Well you know what it is.

Secondly, as they looked around and saw the drips from the fleshy ceiling dropping onto the floor, and as they did one of the drops hit Timmy on the hand.

“Ow, that burns like a night with Tamara the Showgirl,” complained Timmy.

Then it dawned on Jeff, “we’re in a stomach!”

Jeff was not world renowned for his diplomacy, he once asked a leper whether he could move out of his way and take his rotting stinking limbs with him, and when asked by one of the local bar maids if their bum looked big in their latest outfit, he did not say anything but just made oinky noises like a pig. Honesty was problematic sometimes.

The stomach statement did cause a mild panic amongst the group, nobody particularly wanted to be digested today, and if they had known it’s name, certainly not by a gigantic alien

being called Herbert (what a way to go).

Then, Ben had a brainwave (it does happen!).

“Mick, have you still got the tiger nuts and liquorice sticks from the pub?” Ben enquired with some urgency.

“Yes, I took load of them – I need them for my ….. oh well never mind.” Mick trailed off.

“Drop them in the stomach, that will get him going,” Ben was deadly serious.

“You can’t do that,” Frank interjected.

“Why not?” Asked Ben.

“Because he will shit us out the way that we came,” Russ explained.

“I’ve got an idea,” Richard the Blacksmith stepped forward. Everyone paused.

“All of you now, one liquorice stick, one tiger nut each – do it now.” Rich commanded and everyone looked at each other and then realised the game. They all ate at once.

It took seconds, Russ was first, his eyebrows started to waggle, and he pointed a finger at Bob, who pulled his finger and the most enormous fart emitted from Russ (who was trying very hard not to laugh). Bob turned to Ben, and also offered a

finger, and Ben did pull with a great sense of urgency and an even bigger fart was brought to the air. One after the other, fart, fart, fart, fart, fart,fart. And it was beginning to work, the smell was unbelievable, days and days of the finest ale mixed with liquorice and nuts hit the air, and the chamber began to tremble and contract.



More farting, over and over, and the chamber began to violently shake.

Timmy looked over at Bob, and shouted “It’s not enough, you need to lose the Grocs.”

Bob was simultaneously most put out but understood the instruction and flicked a groc up into his hand and dipped his toes into the liquid. His sweaty, stinky, groc cladded feet that still had traces of Natterfright on released their pungent odour. That was it.

All of the walls of the great cavernous stomach gripped hold of the crew and they were shot upwards through another fleshy tube towards a large opening where one by one they fell some fifteen feet out onto a stony floor, one by one, as they landed on top of each other (Bob at the bottom obviously) and finally with the great weight of Rich the Blacksmith falling on top of the bundle. Herbert had thrown them up, and a large craggy, stony face and mouth could be seen retreating backwards to the walls of the giant cavern they were now in and returned back to rock, until it was disturbed once more.

Among much moaning and aching, Russ put a hand out from somewhere within the mountain of bodies, and felt nothing but space, he retreated backwards, afraid of falling and then he saw where they were.

They were in an enormous cavern, on a ledge about the width of five men, that overlooked a giant abyss.

Nothing but blackness, and no way of seeing where the abyss led. Russ concluded that they had been fortunate to land where they did, a few feet forward and they all would have plummeted to their doom.

As everyone extricated themselves from the pile and stood well back from the abyss, it was clear that the cavern was lit by magic torches embedded high up on the sides of the rock, and although there must be a ceiling, it was hidden in the darkness above, a reflection almost of the darkness below.

Some distance across the other side of the cavern, way across the dark abyss, there was a glowing green circle, magic of course, that looked about the same size as the egg that Bob was carrying in his pocket.

“I wonder how we get it over there,” Ben wondered out loud.

And then, a voice that was familiar to most of the crew sounded, it was the voice that had started the quest, and brought them all there.

“I AM ISFET, LORD OF CHAOS, BRINGER OF IMBALANCE, MASTER OF DESTRUCTION AND RUINER OF EPIC NIGHTS OUT…”

“I don’t like him already,” remarked Ben.

“SILENCE, YOU MUST CROSS THE ABYSS AND PLACE THE EGG OF ARTEFACTS INTO THE HOLE OF RESTORATION..”

Russ giggled at this, “hole of restoration, god sake..”

“SILENCE, YOU MUST CROSS ONE BY ONE BUT IF ONE OF YOU DOES NOT MAKE IT ACROSS THEN I WILL DESTROY CHESHAM AND ALL THAT LIVES IN IT….”

“But why?” Frank shouted into the darkness.

