



A Sinister Sport

Leeds, 1973

It was nothing unusual, at least for Steve and his chosen three skinheads, to loiter in the sodium-lit night, on The Headrow or the streets around, waiting for some unwary mundane to pass them by to be followed to be relieved at knifepoint, or the threat of a kicking, of whatever money or possessions they carried or held. But it was for The Plumb, the young lad of slim physique and shaven head whose new swastika tattoo, on his forehead, still itched.

Plumb was a novice at this sporting game, and, knife ready, somewhat nervously waited for the test that would – that might – begin to make his name among Steve’s crew. It was not a long wait, that early evening of light drizzle where the slight warmth of late October had given way to the dreary coldness of November, and they – at Steve’s gesture – followed the middling aged suited briefcase holding man for only some yards when Plumb’s stiletto blade stuck him in the back. He groaned, slightly, before he fell, gasping – but they wasted no time on him, for only his money, his watch, any saleable goods mattered, and he was left there where the cold wet dirty pavement became a pillow for his face as they laughing scampered back to the safety of their den.

It was a single third floor room in a block of rented office rooms whose grimy small single un-openable window gave at least some view of the Infirmary across the street, and it was there, on the bare un-carpeted floor where thieved goods lay stockpiled almost to the ceiling, waiting, that they divvied up their share. Plumb got the cash, such as it was; and Steve and his crew the rest: a watch; a gold ring; the leather briefcase; perhaps a saleable newish wallet. But their value was incidental, purely incidental – at least that time.

Later, the darkness found them mischief-heading westerly, after a bevvvy of beer had been downed at their favourite haunt where the relative wideness of Woodhouse Lane gave way to the narrower streets that north-easterly lay to sedately tumble down in terraced houses toward that tall-chimney of the quaintly-named “Leeds Corporation refuse destructor” on Meanwood Road, and where in a nearby house Steve spent the occasional night in the confines of a stuffy garret, with young shop-girl Lesley. He did not know then – and would not have cared even had he known – that centuries before, and only a gunshot away, Royalist forces had been bloodily defeated at the Battle of Meanwood Valley during his ancestors’ Civil War.

So, steadily but never furtively, they – buoyed by beer, youth, hate, and pride – made their way to serried terraces southwesterly between Woodhouse Moor and Burley Road. At Steve’s instigation, Plumb knocked on the door of a house, and it was not long before a skinny young man in black leather jacket, dirty T-shirt and jeans, opened it. Plumb punched him in the face, and he fell over backwards to where a discarded newspaper lay upon a lino floor near and steps led upward to dank, small, upper rooms.

“That’s for grassing, you cunt!” Plumb shouted as the skinny young man tried to get to his feet.

But Plumb pushed him down before kicking his head three times, and the young man was unconscious when Steve and his crew entered.

Steve threw a leaflet over the prostrate now bloodied body before they all left, laughing. On the leaflet – only a swastika, the letters CoC, and the words: “Violence purifies and makes the man.”

The stolen car took them recklessly fast out from the city of Leeds to near where the rocks of Almscliffe Crag rose beyond the Harrogate road and gave, in daylight, views toward the Vale of York. And it was there on the

top of that rocky outcrop they assembled in that drizzle-filled darkness for Plumb to take his oath.

It was a simple oath – a personal pledge of loyalty to Steve, his comrades, his crew and their new Clockwork Orange Cult – and soon was over, so that they scampered, laughing, lustfully, satiated with feral life and memories of violence, down from their eerie to head back eastwards where Steve, as promised, had prepared for them a surprise.

The girls were waiting in that rented well-furnished well-cared-for Woodhouse terraced house above the fringe of Meanwood Ridge, and Mark, their pimp, greeted Steve – as the friend, and comrade, that he was – there where joss sticks perfumed the houseful-air and Slade's *Look Wot You Dun* played loudly, beatingly, through speakers wired to some Hi-Fi system, recently liberated from some city-centre store.

There was some dancing then – or what passed for dancing – among the crew and the girls until they paired off to upstairs rooms leaving only Steve, Mark, and Ruth. Ruth the dark haired – older than the others, whose young son was in the so-called care of Social Services; Ruth the voluptuous, who sat, skimpily if fashionably dressed, waiting curled up on a sofa; waiting, for Steve her favoured lover to take her to her bed. But it was to be nearly an hour before her desire became fulfilled, and so she sat and watched him as he and Mark schemed, plotted, and dreamed.

At first, their talk was of Eastman, the non-family traitor who had betrayed a friend to the Police. Would that warning of the evening suffice?

"If not – " Steve said harshly, and gestured death with his hand. They both knew that had Eastman been a part of their crew, or even if only the person he betrayed had been, then his fate of death would that night have been assured.

