
DOT

FICTION SUPPLEMENT

FRAMMIN AT THE JIM-JAM FRIPPIN IN THE KROTZ!

I am standing around minding my own business at the last One Tun and clutching a pint glass which is more than somewhat empty, when I hear this voice and what this voice says is like this:

"Are you glop or leather?"

I am contemplating the existential significance of this remark, on account of I do not understand it nearly as much as I do not understand why dead folks win Hugo awards which is to say, not at all, when the voice says it again and I think that maybe the voice is saying it to me. So I look around and can see nobody who is talking to me and in fact they are all talking to someone else. This is very depressing as I only come to the One Tun to talk to the guys and dolls, which is difficult to do when everybody is talking to everybody else, and I am certain I remember to wash this morning.

So I am feeling very depressed all of a sudden when the voice speaks again and this time I am sure that it is me the voice speaks to, as it speaks very impatiently and is accompanied by a sharp pain in the shin. I look down and see these two little dolls who I do not see before on account of they are little, and what these little dolls are doing is looking up at me, so I guess it is they who ask this question. It occurs to me that it is a good idea I should answer this question, as these two little dolls are none other than Miz Chrissie and Louisiana Linda and they are pretty winced up. I can tell they are pretty winced up as they are swaying and holding on to each other, and nobody asks questions like this unless they are pretty winced up. Also I am struck only a glancing blow on the shin. So I say to Miz Chrissie and Louisiana Linda in these terms:

"Am I glop or leather?"

Now there are plenty of things to say in this world that are more sensible than this, since if Miz Chrissie or Louisiana Linda know the answer they do not go around asking me, even if they are pretty winced up. But I am playing for time while I try to work it out and will say anything.

Miz Chrissie and Louisiana Linda look at each other like

they are thinking that this is a cretin who does not understand simple questions such as "Are you glop or leather?" and probably does not know how to tie his shoelaces either. In fact my shoes do not have shoelaces, but I still do not know whether I am glop or leather. So I stand there looking confused and Miz Chrissie decides to explain. What she says is:

"Glop. Chocolate fudge sundae."

So of course I know she is talking about nothing but sex.

Not so long ago I am reading an article in Woolly-bear Pickersgill's fanzine Stop Breaking Down which appears for the first time in more than three years, which some guys consider is too soon, at that. In this fanzine is an article called 'Chocolate Fudge Sundae' which has no more to do with chocolate fudge than A.L. West has to do with hard work, and is in fact about sex. I do not rate this article above five out of ten since it has all the depth of a thin pound note, but of course I do not say so at this moment as it is written by Miz Chrissie herself. Also, Louisiana Linda is none other than Woolly-bear's ever-loving wife, and these two little dolls can give a guy more than a sharp pain in the shin if they have half a mind to.

Well, now that I know what glop is, I get to thinking about the question and what I think is if glop is all about sex then leather is all about sex too, and I will offer plenty of four to one on that what the question is all about is sex.

This takes plenty of thinking as I am pretty wined up myself and do not think too straight, at that. Miz Chrissie is getting impatient and looking like she is thinking whether she can stand on one leg long enough to get a clear shot at my shin again before she falls over, which is a look I do not much like the look of. So I quickly say as follows:

"Am I glop or leather?"

Now, these words do not seem to be much different from the last words I say, and in fact are much the same, but this time I say them in a tone of great enlightenment and comprehension, which is not so far from the truth, at that. I understand the question as well as any guy, and better than most. But this is as much help to me as a bike is to a fish as I do not have a clue about the answer. This question is not a question I ask myself every day of the week, and in fact is not a question I ask myself any day of the week. So I tell Miz Chrissie and Louisiana Linda that this is a very good question while I debate whether I am glop or leather and decide that this is the kind of question that is easier to answer when a guy is not all wined up. This tactic does not fool Miz Chrissie and Louisiana Linda one bit, as they see it on television every time a politician is interviewed.

"Boring accountant," they say, looking disdainfully down their noses at me, which is a pretty neat trick for dolls who are that little.

Too late I realise I should offer them a drink when they first ask me the question, as this gives me half an hour to think about it, if the bar staff at the One Tun do not hurry themselves.

Across the room they see Slicker Hansen and begin to push through the crowd towards him, as Slicker Hansen is the type of guy who knows whether he should be glop or leather, and soon he is talking nineteen to the dozen with Miz Chrissie and Louisiana Linda.

