

Smallholder Sid



By Richard Barr

**Sid takes the law into his own hands –
and gets more than he bargained for!**

*Continuing the adventures of the Harrowing Times drinking trio –
Allotment Holder Alice, Farmer Fred and Smallholder Sid.....*

It was a Goldilocks evening, neither too hot nor too cold, balmy and full of the soft scent of the wildflowers that lined the path. They were walking hand-in-hand as lovers do. He looked a little awkward in his ill-fitting jacket and badly tied tie. The soft wind was gently lifting her slightly pink hair. They could not be described as young lovers. "Mature lovers" might be a kind way to put it. They were enjoying the evening and each other's company.

They came to a little track off to the left.

"Do you think he'll mind if we go down there?" he asked.

"No surely not. We've done it several times before and it's a shortcut to the river Ant. He'll be fine about it."

They wandered along. The night was drawing in. The night shift birds were beginning to make their eery noises. She was startled by the screech of a nearby owl and clung to him. He rather hoped she might be startled again as they passed under a towering beech tree when.....

....suddenly from nowhere there was a crash and they both found themselves on the ground covered by a huge net. They struggled to get out but could not find the end of it.

A few moments later there was a loud shout and a voice said:

"Caught you at last you thieving trespassers. Just you stay there while I call the police."

Although the voice was loud it had a familiar ring to it. They both had no doubt who was shouting at them. She spoke first:

"What the hell are you doing Sid?"

The voice came again: "You're trespassing. I'm going to bring the full force of the law onto you."

She spoke again: "Sid it's us. You have just brought the full force of a bloody big net on top of us."

The angry man then changed his tune: "Alice is that you?"

"You're damn right it is. And this is Fred. We were going for a walk along your path as we've done lots of times before and we reckoned you wouldn't mind - considering how many drinks we have bought you at the Cowpat and Fly."

All of a sudden Sid burst out laughing. He explained that he had been suffering from people stealing his spades and rakes. He was just fed up with all the endless thefts. There were no police within miles of here so he had decided to take matters into his own hands and he was going to catch 

the buggers.

“Well we’re not ‘the buggers’” said Fred. “We’re your mates and we don’t expect you to capture us when we go for an evening walk. Besides don’t you know anything about false imprisonment? Even if we were stealing your apples or your rusty rake you have no right to capture us like wild animals. You’re bloody lucky it was us that ended up in your net because even a hardened burglar would be able to sue you to kingdom come for what you have done tonight.”

Speaking more sentences than he normally does in a month of visits to the Cowpat and Fly, Fred continued:

“Alice and I were just discussing the price of parsnips and planning the next rhubarb crop when this happened. Now I have forgotten what we decided and it’s going to be your fault if the rhubarb doesn’t flourish next year.”

“Err well maybe I was a bit hasty. Sorry and all that. Let’s get you out of there.” He lifted the edge of the net and an even more dishevelled Fred emerged from underneath. It also did no favours to Alice’s pink hairdo (which she had spent hours perfecting earlier in the day).

The following Saturday the trio met again in the snug of the Cowpat and Fly. It was a jovial evening for Alice and Fred because every single pint of Old Fart was paid for by Sid.

They savoured the experience because they well knew that they were never going to have that opportunity again. While they were enjoying Sid’s hospitality, he told them about some of his other plans to deter burglars. He was going to wire up the doors to his barn (which conveniently were made of metal) and run 240 V through them so that anyone who touched them would get a very nasty shock. He also planned to park his ramshackle vehicles up against the door so that they too would deliver an impressive jolt to anyone who touched them. He was going to take a leaf out of the Winnie the Pooh books and dig several deep Heffalump traps to help catch “them buggers”.

Fred and Alice warned him sternly not to do anything of the sort. He probably would not deter burglars but he could injure or kill them. That was just not worth it for the price of a rake. They assured him that they would be very unlikely to visit him in prison and from now onwards they wanted him to promise that there will be no more traps of any kind, no electric shocks and certainly no nets falling from the trees. He looked disappointed but eventually he nodded which was the closest you would ever expect to a promise from Sid. ♦

Slightly serious legal note.

Don’t!

Taking the law into your own hands is never a good idea. Far better to lose the odd rake than your liberty.

For more silliness buy a copy of Richard’s book *The Savage Poodle* (get it on Amazon or contact Richard on Richard.barr@paston.co.uk for details. Price now £7.99) or listen to him every month or so on the Chrissie Jackson mid-morning show on BBC Radio Norfolk (when he tries to be a little more sensible).