"Plumb? How'd he do tonight?" Mark asked.

"Good. He did well."

"Useful?"

"Yep. I'm going to team him up with Phil at the Depot. He starts there Monday. He'll be our runner. There's a shipment due Friday."

"Usual stuff?"

"Nope. Electrical goods, this time."

"I'll let Jamie know." Jamie was their fence, a small rather portly middle-aged man of vast experience and canny if mournful countenance who had thrived in the rationing post-war years and who, though well-known to the Police, had never ever been to Court, for although his second-hand emporium in a back-street by the Wharf regularly received visits from The Plod, they never ever found anything suspicious, or stolen. Or, at least, that they could prove was stolen.

"Usual divvy?" Mark asked.

"Yep – but small bonus for Plumb."

"Gesture?"

"Yep. He might even spend it here!" Steve laughed.

So they talked, laughed, planned, plotted, schemed, until at last Steve came to take her hand, leading her gently – almost lovingly – toward and into her room where they lay, naked, entwined for quite some time, gently touching, kissing, feeling the warmth, the soft human warmth, of each others' bodies. It was for this – for such as this – that she almost loved him. Almost: had she not by the experience of her past stopped herself. And so they lay together, warmly warm, and silent, with only the distant sound of music below; the sounds of their lips touching; their breath breathing; and his fingers feeling her moist waiting wetness.

At first, he had seemed such a contradiction to her. But she no longer cared. It was his company and his body that she craved; even needed; and she would listen to him speak, for hours, in his almost accentless voice as he spoke of his plans, his visions, his passions, his theories, his interests and his hopes. Thus did she listen to him again later that night after their passions had flowed and flowed to ebb with the passing hours of their

intimate, sexual, embrace.

"It's the essence of the sinister, you see," he was saying to her as she lay naked, propped up on pillows in her bed, smoking one of her small cheroots while soft light from a bedside lamp bathed them and the glow of Dusk began to dully glow, as dark retreated beyond that window of their world.

"Experience. Going to, beyond, your limits. Transgressing laws, all limits. Learning. Exulting in life, and treating the mundanes as the idiots, the expendables, the resource, they are."

Then, quite suddenly, his tone changed. "I'd like you to leave, here, this house," he said. "And stay with me. We'll get somewhere."

"Don't be daft!" she said in her broad Yorkshire accent, and slightly laughed.

"I mean it. I want you to get more involved. Assist me."

"You're serious, aren't you?"

"Yep. Very."

"But I don't know anything about the Occult and Satanism."

"You don't have to. They're just words. Words which obscure the essence. Useful – sometimes. But otherwise irrelevant. Like the current name my crew use – CoC. I'll change it; maybe soon for something maybe permanent. It was only temporary, anyways, that outer name."

She finished her cheroot, and lit another one, and he continued.

"It's essentially just a way of living. A way of life. It's not really about rituals and all that crap that the mundanes think it's about. It's about us – individuals – excelling; enjoying. Taking risks. Changing ourselves. Evolving. Exulting. About creating a new way of life; freeing ourselves from the tyranny of laws; from the tyranny of the Police; of governments; of The State. Being ourselves."

"And making money," she laughed.

"Of course!"

"But -" she began to say.

"Mark agrees."

"You what?"

"About you leaving here. He – and I – want you to take over running the girls."

"So what's he going to do, then?"

"He's gonna open a new branch of our venture, in York."

"I see."

"Naturally, I'll have some lads stay here to look out for the girls."

"Naturally!" And she laughed again.

"What'd you say, then?"

Aroused, she said all that then needed to be said with her body, until satiated again, she lay beside him as, outside, the Sun rose into a strangely cloudless early Winter's sky.



There was much that Steve wanted to do, and he had invited Plumb to join him for a drink in their favoured Pub in Woodhouse. Ruth was there, in the dimness of that traditional haunt, and Plumb could not help but ogle her breasts as he sat down beside Steve. But he knew better than to let his gaze linger or address her by

name, and so he sat sipping his pint of beer.

“You’ve got someone interested, I hear?” Steve said to him.

“Yeah, mate of mine. Will.”

“Handy?”

“Shipleys skins.”

“Enough said, then.”

“You wanna meet?”

“Yep, set it up. It’ll be a test.”

Plumb smiled. “Like mine?”

“Yep.” And both Steve and Ruth smiled. For she had come a long way in the two weeks since she and Steve had shared a house.

