

## The York Rd Street Saga as told to Uncle E'Benn.

Never fear my brothers and sisters, E'Benn is nearly here. In exile now, the "Prince across the water" awaits his recall to take over as Spiritual Leader of Herospace. But let me tell the story in every lurid detail.

It was a few dreary days before Christmas. Herospace had lost it's sparkle.

The heroes of yesteryear had long gone but the memories lingered on. Will we ever see the likes of Ricky Manly again, they asked? A world authority on malt whisky, women and Betty's son, but not necessarily in that order.

James Hadleigh, a colossus indeed, departed now to understudy Freddy Boswell in Bread, the chance of tangling with Lilo Lil enough to ruin a promising career in engine electronics. The hair should have warned us. Why did Lucas lavish so much money on this man, grooming him for executive status, when a glance at his underpants would have shown his star potential.

And then there was Dob Bodd, a legend on his own drawing board. Man of the people; friend of Ron Mills. What more need I say?

Peter Skinflinters, the only man to have his wallet set in araldite.

Ricardo Quarterbrain, Tony Eaton, My Lord Aston, Steve Slowberry, - have I not made my point? All men of note, cast aside.

But all dangerous men, simmering in their winter of discontent. They met in a rude hut a few leagues from the Shaftmoor.

"The time is ripe", said E'Benn.

"And so are your socks" said Lord Aston seeking solace in a nosegay.

"Herospace suffers under the yoke of Baron Underdone. Seven days a week do they toil and far into the night do they labour.

The people cry out for deliverance."

"I can remember when life at Herospace was an endless tea break", sighed Tony Eat-on, licking his lips. "A return to regular work-breaks designed to stimulate the *raison d'être* of the whole ethos of Herospace, with plenty of cream buns, could be the basis of a take-over bid. Well that's what I think."

"A bloodless revolution."

"Would Ballcock co-operate? He is still a man of some influence and would take the workers with him", mused Slowberry.

"Promise him a new bike with a big ding-a-ling".

"Every man has his price!" "Overthrow the Underdone. "The concept is too much for me" said Paraquat.

"We must be ruthless. Men are being bought and sold. Rod Blunt, once a man of Quality is being tempted beyond endurance by the promise of an office inside the York Road Bistro and the status of chief chip measurer (once held by E'Benn the Bold). Rod Blunt, a man of some weight, who models underwear for Big Daddy, is being morally undone", said Dob Bodd.

And so after hours of discussion, a plan was forged and undercover agents sent into Herospace to make contact with likely dissidents.

Allan Wiseperson, clad in sequined jump suit with matching plimsolls, sat languidly at his desk, an elegant leg draped suggestively over a convenient rubbish bin. He was

brought back from thoughts of deep significance to the medium term future of Herospace by the arrival of a shadowy figure.

"Can I have a word mate?" said a broken figure of a man, dressed in a red jumper which barely covered his naked knees.

"Certainly my man", said Wiseperson ever ready to converse with the less fortunate. "Don't you recognise me?" asked the tramp-like figure. "It is I, E'Benn the beautiful."

"But you've had your jumper cleaned!"

"The Dole people hosed me down last week. They're good to you if you're quiet and don't make a nuisance" said this pitiful creature, who had once sat on the right hand of Ballcock, and rather enjoyed it.

"Would you like a crust of bread or a couple of second hand chips?" asked Wiseperson searching through his pockets. "No, I'm all right for food. Had my gruel this morning. It's you we are worried about. How you're being oppressed and all that. We want to liberate you, give you back your freedom."

Wiseperson needed time to think about this. Revolutions were tricky things. He might lose his seat on the editorial board of the Gazette, his last chance to make it to the top.

"How did you get in?" he asked, playing for time.

"I parachuted in, in the hours of darkness. See that hole in the ceiling, that was me. The others landed on the railway line. I'll let them in when we have arranged the uprising."

"What uprising?"

"I sent a letter to Ballcock, explaining it. Has he not -"

"Careful", hissed Wiseperson. "And what is this?" enquired a voice and a foot prodded E'Benn's body distastefully. "New cleaner, Mr Griffin sir. Just clearing away the rubbish".

"Thought we'd got rid of all that at the last redundancy" said the Griffin to his companion, a comely wench dressed in thigh high pvc jackboots and a designer Gestapo uniform with padded elbows.

Wiseperson could not meet her eyes. Gillian von Hazlehurst, breaker of men, all seeing, all knowing. Did she suspect the presence of E'Benn, Special Agent? That this pitiful specimen, emptying the bin at her elegant feet was really a superbeing, forged in the cauldron of Solihull Benefit Office, a product of Employment Training, and smelly feet.

"Scuse me your High and Mightyness" whined E'Benn "lest I brush against your wonderfulness". And then he was gone, clutching his sack of rubbish.

"What do you know about the hole in the ceiling?" demanded von Hazlehurst.

"Ceiling worms, that's what it was" said Wiseperson. "It's the hot summer."

"Could be", mused the Griffin. "It's been 'orrible 'ot."

E'Benn, his manly bosom all a tremble, scuttled like a free range ferret down an alley, seeking Ballcock, his next and most important contact. A narrow escape indeed. He had heard of Griffin and von Hazlehurst, supposedly employed as social workers to look after the under privileged of Herospace, but E'Benn knew better. MI6 or he was a fairy cake.

Ballcock was not fooled by the disguise. He recognised E'Benn immediately, looking down his cleavage, he saw the well remembered Margaret Thatcher tattoo glowing faintly on his grubby chest. The sign of a true believer.

