

Memoirs of a Buckingham Biker

• CHAPTER 1 •

Walking unsteadily along the high street, he looked as though he had been dragged through a hedge backwards. Un-brushed long dark hair hung straggly and truth be told, it was a job to tell which was the front. If it was not for the occasional glimpse of a nose tip and a flash of nicotine stained tombstone teeth, it would never be known. And as for his eyes, the bright blue appeared so much different surrounded by a mass of red veins. The jeans he had worn all week were much less blue by that stage, well tarnished and held a distinctive individual aroma.

From the familiar selection of wooden hand stalls that lined either side of Market Hill, he guessed it must be Saturday morning in 'Buckingham'. If that was Saturday, the day before must have been Friday. But of that, he could not be totally sure. In his alcohol soaked existence, anything could have happened.

That behaviour though, was nothing new, far from it, in fact. His young body had already taken a pounding for several years. Smoking at the age of ten, although it was not until two years later, did he accidentally inhale the stuff. Discovering beer at twelve years old was indeed, one of the worst things that could have happened to him. But then, that was down to the influences and circumstances in his life.

There had been problems at home for years. The male parent was never seen as a father figure by Garry. He was always at the helm of constant arguing, womanizing, thieving and more. Not a person to look up to at all. Especially on those couple of occasions he had witnessed his mother receiving physical abuse during those drunken rages.

When he was at an age he thought he could help defend his mum, Garry quickly learned he could not. One single punch to his chest had sent him flying across the room, only to strike the wall before either foot could touch the ground. That type of love he could well do

without. However, unbeknown to young Jones, he had chosen an escapism that was very familiar to him. The very thing which caused so much trouble within the family.

Squinting from the sunlight, this fifteen year old lad had no idea where he had slept the previous night. He just knew he had to make it to the light blue and white painted building just past 'Woolworths'.

There was a certain sanctuary to be found within the confines of 'The Whale Public House'. Having a surname like Jones, it only followed that his nickname was going to be, Jonah. The fact that he drank in the Whale was coincidental. How much he drank in the Whale, was substantial yet inconsequential. Prepared to down anything to soften his troubles and blot out the pains of reality.

Those using the back bar never used the front door, although they could have done. Straight through the front bar, along a short corridor, past the toilets, up a couple of internal steps and in through the half glazed door on the right. The front bar was where, *normal* people went to enjoy a drink or two. That time on a Saturday however, was where a group of male pensioners congregated. Sat huddled together with their half pint mugs, studying the horse form towards the newspapers well-thumbed back pages.

Those who used the back bar were of a certain type. Young leather jacketed bikers.

Between the pub and 'Sketchley's Dry Cleaners', was an old coaching inn entrance. That led to a remarkably small area at the rear where a few converted stables were used for storage.

This proved ideal parking for the slim vehicles of the present clientele. On busy nights, those who could not find room back there, would park on the lower side of 'Market Hill'. Beside the silver painted tubular bars, overlooking a multi stepped feature, leading down to a layby.

That shallow slip road was, just a few years before, used as 'Buckingham Bus Station'. In reality, it could hold two, maybe three coaches at a push. The new station was sited at the furthest end of the 'Cattle Market' further along 'High Street'. Inner green metal railings,

which had once held animals, had been removed and a blue shelter installed. That had really brought the town up to date. There was still room for the same amount of public transport vehicles, it just meant those waiting did not get wet when it was raining.

Several others had unusually beaten Gary to the bar that morning. Focusing in, there were a couple of mopeds he recognised, one yellow and the other blue. They belonged to fellow school mates, Martin Blackwell and Doc. Well, at least he would have some company for the next couple of hours.

The two thirty pm closing time was strung out until nearly ten to three, allowing that one extra pint to be consumed. The first pint was hard to squeeze down, almost an hour that took. Gary always hated it when that happened. He saw it as a massive waste of precious drinking time. However, it was usually the penalty of a heavy night's partying. But, not only had he very soon caught up with the amount of drinks consumed by his companions, he had indeed surpassed them. Not because he liked the stuff either. It was the effect he longed for. An alternative reality was what he needed. One where he could be brave, confident, and strong with the popularity he so desperately sought.

Eventually, Gary reluctantly emerged from the sloping passageway surrounded by his usual chums. Jerry Royal, Geoff Campion and both moped owners, Martin and Ray 'Doc' Dixon. All had their start of the weekend fill of beer, except for Gary of course.

There were no girls from the nearby 'Thornton Collage Convent of Jesus and Mary' to cheek with that afternoon. That was disappointing. They always had a good rapport with those crisp uniform wearing rascals, who were not all as sweet and virginal as was generally thought.

The boys were merely big children who enjoyed nothing more than fun. And more often than not, the straw boaters were just too tempting not to pinch and try on. Maybe, when the headwear was returned, it was the reward of a kiss they enjoyed a lot more than anything else?