Meanwhile, I get to thinking, well, am I glop or leather?

THE PEASANTS ARE REVOLTING!

Some time ago I am in this little speakeasy called The Peasant talking with Half-an-Ear Langford, though I do not say much myself since when a guy talks with Half-an-Ear Langford it is Half-an-Ear Langford who does the talking. We are talking about this and that, when Half-an-Ear suddenly says how Woolly-bear Pickersgill is thinking of taking a trip down on the west side, and so is Spiny Dorey. Now Half-an-Ear thinks this is a very good idea, as he runs a sideline organising trips down on the west side and does very nicely thank you out of it, but I must say that the news comes as a great surprise to me as Woolly-bear Pickersgill is never one to have dealings with the west side in any shape or form.

I think nothing more of it, and I certainly do not give Half-an-Ear the impression that I am interested in such a proposition myself, or else he will talk me into it on the spot, as he is always trying to get as many guys as he can to take trips down on the west side. Also I do not get a word in edgeways.

Now the reason I do not give it a thought is I always consider the west side a very dangerous place indeed, as it is full of guys who will stick a knife in you as soon as look at you. In fact, I hear sooner. The west side is all sewn up by Ronnie the Boss, who gets to be top man by placing the Peanut in a sack and giving all the Peanut's boys retirement gifts of concrete boots and a free walk across the Potomac. A lot of citizens say this happens none too soon, though I note that none of these citizens are wops or niggers, at that. Ronnie the Boss brings in his own boys such as Wooden Georgie and Caspar the Wino and Gabby Haig, so you can see what sort of a guy he is. Caspar the Wino and Gabby Haig are guys who will sell their fathers for a couple of bobs, and the way I hear it they never even have fathers.

Well, that night I get to thinking that if Woolly-bear Pickersgill and Spiny Dorey are thinking of a trip down on the west side then there must be something in it, as these are guys who do nothing for nothing, especially Spiny Dorey. So I think some more about a trip down on the west side and I drink a little scotch to help the thinking, as it is not something I do more often than I can help, and the more I think about it the more I think it is a good idea. In fact, I think about it a lot that night, and I wake up in the morning thinking that in future I do not think so much since it only makes my head hurt. And of a trip down on the west side I do not think at all.

A few weeks later I get to talking to a guy I do not see

before who just blows in from the west side and this guy talks of nothing but what is going on over there. It seems that Gabby Haig and Caspar the Wino are fighting it out over who should be number two to Ronnie the Boss, even though when Ronnie the Boss becomes top man he says Wooden Georgie is number two. But Gabby Haig and Caspar the Wino are not such guys as will let Wooden Georgie stay number two for long, and Wooden Georgie says nothing at all. Gabby Haig, this guy says, decides that the way to get to be number two is to get tough with the Keeno Good Boys who control the east side. So he shoots his mouth off about how the Keeno Good Boys are no good at all and for two pins he will be round with his boys and cause a little premature death by allergic reaction to hot lead.

Well, this statement goes down with the Keeno Good Boys like swallowing so much glass, and Big Red Nid says if Gabby Haig so much as spits outside the west side, the Keeno Good Boys will be filling the champagne bottles with petrol and if a few happen to drop on Gabby Haig with the fuses lit, then it is just too bad. Gabby Haig says this is nothing but provocation, since no one is allowed to talk of cooling off guys except him. Of course, Ronnie the Boss does not take kindly to this kind of talk, since the west side is his territory and he does not want it blown to pieces while it is still producing such good returns, so he says that Gabby Haig is talking hypothetically and does not mean what he says. Now this I can believe, since Gabby Haig talks in such a way that very often no one can understand what he says in any case, and he might as well talk hypothetically as any other language.

Caspar the Wino listens to all this, and when he sees Gabby Haig slapped down by Ronnie the Boss he jumps in and says how Gabby Haig does not know beans, as Caspar the Wino controls the hardware and not Gabby Haig. What Gabby Haig says to this is not reported, but I will lay plenty of six to four that it is not polite.

