



THE VIBRATORIAL

Your special Christmas gift, a special one-off festive Vibrator.

Okay Christmas came and went, and frankly I just couldn't get my shit together. Consider this a Christmas leftover a bit like those scraps of turkey you probably still have in your fridge waiting to be formed into succulent pithiviers (*see later recipe section).

I know you all thought and probably hoped Vibrator was dead and buried, but if you've seen any zombie films you will know they just keep coming back, a little bit grimy and besmirched, but intent on Revenge!

The last year started out optimistically. No one died.

Well actually lots of people died, some of them I possibly even knew but the prospect of rereading Ansible's obituary pages is a daunting one.

What else went on? Well, I remember in last January I shat my pants. Strange how certain memories linger.

Also in January I had to abandon my attempt to traverse Antarctica alone on foot. To be fair I hadn't really thought it through since I hadn't thought it would be so cold.

February was pretty much of a washout too, since my favourite goldfish, Lenny, died. For a while I blamed myself for not providing the correct environment for him, which was one in which my cat would be unable to fish him out of his tank and eat him. Now I blame my cat, who fished him out of the tank and ate him. Otherwise throughout the year the cat, Jenny, has been a boon and an asset, although not a commercial one. She provided Pat with comfort following her motorcycle accident (Pat's not the cat's) and in fact won a phone in a competition on the radio which guaranteed her (the cat not Pat) a supply of dried fish for life.

Summer came and went. I celebrated my faith at the Holy Church of St Mary of Wentworth by winning the Harvest Festival raffle. It is totally not true I stole the vegetables while nobody was looking.

Lots of things happened in September. I discovered a new recipe for linguini for instance which did not involve prawns.

In October I painted myself in silver and posed as a human statue in a high street in Bath, but nobody was fooled, except perhaps a six-year-old child who ran away screaming and could not be placated, even with offers of ice cream and chutney.

In November my identity was stolen by someone called Pedro. What can I say? He later gave it back to me, along with a festive stollen, but I can no longer trust anyone named Pedro. Which brings us to today when rancid Northern traitors have sold out their birthright, so they don't have to eat French cheese any more, and Boris had admitted being so tired he doesn't want to even try and bring in a proper deal for Brexit.

But good cheers and best wishes to all of you no matter what church you subscribe to, even if you are too Jewish to call it Christmas.

IN MEMORIAM: STEVE STILES

I had hoped my go-to cover artist Steve Stiles, although diagnosed with incurable cancer, would live to see this issue of Vibrator, but it was not to be. Originally given months to live, in fact he had only days and died on January 12th. He will leave a big hole in all our hearts and a huge gap on many of our fanzine pages.

SOME RECIPES FOR (NEXT) CHRISTMAS

Tony Berry Pudding.

This delightful Christmas Treat uses typical autumn fruits, and all sorts of berries except possibly juniper berries which are a bit too tart for many peoples' tastes. If you have an excess of juniper berries, however, please feel free to throw them in. After all, who really cares?

Firstly make a basic pudding mix, out of a packet if you don't have the knowhow or intelligence, to do it for yourself (Tip: it's basically flour, eggs, and sugar). Add zest of lemons, limes and oranges and any other zest you happen to have around. But don't try and show off by using exotic zests. They will invariably rebound on you. I once knew a man who tried to zest

a kiwi fruit and died in the process. (and please, however trendy you may think it is, don't use squid ink, it is verily the ingredient of the devil).

Grease a baking tray with, well, grease, or candle wax if you have no grease, although I find it hard to believe you would have no grease, and line with parchment or naval quality tarpaulin. Pour the mixture into the baking tray and mix in the berries. Stand well back in case they explode, but if nothing has happened within five minutes you may safely approach them and turn them out into a very baggy suit..

I know most people will here be expecting a joke about Tony Berry's Locksmith abilities, but I'm not going to crack one of those. Bake in a moderate oven until it is not burnt. Serve with raw syllabub.

Fishlifters Baked Lobster Surprise

Claire once showed me a lobster she had brought home with her from her far-flung travels in Outer Mongolia or it might have been Seattle. One intimate night while we were discussing Corflu matters and while she was changing my diaper, she shared this recipe with me whilst I removed her suspenders.

First take your lobster, descale it and whittle it into the shape of a Mosquito bomber from WWII. Then tell it some jokes. It will be pretty angry but just ignore its feelings, it is only a lobster after all. Take off those rubber bands that are used to constrain its claws and kill it humanely by subjecting it to Motorhead and a large hammer. It will thank you and possibly sign a petition to pardon you when the European Commission on Lobster Rights meets in Geneva (Tickets \$6,000 from Useless Conventions 'R' Us).

