

AT ANGELS TEN RED LEADER

By *Sanners Gow*

I wis drivin throu Banff ae day and saa a sign sayin there wis a carboot at the Tesco car park. I drew inaboot an there wis an affa boorach o cars sellin aa the odds 'n' eyns fowk wanted rid o. I'd a raik about lookin at the books but they were maistly Mills & Boons or that kind o thing, nae interest tae me ava. I cam upon this boot an the auler wifie hid books mair tae my likin so I'd a gweed raik among them. I got a twa'r three that interested ma.

The wifie said "It looks like ye'll be a meenitie or twa. Wid you look aifter the stall for me?" She added "I'm needin tae pooder my nose!"

I wis gey surprised at this because she didna ken me fae Adam an tae leave me in charge o her stall wi some gey expensive lookin ornaments put me aff my styter. She must've seen ma predicament and said "I winna be lang and ye've got an honest face."

I tellt her I didna mind lookin aifter it for her but speired fit wid happen if onybody wanted tae buy something? She laached an replied "Michty min are ye blin? The prices are on aathing."

She pointed tae the ice cream tub "There's change in there!" An wi that she wis aff towards the shop. I got a fyowe mair books and saw some mair aneth the table so I'd a raik there ana. I opened ae box an inside wis a sheep's wool jaicket o the kine ye see in aul war films.

"Michty this wid dee ma fine for vrochtin in the wids!" I tried it on and it fittit like a glove.

"It suits ye!" This wis the wifie back.

I tellt her the jaicket wid be good for the winter. I did a twirl like a gype an she teen a richt laach tae hersel. I speired at her foo muckle she'd nott for it?

"Och it's jist an aul thing and it wis good o ye lookin aifter my stall so wid a fiver be ower muckle?"

Stories in the Doric from the Monastery of Fable

I handit ower the siller richt awa plus one fifty for aa the books. As I left I noticed this aul mannie sittin in the front passenger seat o her car. He wis glowerin at ma wi an ill-naitert face. A wee bittie put oot at this an mair than puzzled as tae fit wye she got me tae look aifter her stall fin the aul man wis sittin there, I jist shrugged my shooders and headed back tae my Landie. I threw the jaicket an the books ontae the seat and left tae gyang hame tae Macduff.

I showed the jaicket tae my mither and she said it wis fae the war and she mined the pilots weerin them. There wis a tear on the richt side and it hid been sortit but my mither didna like the dark broon stain on the inside. She said it lookit like bleed that hid been washed aff at some point and it wis in line wi the repaired tear. She tried sair tae get the stain oot but nithing she could dee wid get rid o it. But onywey it wis aaricht, stain or no and I wore it in the wids and richt fine it wis.

About the hinmaist week o October I wis takkin doon a puckle firs fae the side o the main road that were gettin in the wye o high sided larries. I'd feenished vrocht for the day and put my saw an chines in the back o the Landie. Fin I gid intae the cab, the Landrover started tae rock back an forrit as if bein buffeted by a strong wind.

"Strange!" I stepped oot o the cab an there wis hardly a braith o ween. Ower the next couple o wiks the same thing happened a fyowe mair times. I jist didna ken fit wis causin it but I jist caa'd awa an ignored it. Ae nicht though comin hame late things got a lot worse.

I wis comin doon the Slacks at Keilhill fin the buffetin started eence mair but this time I thocht somebody hid thrown a haanfae o chuckies at my motor because I heard the pitter patter o them as they hut the side o the Landie. I stoppit and reversed back tae far I thocht the steens hid been thrown fae but nae a sign o onybody could I see for it wis comin doon dark. I wis fairly gettin puzzled about fit wis gyan on even tae the extent o checkin oot the suspension o my Landie.

For a fyle aifter that nithing happened an I thocht the grease I'd pitten in the suspension hid fixed the problem. Aye but it wisna tae laist because ae nicht as weel as the usual buffetin an chuckies hittin the side o my Landie I saw flashes like lichtnin.

Stories in the Doric from the Monastery of Fable

The buffetin got as bad it wis like tae pit ma aff the road. The thumpin an bangin at the side o my Landie wis unreal an fin I got hame I checked oot the bodywork tae see if there wis ony damage. But apairt fae the normal bashes an dints ye'd expect fae a vehicle that spent maist o its life in the wids there wisna a mark.

About a wik later I'd been takkin a puckle trees doon up the Cullen wye for the Hydro. Big bonny beech trees they were but as they were ower near the power lines they hid tae come doon. I vrocht late sneddin the branches an cuttin them intae cloggies (that wis een o ma perks I got aa the limbs tae masel). I planned tae tak the bogie up wi ma neist day an load up. My mither wid be fair kinichtit wi the beech cloggies for they burned like a cannell. On the wye hame tae Macduff the bangin an flashin startit again at this side o Portsoy but even mair coorse than afore. I realised by noo that something far fae richt wis happenin. I didna ken if I should stop the Landie an rin awa or jist sink the tackit an hope it wid stop.