“IT’S WHAT I DO!” and with that the Egg of Artefacts (really!) rose from Bob’s pocket and flew across the abyss to hover slightly in front of the green lit hole.

At the same time, dozens of rock platform floated up from the abyss and now hovered like stepping stones in the middle of the air, in fifteen broken lines across the dark and deadly drop.

“CHOOSE YOUR PATH, CHOOSE YOUR PERIL.”

The voice then stopped, and Richard the half goblin stepped forward, “we are going to have to jump across these stones – I will go.”

And with no thought for his own personal safety, Richard leapt onto the first stone in front of him, hovering over the darkness. It held his weight and although it was only a foot wide and three feet long, he balanced. The next stone was a gap of some six feet away, it was quite a jump to make with the run up but Richard pressed on and jumped to the next one, it wobbled slightly, but held his balance and looked around at the rest of the crew stood back on the ledge, Richard gave them a thumbs up over his shoulder and turned back to make a leap to the next one. If he made this one then he would have another ten to do but he was getting into his rhythm and he leapt forward

again.

Tad unfortunate this one, as he leapt through the air, he was actually smiling a tusky smile to himself, he was really good at this, and in this moment of euphoria he did not see the grapefruit sized rock that was being shot across the abyss towards him. Timmy saw it and shouted out “Be careful, they are trying to shoot you in the …”

“Ugh,” grunted Richard as he was hit full pelt in his nobgoglin and was thrown backwards from the platform and off into the abyss, the gang could hear him screaming for ages as he fell. They looked at each other. Mick spoke first.

“Right fellas, we have got to do this or we have had it anyway – let’s all go at the same time, surely they can’t fire at all of us, and if one of us makes it then we might be able to save the others.”

To say that this got a luke warm reaction from the rest of the gang would have been some understatement, but they understood the gravity (you bet they did) of the situation and lined up against their respective platforms.

“On three ,ready?” Mick got them set, “One, two, three – go!”

Mick’s idea had been pretty decent but was based on a few missing facts, one they didn’t know where the rocks were being fired from, they didn’t know how many people or what was firing and they didn’t know if all of the platforms were safe,

apart from that it was brilliant.

They leapt across to the first platform, everyone was safe apart from Bob, who was a little unlucky (fancy that) and lost his footing jumping across and simply just fell into the abyss, he had managed to grab the platform with his hands and was now just hanging at first base trying not to drop to his demise (don't you hate that when it happens!).

Timmy was making very good progress, he had leapt across four platforms in not time at all, and just paused for a second to size up the leap to halfway, then blam, a rock fired across and straight towards his prized turnip. One blood curdling scream later, Timmy was falling into the abyss.

Richard the Blacksmith, although larger, was actually

surprisingly agile and was also close to the halfway point when a rock fired towards his head. He ducked as best he could but forgot about his antlers that were securely tight to his head and the rock clipped one, and knocked him off balance and into the darkness below, shouting something that sounded like "Anchooooooorrrs".

Mick was hit in the helmet, which turned it around at a funny angle so he was unable to see and he too slipped off into the abyss. In quick succession they fell, Russ, Ben, Jake, Jeff until there was just Frank and Bob.

Bob was still trying to get back on his first platform, and had one leg up and was trying to swing the other one onto it to get

back on top. In the meantime, Frank, with moves that really quite belied his years, was only two platforms away from the egg of artefacts, when a small boulder was fired towards his ankles. Like some sort of gladiator, Frank jumped straight in the air, avoiding the shot but it continued to go past him towards the unfortunate Bob, who was just about on his knees on this first platform when the boulder hit him straight in the face and knocked him back to clinging onto the rocky ledge once again.

Frank turned to look back and started laughing at Bob, which was a shame because a second rock had been fired whilst he laughed which caught him square in the stomach and knocked him into the abyss too, shouting “That’s your fault Booooooooooobbbbbb,” as he tumbled to his doom.

Now there was only Bob, it was not lost on him that he had not had much luck of late and now he was in charge of saving everyone. Even he didn’t like the odds.

He brought himself back onto his first platform, and he looked down at his Grocs.

“Come on, we need to do this or we won’t be able to go to the pub ever again,” and as he made his self-motivational speech, he noticed a small button on the side of his Grocs, on each sole, that he had never seen before. He reached down and pressed each one on his sandal, and a slight sparkle started to emanate from the soles of his shoes, this was magic at work.

“Oh my gods,” gasped Bob, “I didn’t know these were Grocs Air Max!”.