Smear the lobster with butter and put it in an oven. The surprise is if it will be edible.

Frank Lunney's Starters

There is nothing that Frank likes more than Pigs in Blankets. Oh, no that is David Cameron. Still I'm sure Frank would also like these mouth-watering tid-bits with which to celebrate the festive season, unless you are Jewish, when it is the holiday season and you are not allowed to eat bits of pig anyway. First get some pigs. These are not real pigs of course, but tiny cocktail sausages. You can buy them in bulk from Costco, or else make them to your own weird recipe incorporating whatever inedible ingredients you have to hand. Costco's are at least labelled as inedible so you know what you are getting and is useful for avoiding lawsuits. Next, sauté them in a small pan, or a big pan if you have bought too many. Discard any that explode, they are not good for you and may get you in trouble with the NSA, or even NASA if you are infringing one of their copyrights for rocket propellants.

Once the pigs (sausages, in case you need to be reminded) have cooked set them aside and prepare their blankets, these can be made of bacon slices, pancetta, salami or anything except real blanket material (that way madness lies (although it does give a very fluffy result). Wrap them, slap them, comfort them and croon old Rosemary Clooney songs to them. Cook them

again, if you like (it's always safe to be sure), and serve with a platter of pickles cut into various interesting shapes, or else leave the gherkin whole and proclaim it is a penis.

Christmas Kebabs

If you live in Harringey there are no shortage of Christmas Kebabs, some of them even with Holly attached. I once kissed a counter-chef under the mistletoe. His lips were very, very greasy. If you live in the outliers of civilization in places like Bude or Basingstoke or Maridge Hill (we won't talk about Edmonton), however they may not be so readily accessible. Why not make your own? All you need is low-grade meat, preferably lamb, but it can be horse if you have a reliable supplier. Take a hammer, or several, and smack it into something resembling meat that has been smacked. It doesn't matter at this point what shape it is. Leave it to hang for several months. That will solve most problems although you will probably have to buy several cans of Raid to deal with flies and other insect infestations. Cut it down and make sure it is not still breathing (insurance companies will call you out on this). Cook it over several candles or oil lamps, and slice it into easily regurgitable portions. It will make cleaning up afterwards so much easier. Best served with a fresh Retsina

Okay, as promised Leftover Pithiviers

Pithiviers are also known in many cuisines as Tortilladas, Quincies, Bellowbags and Cornish Pasties. They are basically a short-crust pastry pie with meat in it. You don't need to know any more except that many Haitians swear by them.

AMERICA THE DAMNED

An occasional series by Graham Charnock

THE MOUNTAIN MEADOWS MASSACRE

Spirits were high in the small community of Berryville in Carroll County Arkansas, in 1857, among settlers brought together from three other neighbouring counties, under the name of the Fancher party, whose aim was to drive west. News had reached them that there was land and opportunities available on the other side of the continent. There was a sense of excitement in the air at the prospect of a new adventure. The people were multi-denominational, some were free-thinkers, some were perhaps just restless. However they all obviously and perhaps understandably found life in Arkansas stifling and unremarkable. They had largely lived frugal unextravagant lives; they had saved and raised funds amongst themselves and bought sturdy wagons and horses and pack-mules and the dry goods to provision the trek they were about to embark upon. It would, they hoped, take them across a continent where they would establish themselves in a new life, not by the grace of God necessarily, but by the dint of their own diligence and hard work. They knew they would face

harsh landscapes and sometimes hostile people, so they were not without repudiation, but they had equipped themselves as well as they could with guns and other weapons, and had faith in the strategic wisdom of their leaders, and were of course buoyed up by the enthusiasm of their venture. Their destination, California, was an almost-fabled land but one which they all believed would provide them, men, women, sons and daughters with a better life. They were seen off by a modest crowd of supporters and spectators, some of whom were no doubt sceptical and were heard to mutter under their breath that there would be no happy outcome to the venture. There are gainsayers everywhere.

There is not record of the vicissitude and tribulations they suffered until they reached one of the Salt Lake City, one of the stop-offs on their route. Salt Lake City was in Utah Territory, at the time an area of considerable territorial tension with native American Paiutes holding an uneasy truce with established Mormon settlers under the leadership of Brigham Young. At the time Salt Lake City was of course only a city in the sense of being one of the many Cities of the Kingdom of God, but was already considerably urbanized and settled and considered a safe and sanctified haven by its inhabitants, who were protective to the point of being xenophobic.