Now all this is very worrying, as our part of town is slap between the west side and the east side, and the quickest way from one to the other is right smack through the middle. Personally, I have no desire to see black sedans loaded with Gabby and his boys come hurtling through, as a guy can get knocked down by such black sedans and there is no more chance of claiming off Gabby's insurance than out-drinking Ding-a-Ling Henry on a good day. Not to mention where the Keeno Good Boys will very quickly get the idea of taking out the black sedans before they reach the east side, which leaves them not much choice of where to do it. In fact, no choice.

This is all on my mind when I am with these guys and dolls in a big, empty speak down by the railway station. This speak is empty because it has worse beer than the One Tun, even if it is real beer and the One Tun is only Watneys Worst, and it is big because it is built that way. We go there because it is the only speak in Surrey where all the guys and dolls can sit down together, though personally I can sit down almost any place, and go to a

speak to drink beer. Well, I am sitting there thinking that once again I choose the worst of all the bad beers and that this speak will drive me to rum and coke before very long, such as five minutes, when Iron Maule suggests, very pleasant, that it is maybe a good idea if I go on a trip down on the west side. Well, I listen to Iron Maule when he says this, as he is not called Iron Maule for nothing. But I ask him if he knows what is going on down on the west side these days, and I also ask him if he is talking with Half-an-Ear Langford lately. But he takes no notice of these questions and says again he considers how it is a good idea if I go down on the west side. Well, I see I am going to get no sense out of him this evening, and turn away to tell Big Brian how I want a rum and coke this round. Big Brian falls over, as he is a sensitive soul who will faint when distressed by such things as a guy not wanting to drink beer, even bad beer. But that night I remember what Iron Maule says, and Iron Maule is not such a bad guy, at that.

Well, with one thing and another, I am soon round at the Peasant with Half-an-Ear Langford again and while his mouth is otherwise occupied drinking beer I manage to tell him that I want to go on a trip down on the west side. Naturally, Half-an-Ear thinks this is a very good proposition and says he will put me on the list right away, if I give him a fin. Now I am not so sure that I want to be on any list, especially if it costs a fin, but Half-an-Ear says that this is the way it has to be and if I am not put on the list, and do not give him a fin, I do not go down on the west side, and that is that. So I am put on the list with Spiny Dorey and Woolly-bear Pickersgill, which is not much for a fin.

Some days pass and nothing much happens, which is the general thing that happens, when I read in the papers how Ronnie the Boss makes some proposals to Big Red Nid. Now these proposals are very good for Ronnie the Boss and Big Red Nid, but the best I can say about them is that you can have them. What Ronnie the Boss proposes is like this: if any trouble starts there is no need to start on breaking up the speaks and numbers rackets and such enterprises on the west side or the east side, as there is plenty of room in the middle where they can fight it out. This disturbs me more than somewhat, and there are a number of prominent citizens in the middle who protest a lot as it disturbs them more than somewhat too.

Well, Ronnie the Boss does not like this sort of behaviour as it can only lead to trouble, but he is not such a big guy out of the west side and does wish to antagonise prominent citizens who do not live there. So he explains how he is talking hypothetically again and what he really means is if a couple of black sedans go out of the west side with Caspar the Wino and his boys, and a couple of limousines come out of the east side full of Keeno Good Boys, then naturally they are likely to meet in the middle, and if they are packing rods, which is more than likely and in fact is a dead cert, then someone is sure to let fly. This, he

says, is all he means. Well, there is at least one guy around here who thinks Ronnie the Boss does not know what he means, but of course I do not say so out loud as Ronnie the Boss has big ears and hears everything, and I do not want to annoy Ronnie the Boss, as I am by no means a prominent citizen.

Well, I guess it is all this talking hypothetically again, because Gabby Haig ups and says how there is a contingency plan and if the Keeno Good Boys begin to start to look as if they are planning to move out from the east side then he gets down there good and quick and tosses a few tactical pineapples around. And of course he does not toss these pineapples around actually in the east side, as this is provocation, but right close up so they can see real good what happens when guys step out of line.

When Caspar the Wino gets to hear this he leaps up and down and says how there is no such contingency plan, as he is in charge of plans and he never makes one like this. He says Gabby Haig is talking out of the back of his head, which is not such news to some of us, at that. Even Foot Holdstock does not say such things as Gabby Haig.