Moseying into 'Woolworths', they headed straight for the record section. A lot of time could be lost there just flicking through the selections of 45 pence singles and £1.99 albums.

It was only a year or two before, Jonah would buy the little green booklet of song lyrics. A weekly issue that only cost a few pence, but was invaluable to youngsters. That always came in useful when singing along with the radio chart show on a Sunday or 'Top of the Pops' on BBC1 Thursday evenings.

That was something which used to annoy his mother. She so wished she had never bought that damned oversized stereo box for him. Somehow he discovered an outlet on the side which allowed a microphone to be plugged in and turn the whole thing into a mobile speaker. Yawping out funny remarks, as he thought, believing himself to be the part time Disc Jockey from along the road. No, the whole thing was a mistake, but she still tolerated it.

Slade, Sweet, Mud, Status Quo, etc were the norm and he enjoyed that glam rock music a lot. He also found himself getting a taste for classical music too, from television adverts more than anything else. But it was impossible to write Bach and Beethoven on his jeans beside Led Zeppelin and Deep Purple. So those urges were put into the background and went with the flow.

When checking out the hits became boring, the five friends sauntered around the rest of the shop. It was a reasonably large store, selling virtually everything from cheese to paint, books to clothing.

Gary liked Woolworths. Three of his very short lived girlfriends had worked part time on the dairy counter there. And sure enough, before his eyes he saw another female schoolmate earning a little extra money to improve her life. Bending over cleaning the front of the chilled cabinet, was a girl from the year above Jonah.

Being a young man, he had not yet learned how to think.

The loud slap was heard all round the store and heads turned from all corners. It had seriously

stung his hand, so what it had done to the poor girl's bottom he could not help but wonder.

The unsuspecting girl, who flung herself upright with amazing speed, was stunned at the sudden act. Glaring at her attacker, she softened and forgave him immediately as she knew he meant no harm.

"I saw that! I am going to report you for assault!", claimed the tall thin manager who had been following the leather clad boys.

All five turned to look, then nonchalantly ignored him.

"Leave my store, now! I am calling the police!", he threatened.

"Do you know the number?", Gary asked helpfully.

Storming off to his office, mumbling under his breath as he strode, the black suited man was determined to make an example of the weekend riff raff.

"I'm really sorry. I didn't mean to hurt you" Jones was very apologetic as he was only ever out for fun.

"I know. It's all right But it did bloody hurt!", the red faced female informed him.

"I could kiss it better", he smiled hopefully.

"No you couldn't", she almost laughed.

"Well, not from here, obviously. I'd have to get down on my hands and knees"

Indicating with both hands, he added, "...But with all these people looking on It's never the same with people looking on, don't you find?"

There was nothing like embarrassing people to get a few laughs.

It was the same when they sometimes went into 'Boots' over the road. A group of cheeky boys, asking about the size and qualities of condoms openly in the shop, usually sent female customers scurrying out. But to give the Saturday girl her due, she always coped with it very well.

Grabbing Gary's arm, the 'Woolworth's' girl dressed in pink gingham suggested, "You really

had better get out of here” She gave him a hard push. “He will do it. He will call them”, she added worriedly. He was not boyfriend material but there was something about him that was hellishly likeable.

Jonah blew her a kiss as they wandered off on their escape.

Around the other side of the supermarket they met two other school mates, also budding bikers, Anthony Cost and Julian Chudworth, otherwise known as ‘Chuddar’. They were lingering around the women’s lingerie section. That pair spent more time here on a Saturday than ladies did all through the week.

Martin nudged his friends arm. “The manager cometh”, he sneered, brushing the wayward quaff of collar length blonde hair from his face.

All seven lads turned to stare.

Sure enough, the senior staff’s bobbing balding head could be seen above the shelving units, as he traipsed the aisles in search of the disrespectful teens.

All waited patiently for him to arrive. Some picked their nose and smeared it down new clothing, while others lit up cigarettes.

Anthony was eating a pie he had picked up at the cold counter. He had a habit of doing that when he was hungry, then handing in the empty wrapper at the till.

“I’ve called them! I’ve called them!”, he cried triumphantly. Hovering at the alleyway end, he felt far too wary to approach now the number had multiplied.

“And don’t go near those clothes with your cigarettes”, he warned.

“Oh, shut up and fuck off, you annoying little twat”, Geoff growled.

Clearly, there was going to be some interesting results in his upcoming English exam.

“The police have been phoned! They are on their way!”

“You can use a phone? Well done! Give that monkey a banana”, laughed Martin, which inspired a chuckle from the others.

Ignoring the remark, the tall man walked off, asking other members of staff to watch them. It was young part time girls, who could not care less, who were entrusted with that task.

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