It was also a community which was fundamentally bigoted, and which felt itself at threat, both religiously and territorially, from many quarters. While rejoicing in their particular interpretation of the Lord, they were nevertheless deeply paranoid and took their constitutional rights to bear arms very seriously.

The Mormon Church of Latter Day Saints had been founded some decades earlier by the authoritarian Joseph Smith and was a far cry from the modern all-singing and all-dancing stage show which today celebrates the sect. Unsurprisingly the Mormons, under his guidance, were a rigorous and disciplined movement with a commonality of thought, and then, as now, were bound, if not to say hidebound, by strict religious principles. Smith had a history of using organized violence, not unknown in the frontier country in which the movement was founded, and formed a Mormon Militia, known as the Armies of Israel, ostensibly to protect his people and their territories, albeit under an aggressive name. They certainly believed in biblical wrath and vengeance. Nowadays the Mormons are viewed as a largely benign group, who are possibly better known for their archives of family histories and their habit of taking multiple wives than anything else, but It is likely that, back then, given their uncertain hold on their territory, and an air of paranoia inherited from their founder, they were nervous about incursions from people they viewed as outsiders.

In any event the wagon train, full of brave and hopeful explorers, in search of respite and charity were not given a warm welcome, and they quickly moved on to a place called Mountain Meadows. It was an idyllic location, but not one where a wagon train could be easily defended. The Mormon community in Salt Lake City raised a militia, which was known as the Nauvoo Legion. Under the leadership of Isaac C. Haight and John Lee they descended on the hapless wagon train like the wolf upon the fold, very probably spouting religious references to support their cause as they did. The militia had formed an alliance with local native American Paiutes, paid for of course with money and guns, and conscripted them in a fairly transparent

attempt to conceal their direct involvement in the attack. However rumours spread that the settlers under siege had recognized non-Native Indians amongst the attackers, and so futile measures by the Mormon community were set in train to silence them. That is another unchronicled story.

The slaughter at Mountain Meadows was fairly complete and comprehensive. Some children were spared and taken into care by soft-hearted Mormons, to provide future fodder for their religious mill.

There are several signifiers here to direct us to the current malaise that is America. The mobilization of violence in the name of religious righteousness, not to mention the desire to pass off acts of violence in the name of others. And then to cover-up the conspiracy by removing any witnesses.

Strike any chords?

TALES OF A LAS VEGAS TAXI DRIVER`

By Nic Farey

SEASON'S BLEATINGS

"I'm doing an end-of-year, seasonal issue of *Vibrator*", sez Charnock (G), "You got something for it?"

"Taxi column? I dunno mate, could be a bit boring, end of year financial report? Uncle Johnny *might* read it."

"Lichtman will read it."

"What's the deadline?"

"December 28th."

"OK". *sotto voce*: "Fuck."

If this were any kind of normal, that is, following on from a last-month ish of *SexToy* and chucking Grah a steaming pile of filler which I'd make up for next month, honest guv, then you'd indeed have got the Ackers Report, which incidentally would have been decent, this having been my best earnings year since 2014 (although not by a lot), but then again we're a bit trepidatious about the tax filing, since Jen has also been earning actual money with the transcribing gig (and a little bit from being a HempWorx associate, CBD products) which, as a contractor, hasn't had tax taken out - in IRS parlance, she gets a "1099" form in January, so we'll hope for enough offset between her dosh there, my deductions and *Journey Fiction* losses so that we'll at least be looking at break-even: probably no refund, but not owing anything either. That was pretty soporific, wasn't it? If Grah's got this out by year's end, it'll be the final tipping point for the aged and portly readership, already partially comatose from mince pies and Xmas pud and exhausted from cracker-pulling, sending them into a blissful

slumber punctuated by the occasional gravy fart.

