

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.

Pub Lore Fact

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.



“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.

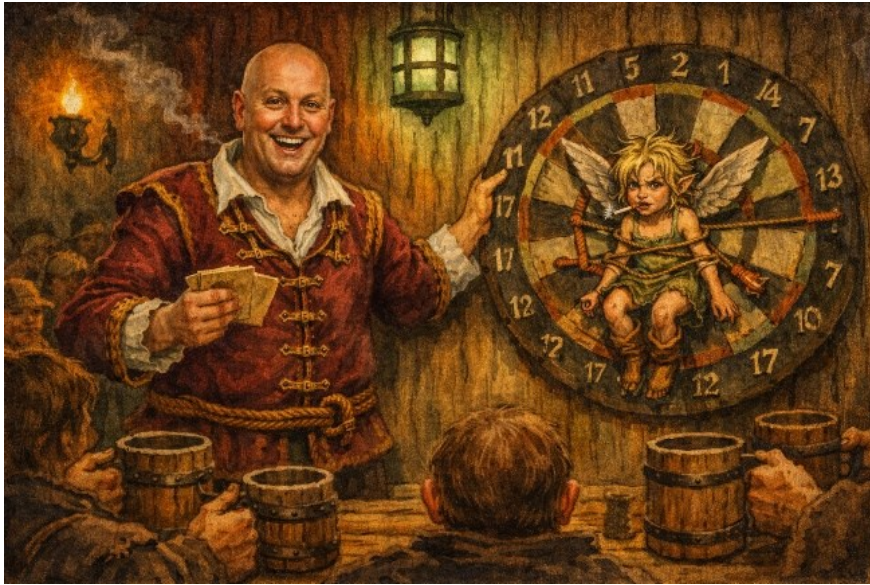
Everyone agreed, and they slipped inside Vault 17.

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.

Pub Lore Fact

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.

End of Pub Lore Fact

“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 his 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 throbbler 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 held 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.