Of course, Ronnie the Boss cannot have this sort of thing going on as it undermines his authority, and maybe someone hauls off and places him in a sack just like the Peanut. And he cannot just go around saying that either Gabby is right or Caspar is right, because for one thing that means either Caspar is wrong or Gabby is wrong and if a top guy is wrong that undermines his authority too, and for another thing he does not know who is right in any case. So he says both of them are right. The way Ronnie the Boss explains it, when Caspar says contingency plan what he means is one of his plans for contingencies, whereas when Gabby Haig says contingency plan what he means is how he reacts in an emergency they do not plan for beforehand. It occurs to me that a guy who reacts by tossing a few pineapples around is about as safe to know as an earthquake, and probably less so, but I am very impressed by Ronnie the Boss's explaining, as I never hear anything like it.

Well, whether it is all this talk of pineapples or I do not know what, the next thing is Woolly-bear Pickersgill and Spiny Dorey both haul off and say how they do not wish to go down on the west side after all, and make Half-an-Ear cross them off his list. This upsets Half-an-Ear, as he already books up the trips and stands to lose a lot of scratch unless he can find some new citizens who want to take a trip down on the west side. So he starts asking various guys and dolls and from time to time I hear how A.L. West is thinking of going, or Slim Jim Barker, or even Slicker Hansen, but none of these guys get on Half-an-Ear's list. A doll who nearly gets on the list is Different Roz, who is called Different Roz because one thing you can say about Different Roz is that she is different. But she changes her mind at the last minute, which is not so different, at that.

Half-an-Ear is getting pretty desperate by now, as there is not much time left, and he considers dropping the whole thing.

But I say to him, no, hang in there kid, and then who should come along but Roly Poly Roger who wants to take a trip down on the west side. You should see Half-an-Ear then, as he looks like a guy who loses a nickel and finds a C note, and maybe he does, at that.

Now, Roly Poly Roger is a guy who is very roly and more than somewhat poly, who does not do much in the way of fanzines, but hangs around at cons and in fact organises more than his share of them. He is generally agreed to be a good guy, even though he is in the books racket and spends a lot of his time at cons hanging around in the book room selling books to young squirts who do not know better than to buy science fiction, and I must confess I buy the odd book from Roly Poly Roger myself, which only goes to show what sort of a book seller Roly Poly Roger is. Roly Poly Roger also goes to a lot of Star Trek cons and takes whole bundles of scratch off little Star Trekkies, and whatever else there is to take off little Star Trekkies, which is sometimes not much, the way I hear it. So you can see that Roly Poly Roger is one good con merchant.

Well, Roly Poly Roger and I are standing around in the street one day, talking of this and that and mostly about the trip down on the west side, when this black sedan goes by at high speed with Gabby Haig in the front seat by the driver, and Gabby Haig is waving a big John Roscoe out of the window like he does not care who sees it. The sedan screeches round the corner heading for the east side at about seventy miles per hour and leaves long black tyre marks on the road and a cloud of smoke in the air. Right behind is another black sedan and driving this is none other than Caspar the Wino, with a couple of his boys in the back seat. These boys are both hanging out of the windows with rods pointing in the general direction of Gabby Haig, and these rods are going like this:

"Bang! Bang!"

Now if there is one thing I do not like it is the sound of rods going bang! bang! as at most times this means there is hot lead flying around and about, and hot lead is none too particular about who it hits. So I dive down into a doorway and have a soft landing on top of Roly Poly Roger who gets there about half a second before me, and this is none too soon, at that, because as Gabby Haig goes round the corner, Caspar's boys start shooting across the angle, which is where we are standing just before.

Well, Caspar screams round the corner after Gabby, and the rods are still going bang! bang! and the both of them are headed for the east side. I confess I do not entirely understand what is happening, as I always consider Caspar and Gabby are on the same side, even if they do not like each other much more than Custer and Sitting Bull. But one thing I do know is that Big Red Nid is not the kind of guy who will stop to debate the fine points, but will send the Keeno Good Boys after the both of them.

Sure enough, not five minutes later, back round the corner comes Caspar and this time there is only one guy hanging out of

the back window with a rod, and he is shooting at a red limo where a Good Boy shoots back with an ugly machine gun, only his aim is worse than most and he takes out all the windows on the other side of the street, which does not worry Caspar's boy one bit. Next is Gabby Haig, who puts down his rod, or maybe he loses it, and is tossing pineapples at another couple of red limos. Now, it is tricky enough tossing pineapples in the right direction when you are standing still and so is the party you are tossing them at, but when you are in a sedan doing sixty-five round a bend and so is the other guy, then it is a dead heat with impossible that you actually hit the other guy. And so it is, as chunks of masonry go flying from the buildings and bits of road leap into the air, but the two limos keep going.