In the event the decision wis teen oot o ma hands fin a almichty bang an something came throwe the driver's door an punched ma fair in the richt side knockin ivvery inch o braith fae ma. There wis mair flashes and things hittin the Landie but I'd better things tae worry about as a tearin pain tore at my intimmers. Fin I put doon ma hand I could feel the bleed pumpin ower it. "Some bastard his shot ma for Christ's sake!" By this time I could feel my heed begin tae sweem and my een got affa blurry but even throwe the haze I kent nae tae stop because faivver hid shot ma micht come an finish the job. I vaguely mind keepin tae the richt side o the road then the next thing I kent I'm in a hospital bed wi tubes stickin oot o ma aa ower the place.

A doctor came inaboot an speired foo I wis feelin but my reply made nae sense tae me so I dinna ken fit it sounded like tae him. He jist smiled and left. Ower the next couple o days I managed tae get up and aboot but ma side wis affa sair. The police came tae tak a statement. They'd found my Landie crashed intae the gates o the Roads Department's yard at Boyndie and mysel tryin tae climm the high gates for some reason. So I tellt them fit hid happened and that some bugger hid shot ma.

I couldna explain why I'd been tryin tae climm the gate because I mined nithing aboot that. This startit a big search o the area but nithin wis found. The Landie hid mair holes in it than a sieve and they said I wis lucky tae be

Stories in the Doric from the Monastery of Fable

alive. The police that found me hid pushed dressings they cairriet in their first aid kit intae the hole in my side then rushed me tae Chalmers Hospital. The doctor that saved my life cam tae see me. His faither wis a doctor at Banff but on the nicht I wis brocht in he wis fullin in for his faither. He'd jist cam hame fae a tour o duty in Afghanistan and spottit immediately that I'd shrapnel wounds and hid operated tae stop the bleedin. Athoot that I'd be in a box. Of coorse I thankit him for my life and we got tae newsin aboot fit hid happened. I tellt him aa the things I couldna tell the police (aboot the strange flashes and bangs ower the past couple months). I thocht he'd laach at ma but he didna. Instead he handit me a copy o that week's Banffie sayin "Read this!"

The Banffie hid run the story aboot the mystery surrounding the shooting on the road atween Portsoy an Banff and aboot me,how ill I wis blah blah but it wis the eyn o the article that made the hairs on the back o my neck staan up. The Landrover had been found crashed into the gateway of the Roads Department's yard at Boyndie which had once been the hospital for the old wartime aerodrome nearby. A lot o pennies startit tae faa intae place at this revelation but I kept it tae masel. Eventually I made a full recovery fae my wounds.

The neist year I wint back tae the carboot that wis held the same time each year tae see if I could find the wifie that hid sellt ma the jaicket. By good luck she wis there wi her stall and I wint inaboot an got newsin tae her. I speired her aboot the jaicket so she tellt ma it wis her faither's. He'd flown Mosquitoes fae Boyndie during the war deein sweeps across the North sea tae attack German convoys aff the coast o occupied Norway.

She tellt ma on one attack they'd came under heavy fire fae a German flack ship and hid been badly damaged. His navigator hid been killed and her faither badly wounded but somehow he'd managed tae get back and hid made a crash landing at Boyndie.

Ma hairt by this time wis gyan like a trip haimmer. I could hardly spik but I managed tae compose masel lang eneuch tae speir "Far aboot wis yer faither woundit?"

She pointed tae her richt side and said a lump o shrapnel fae the flack hid made a hole the size o her fist intae his side.

Stories in the Doric from the Monastery of Fable

So I tellt her aathing about fit hid happened tae me even tae showin her the fist sized scar in my side. But fin I tellt her about the aul mannie sittin in her passenger seat glowerin at ma fin I left wi the jaicket she got gey upset. She teen a photo fae her handbag an showed it tae ma sayin this wis teen a couple years afore he died.

“Aye that’s the man richt eneuch! He seemed affa angry an glowered at ma!” The woman hid tae sit doon on the tailgate o her car an I thocht she’d pass oot aathegither. She then tellt ma that her faither hid ayewis said that fin he died he wintit his Irvine fleein jaicket draped ower his coffin. In the event she’d forgotten aa about his wish and by the time she remembered it wis ower late. She’d kept his jaicket for years but hid thocht that somebody could get the gweed o it so last year hid decided tae sell it at the carboot.

Onywywe atween us we decided tae gie her father his wish and approached the cooncil. Of course we’d tae tell them the reason as tae fit wye we nott the grave opened an tae oor surprise they listened wi a sympathetic ear. Permission wis grantit and on the appointed day the grun opened at Myrus Cemetery Macduff.

Baith o us stood there as the lads cleared the earth awa and checked the coffin wis still in ae bit. By gweed luck aathing wis fine and we went forrit tae pit the jaicket doon the hole. The woman turned tae me sayin “Since you suffered maist because o that jaicket wid you like tae pit it in place?”

Takin it fae her I gaed doon intae the grave and placed it on the coffin and tae this day I’m sure I heard radio static and voices fae the past chatterin awa and one voice as clear as a bell say -

“This is red leader at angels ten!”

This is Johnny Hutchison’s story. (1980-2008)