The taxi topic *du jour* is the introduction of flat rate fares to and from the airport and the Strip, and whether this pilot scheme will ultimately help or hinder. This kind of minutiae might actually be of some mild interest to the only person still reading (Lichtman), and believe me I could go on a fair bit about something that was supposed to *simplify* things becoming a typical Taxicab Authority clusterfuck, ill-thought-out, compounded by an eye-glazing software update from the usual gang of idiots at Verifone (who are not at all funny) to accommodate the fixed fares. Circling back to previous coverage (as MaddowBlog's Steve Benen would say), we have a ride hail/payment app called "Curb" (which is, at least in Vegas, rubbish-to-absolute-bollocks at ride hailing, but rather good on the payment end) via which the passenger can pay for the ride while it's in progress by pairing their phone with the system. The cabs have a little tablet screen for the driver, and when a rider used the app, we got a little boxed message to inform the driver that the trip would be paid for by the app. Trouble was, the message only stayed there for 5 seconds or so, and therefore was easy to miss if you were paying attention to the driving. I mentioned this several times to the cab manager who's also supposed to be the point man with Verifone on this sort of thing, pleading for the addition of an alert tone of some kind, and how fuckin' hard could that be to add, eh, since they managed to add one pretty quick after the chip reader slots were added to the machines and we were getting 100+ credit cards per shift left in the fuckin' machine. Well, guess what, they ended up doing just a little better, with an audible "Mobile pairing successful" *and* the same thing printed out on our little receipt machines. Took them a fuckin' year. For the flat rate fares, they had a couple months, tops, to come up with something, which at present requires us to do *five* screen taps (Menu / Fare / Flat Rate / Select Rate / Add) *and* asks the customer to confirm/accept the fare on *their* screen. The fare quoted to the customer doesn't include the 3% State tax either, so it's not even the final amount. I haven't had to deal with any of this tosh yet, since the introduction of the scheme was on December 20th, and my last day of work before my break was the 19th. It's quite possible that some of this might have been improved by the time I go back to work on the 29th, since some bright spark somewhere or other realized that the original start date (January 1st) would get a well severe test from the expected New Year crowds, not to mention the scrum that is CES at the beginning of January, so it would seem a good idea to have a bit of time (at a notoriously slow period) to test it out.

And, see, I did it anyway, the minutiae thing, proving that I can wank on, absent any restraint, and now I'm hearing an inscrutable Miyagi-like voice in my head going "Wank On. Wank Off..."

[Several paragraphs of near-incomprehensible drunken tedium redacted. Ed.]

CLANG! THUD! CRASH!

Thank you madam, that's certainly brought me to my senses.

Of course, Charnock picks the time of year when I'm off work because it's deader than an actual can of Spam out there, and I begin to wonder if he's just assuming I'll punt some salacious taxi tale for old times sake or that I might actually enter into a more surprising philosophical discourse on the limitations of geographical separation which are yet skiffily

ignored by a perhaps tenuous yet discernible psychic connection, evolved, not so much from a shared worldview necessarily as a bucket or two of commonality of experience within the Faniverse (something Joyce Katz and I agreed was a significant contributor to the fact that such alarmingly different types coexist in it, at least they/we did before the wall-building that predates Tiny Orange Fingers by a minute) and, inevitably, drink.

Well, it rather looks like I'll be cabdriving for another four years (of 60-hour weeks), since taking my Social Security next year at the earliest possible moment means we'd be worse off, since there's only so much (about \$17,000pa) you can earn before they start taking it back and giving it to Betsy DeVos for no reason. So ey, Grah, if you're going be doing these occasionals again, give us a heads-up and I'll try to make a note of any good stuff here and there, so I'm not entirely caught on the hop. Did I tell you the one about the bloke from the gay bar who had his strides round his ankles in the back and his whopper chopper waving in the wind? Yeah, think I did - no doubt it'll be in the collected writings, indexed under "Can of Vim with a sheep's heart on the end"...

(Still reading, Lichtman...?)

VIBRATOR BACKSIDE

One of the best things about the last Christmas was me receiving a blow-job from a whore I happened to meet in Finsbury Park. Everything was downhill after that. Some bastard stole the catalytic converter from my car, leaving me carless during the holiday season, and I didn't even get an erector set or a bottle of fudge in my Christmas stocking. I did, however, receive lots of Christmas stockings. Thanks go out to Greg Pickersgill, who donated some of his, although they were a bit mouldy. I think he was trying to tell me something. Have not so far mentioned Trump in this fanzine, so I will now, in my opinion he is a great snooker player. What about other people we all know and love. Ian Williams remains a true spiritual guru in my eyes. If only he could put aside his obsession with cats I feel he could lead our country to a greater future where like Gary Mattingly we could all walk amongst the sunlit uplands. John Hall received a new kidney, but it had no effect on his right wing views nor his trumpeting (sorry) of Osbornian economics. Roy Kettle continued to ignore me on Facebook, which was at least better than lots of people threatening to kill me (true). Oh, and I published a book of poems, so I must be just about ready to die.

This has been Vibrator 50 dated January 2020. My email is graham@cartiledgeworld.co.uk. If you are stupid enough to be one of the few remaining fans producing a hard copy fanzine you can send me one in exchange to 45 Kimberley Garden, London N4 1LD