"I got your letter. Decoded it last night. But I'm afraid revolution is out, unless I get an

office in the canteen like Rod Blunt, and a pretty secretary."

"You could have me again if you play your cards right sweetie", said E'Benn, fluttering his eyelashes.

"That clinches it. When do we start?"

"Not here ducky. I've got to learn to type first" said E'Benn sweetly.

"I mean the revolution, you pretty thing".

"Have you a core of determined, brave men ready to sacrifice everything for the cause?" asked E'Benn, licking his lips.

"Well there's Nutty Slack. He's good with a knife. And there's Fartkins, lethal with hot coffee at close quarters".

"Big Foot Meadows?"

"Gone adventuring. Found the lost Tribe".

"And Dippy? Crawl up a drainpipe he would. After a year in orbit with that monkey nothing scares him".

"And Longsword? Equipped for anything, including self induced gas attacks. And he's a thespian!" "Isn't that illegal?"

"Only if you're under 21".

"We will rise at dawn"

"I want no dirty talk here" said Ballcock slapping his wrist sharply.

So out of the morning mist came the freedom fighters, led by E'Benn the Red.

Honed to superficial fitness by ex-SAS sandwich maker, Vic the Needler (now of the A34), they surrounded Yorke Road. E'Benn was at the peak of his physical perfection, his buttocks clenched, he was a frightening sight.

He had come to rescue Herospace and when it was finished, he would give his body to the woman of the revolution, as first prize in a celebration raffle.

Luckily they didn't know this yet or things might have been so different.

In the Eagle's Nest, high above the gate house, Sir Davy Underdone was presiding over a meeting of his underlings, the cream of Herospace. Some of the cream had passed the sell-by date and was sweating slightly as their leader, affectionately known as the Fuhrer, cast a steely eye over each of them.

"Sir, I'd like, like to say -".

Becancall was such a man. Once he had walked tall in Herospace, a man of destiny. Now, despite being the proud owner of 100 Abbey National shares, there were doubts tearing at his vitals.

"Should we not talk with these people?"

"Talk! Talk! That is why we are only now rising from the ashes of yesteryear," intoned Underdone. "We shall impose the strategy of the market. If they do not toe the b----y line then they can go and work in the b----y Bull Ring!"

Betty's son nodded vigorously, nearly falling out of his carry cot. Had he not advocated such measures years ago? Had he not won a glorious victory over the peasantry. But he still wore the string of garlic round his neck as protection against Ricky Manly, lest the undead should ever return.

"He's out there, you know", said Lionel Bones, ever probing for a weakness. "I saw him.

Ricky Manly has returned."

"Oh dear, dear, dear", said Betty's son, a tear bouncing off his Mummy-care rattle.

"Please help me." And he climbed onto Underdone's lap to seek the consolation of a hug.

"There, there," said his master, absent mindedly hitting him on the head with a creatively modified FADEC.

"Why not use the Fireman missile with the Bobby Day warhead?" spluttered the Griffin.

"That should put the wind up these pinko revolutionaries".

"And me" said Becancall. "They are still in the experimental stage. Always likely to fizz around causing chaos when it was originally developed here at Herospace".

"But the Yanks reckon they can improve it a lot", said Lionel Bones.

"And now that we've only got limited use of Wigglesby the Magic Dragon, we will have to take a chance," said Underdone, but he was not that brave.

"We will talk first. Put the Doomsday missile on standby and, bring me Plantoid" instructed Underdone, "he shall be my gobetweeny."

They found Plantoid sitting in his cupboard dressed in his Father Christmas outfit. He was close to tears, having just failed his audition for the Christmas Party. Would he ever be the same again? Imprisoned by Wigglesby for years in a glass case and only allowed to go home after dark, he was still not completely cured.

"Tell E'Benn this," said Underdone. "If he sets a single smelly foot inside Herospace, I shall fire the Fireman missile (with Bobby Day warhead) into a cauldron of canteen curry and devastate the surrounding area. I care nothing for civilian casualties."

"But its Christmas," said Plantoid. "You can't be nasty at Christmas".

"Of course I can," said Underdone stamping his feet. "I like being nasty, even more than Les Codge! (Remember him dear reader?) "Get me a gross of flies, I want to pull their wings off".

Faced with such evil, even Plantoid could do nothing. He shrugged off his Father Christmas outfit and went in search of E'Benn and Ballcock.

The revolutionaries were all sat in the snow, clustered around a glowing brassier. It was E'Benn's, and they were contemplating dumplings for lunch.

"And Hall Green will be laid waste. Not a chip shop or Chinese take away still standing from here to the Solihull border," said Plantoid.

"Wholesale famine", said Ballcock. "Thousands starving. Allotments, gardens, contaminated with our curry, more deadly than plutonium, with a shelf life of a million years!"

And so they slunk away, the bitter taste of defeat under their armpits.

For E'Benn it was back to the Dole queue, his last chance of glory gone forever. For the others, there was not even that.

"I could have been the King of Herospace", E'Benn said out aloud. "I would have enjoyed grinding the peasants into the ground. I've still got my safety boots. Ideal for the job. I could have donated my body to the woman of Herospace.

I could have demanded plates and plates of extra soggy chips and not paid for them! I would have enjoyed power, ever so much."

Soon he was lost in the blizzard. A sad little man, destined now for oblivion or Employment training. Life was full of decisions!

Footnote!

E'Benn's feet are not really smelly, well, not much.

He will also not be donating his body to the heroic ladies of Herospace, so it's no good getting all excited, you'll just have to make do with what you can find. Sorry!