He took a run forward and jumped to the next platform, landing with ease and with just enough time to swerve his body as a rock came firing towards him. He ran and jumped forward again, but this time jumped so high that the rock being fired at him passed clean beneath this heels. He ran again, but this time leapt diagonally, flying high through the air like a gazelle, his lovely hair was now flowing in the slipstream of this athletic master class, and the creatures firing the rocks could not keep up.

This way and that, he leapt and twisted and turned, a forward flip over two rock projectiles, and now the aggressors were firing two, three rocks at a time but to no avail – Bob was on fire, leaping this was and that, hair swishing like the glorious tail of a peacock behind him.

And then he was there, the final leap on the final platform, he could see the egg and the glowing green hole. He knew what to do.

“I am no longer Bob the Unlucky, I am Bob the hero, saviour of the town, shiny god with lovely hair,” Bob shouted, and then he leapt, and as he did so three rocks were fired at him.

The first hit him square in the face, with so much force that in slow motion it knocked him into a backwards flip, until the second hit him square in the buttocks, causing him to continue

to spiral in the air in a complete loop until the third one hit him, fully and completely in those poor battered crown jewels of his but incredibly he landed back where we had jumped from, bleeding from the nose, with bruised buttocks and a battered sausage but he was still standing. A voice could be heard in the background, “God sakes Cecil, this bloke is

unstoppable,” and with those final words Bob leapt for all he was worth back towards the egg, which he grabbed mid air with both hands and hurled into the, erm, into the, you know, er hole of restoration.

A bright light shone so brightly, that all he could see was white, and then flashes and Bob felt himself floating in the air. And as he did, one by one he saw the crew floating with him, Richard the Half Goblin, Timmy the Orc, Mick the Watchman, Ben the Merchant, Frank the Merchant (retired), Russ the outsider, Jeff the Engineer (and definitely not a wizard), Richard the

Blacksmith, Jake the Golem – oh joy of joys what was this?

“I know!” came a voice out of nowhere as everyone floated through the heavens together.

“DOB?” Bob exclaimed.

“Yes!” Said DOB, you have saved us all and we are being

transported back to the pub.”

“Hoorah,” everyone shouted together as the world began to spin around and around and then everything went dark.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN – THE ANTI-CLIMAX

And so all of the Shouty Wednesday Crew were in the saloon bar, crammed around the tables and enjoying their ales, the fruits of their labour and a very interesting journey indeed.

Dave the Bastard was sat in his chair, growling at the incredible noise that was being made by the gang, as they drank to their hearts content in celebration of their success. DOB was putting some more logs on the fire.

“A toast,” declared Ben, holding his cask of ale high in the air (and spilling a bit), “To all of the Shouty Wednesday Crew, and our very own Bob – who may not be that unlucky anymore!”

Everyone cheered, apart from Bob, who had accidentally spilt half of his ale on the crotch of his trousers and looked like he had just had a very unfortunate senior moment in his pants. Then he decided to leave it and raised his ale, he would probably have got them wet somehow later anyway.

“Be ready for lock down tonight,” warned Dave the Bastard, “the change is forecast for this evening, so make sure you silly buggers are ready.”

And Dave the Bastard was right, the change happened to Chesham every now and then, when the ground would shift, and where new buildings and places and people would suddenly appear, and new and different tales would be ready to be told. And as the ground began to shift, and the buildings

began to change, the George and Dragon emerged on the high street, a new drinking hole, the Red Lion, The Tavern, and new people too – who knows, one of them might even be you.

Thank you for reading, I hope you have enjoyed it and if you would like to see another series then please let us know at

info@chroniclesofchesham.com

Thank you to all of the people I have made fun of and all of the venues in Chesham involved.

Russell Barr

red, and occasionally belching natural gas into the ether.

They had found Herberts Hole.


THE CITY OF CHESHAM
The Barracks
The Palace of Lord Chester
MAIN GATE
PALACE SQUARE
THE PLEDGE
GENERALS ARMS
TOWN SQUARE
THE MILL OF MOTHERCAKE
BENJAMIN THE MERCHANT
Jeff the Engineer
GUILD MASTER SQUARE
BOB THE GOLD
THE GUARD
FRANKS PLACE
FRANKS SQUARE
THE CURIOUS STONES
HERMITS HOLE
TRUMPETS
GLAZIER
JACKY HOUSEMAN
MAIN SQUARE
DRAWING ROOM
CHESHAM GAOL
THE LOOP
THE BOG
RIVER
CHURCH STREET
RICHARD STREET
JEREMY STREET
THE ALE OF MEAT
WINE COUNTRY
THE ARMOURY
BOB MANCAVE
THE REAR ENTRANCE