That day of the test was a mournful if British one – for weather. For the wind was cold; the sky overcast and dull with cloud; and the slight persistent drizzle of that middle morning lent meaning to Julius Caesar’s long dead desire to live in far more sunnier healthier climes. Steve was there, with Plumb, and Will, the heavily-tattooed, waiting in the stolen car outside the shop. It was a kind of non-descript shop, selling jewellery, not quite in the city centre, and its décor and display seemed as if to say that its owner could not quite decide upon the intended clientèle. For there were some quite expensive items, among the rings and watches, and then some much cheaper tat while a middling assortment of second-hand items completed the rather mixed collection.

“Ready?” Steve asked Will, as the young skinhead of stocky build sat in the backseat of the car, clutching a sawn-off shotgun.

“Let’s go!” Steve said, and he and Will were swiftly out, masks on.

Steve pushed the one male customer aside, his right hand brandishing his revolver, while smashing displays with a hammer.

“Fill it!” Steve demanded of the customer, as Will thrust a small bag at him, and – obedient, like the trained mundane he was – he obeyed, stuffing it full of rings and watches. And then they were gone, outside, to where Plumb waited, ready and revving the car.

Ruth’s old haunt claimed them, after the necessary change of outfits and cars, above the fringe of Meanwood Ridge, and Will and Plumb sat on a sofa in that well-incensed house while Steve inspected the haul.

“Good,” he said. Then, to Will: “You’ll get your cut in a couple of days, OK?”

“Yeah, sure,” Will said.

“You got a job?” Steve asked him.

“Nah, only thieving,” and he laughed, showing two teeth broken from fights.

“From now on, no freelancing, understand?” Steve said.

“Sure.”

“You do only the jobs we give you.”

“OK”

“Got some regular work, if you’re interested,” Steve said. “Right up your street.”

“Yeah?”

“Protecting our assets, here. Could be a rough, at times. Oh, yeah of course, you haven’t met them, have you,” Steve smiled. He called out, and, one by one, Ruth’s girls came in, all five of them.



Introductions over – as was his hour with the girl of his choice – Will was taken in a convoy of three crew cars amid the light of that day, such as that light was, to the rocks of Almscliffe Crag which rose beyond that Harrogate road and which gave, in better daylight, views toward the Vale of York. And it was there, on those topmost now rain-spattered rocks, that he gave his solemn pledge of loyalty to that crew.

“You’re family now,” Steve said. “Understand?”

“Sure.” And they all knew he meant it.

“We have some simple rules. First, we don’t betray our own,” Steve said to him. “Anyone who does is killed. No questions; no quarter; no delay. You’re in this for life, and if you ever show enmity towards us, your family, we’ll hunt you down and kill you.”

Steve paused for a moment before continuing. “Second, we all have equal shares of whatever we take or whatever our enterprises earn. No favouritism. Third, we care for our family. We respect them. We look after them; look out for them. We will risk our own lives for them, if required. All of them – women, children; they’re all our comrades. If you disrespect any member of our family, our kindred, you’ll suffer – you’ll be put on trial, before us, you’ll say your piece, and be judged and, if necessary, punished.

“Fourth, it’s the mundanes and us. Our folk, our kindred, our band of comrades, our family, against the mundanes. The mundanes and their property, all they have, are our resource. Fifth, the laws of the mundanes are irrelevant to us. The government, and especially the Police, are our enemy, servants of the mundanes – we expect no favour from them, no quarter, and we give them no favours, no quarter. Understand?”

“Sure,” Will said. And they all knew he meant it.

“Also, there’s only one leader, one chief. Currently, it’s me. You got a grievance, something to say, you come to me, say it to me to my face, in full earshot of others. We don’t ever talk about one of our brothers, one of sisters, behind their backs. If you’ve got a grievance against me, you face me with it, in full earshot of others.

“If you ever have a dispute with any member of our family, our crew, you bring it out into the open. If we can’t settle among ourselves, then you’ll settle it between the two of you, by a fair fight.

“If you don’t like my leadership, challenge me for it, openly. If necessary, we’ll settle the matter by a duel with deadly weapons. So, for leadership it’s a duel; for other disputes, a fair fight, in front of comrades.

“There’s no leaving your family. You’re part of us now for life; you’re our brother, for life. If you want to settle down with someone, or get married, she has to be either one of us, or become one of us. No exceptions. Same with our women-folk, our sisters – if they are serious about someone, wanting to settle down with them, maybe even get hitched, then he has to be either one of us, or become one of us. No exceptions. Same if you move away for some reason – you’re still family; still bound by your oath; our rules; and we may ask for your help, anytime; just as you can ask for our help, anytime.”

“And one last thing,” Steve said. “We have our own, small, tattoo. Our mark.” And he smiled, saying, “although I don’t know where you’re going to put it.”

Steve laughed, Will laughed; everyone laughed, for Will’s arms, hands and neck were already covered with tattoos.



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