Then one of them pulls to a halt outside Maggie's Bar and two Good Boys dash inside carrying bottles, and if it is hooch in these bottles then I can only say that I never wish to taste it, as the Good Boys jump back in the red limo and Maggie's Bar takes off for heaven. Now, I never see just two Molotov Cocktails do this to a joint before, and start to wondering whether Big Red Nid discovers something new in the way of cocktails. It is only later I find out that Gabby Haig is using Maggie's Bar to store extra pineapples and Roscoes, which is a low trick even for Gabby. It is not cricket from Maggie either, as I am in Maggie's Bar most days.

Well, all hell breaks loose and guys are running for cover and pulling out rods all along the street. The citizens hereabouts are mostly peaceable guys, although they are not averse to giving you a punch in the snoot if they think you need one, but when they get riled they have a tendency towards violence, and there is nothing riles a guy more than being shot at. The red limo does not get ten yards before it is turned into a colander, which is apt to happen to a limo of any colour when half a hundred guys let loose with Betseys.

It goes all quiet then, except for one of the guys from the limo who moans a lot until Acid-Joseph picks him off for target practice. Of course, we are all waiting for the autos to come back again as there is no chance that Ronnie the Boss allows two of Big Red Nid's limos to roam around the west side, and sure enough back they come, the two limos chased by three black sedans.

Well, all the guys behind cover, which is all of them, haul off and let fly with their rods. Some of the guys shoot only at the red limos, and some shoot only at the black sedans, but I can tell you that most guys shoot at anything that moves, and personally I do not move a muscle. Not one auto gets through, which I guess comes as a surprise to Ronnie the Boss and Big Red Nid when they find out.

When the dust settles, which takes a long time as there is a lot of dust, I get up and brush myself off and I say to Roly Poly Roger like this:

"If we do not take this trip down on the west side pretty soon," I say to him, "there is no west side to see, but only a

lot of fallen down buildings, and we have our own fallen down buildings which are just as good."

"This is substantially correct," Roly Poly Roger says.

"On the other hand," I say, "now that Caspar the Wino and Gabby Haig are wiped out maybe there are no more shoot outs, as Ronnie the Boss certainly considers them bad for business."

"This too is not without foundation," Roly Poly Roger says. And we stroll round the back streets to the One Tun and get outside of a little of the beer there. I am still so shook up I even drink two pints of London before I realise it.

Well, a few days later when it is all back to normal again, except for the hole in the ground where Maggie's Bar once is, and no windows all along one side of the street, and a few holes in the walls, I find myself with Half-an-Ear Langford in the Peasant and I mention to him my thoughts on shoot outs and trips down on the west side generally, now that Gabby and Caspar are out of the way.

"Oh no," Half-an-Ear says. "Oh no. Do you not read the papers? Caspar the Wino and Gabby Haig are not in the three sedans which chase the Keeno Good Boys out of the west side," he says. "Ronnie the Boss is waiting for them when they come back and hauls them in. They are still around and, or so I hear, they do not like each other even more these days."

I put on a very glum face at this, and I am certain the glass of milk I drink for breakfast turns in my stomach.

"Look on the bright side," Half-an-Ear says. "Look at it this way. When it happens again, maybe the west side is the safest place to be."

THERE'S A FLY IN MY SWILL!

Well, I am just finishing off when I suddenly realise that there is this great pile of letters about the last DOT, including one from Harry the Gimlet which I fully intend to use this time round because otherwise he wants it back. Well, all along I really do wish to use this letter, or some of it, as it is fairly humorous and will probably cause one or two guys to crack a grin, though it probably falls short of belly laugh material, at that. But as it turns out, there is no room for it on this page, and I have little desire to type on another stencil. In fact, none. So I will have to send Harry his letter back after all.

But DOT 12, which comes out Real Soon Now, will probably have letters from other citizens in it, since if it comes out that soon I do not have the chance or inspiration to write much else for it, especially the inspiration.

This DOT and DOT Fiction Supplement come to you from
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for reasons which seem very good at the time although I do not precisely recall them right now.

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OR WE SEND
THE BOYS ROUND...