

The Teeny Tiny Toaster Dragon

Genre: Unspecified

DING. The toaster plunger pinged, snapping Martin back into the kitchen from his daydream. He didn't remember putting any bread in the toaster. He turned around to check, he was right – no bread.

He always thought there was something odd about this toaster his mother had given him. It lasted much longer than most - toasters don't typically work for over forty-five years, most are lucky to reach their second birthday. But not this one, its shiny metallic frame had glistened into the eyes of Martin's family for generations. Not once broken or clogged with crumbs, and now pinged with no bread in. Strange.

That's because Martin's toaster was by no means a normal toaster. It was, in fact, home to a tiny dragon. A teeny tiny dragon named Theo. Theo worked inside the toaster, turning bread into delicious crispy perfection by blowing his tiny flames over each slice. And just a few seconds ago, Theo had stubbed his toe on the plunger.

Martin inspected the toaster now for the first time, pulling it away from the wall, revealing a small patch of flour from last night's lasagne sauce. Had he been looking; Martin might have seen Theo's tiny footprints dotted amongst the white spelt. Instead, he peered inside the letter-box-like slats, his shadow looming over the toaster. As the light changed, Theo scrambled to his feet and pressed his back flat into the wall. Trembling, he screwed his eyes shut, wishing more than anything that Martin hadn't seen him.

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The Wednesday Night Classic Album Society

Genre: Unspecified

These are the rules of The Wednesday Night Classic Album Society:

One: Only 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ r.p.m. records, with a duration of at least 15 minutes per side will be played.

Two: The member may briefly introduce the record, with factual information only about the artist and the recording.

Three: The sides will be played in the correct order, in their entirety. There must be no conversation while each side is played, nor while the record is being turned over.

Four: When discussing the recording, members will respect each other's opinions and accept they may not always agree with one another.

Five: No Beatles.

Henry fixed the poster to the wall at the top of the stairs, just by the door, and stepped back to admire his handiwork. Eric had been encouraging him to produce something with the rules on since they had started the Society, but it taken Henry several attempts to come up with something he was happy enough to share.

He had created a twelve-inch diameter black ring with a three-inch diameter pale green circle in its centre, on which the title was written. The words spiralled inwards from the outer edge, painstakingly hand-scripted in fine, white lettering. If asked, he would explain that they represented the groove of a record. He might also mention, for the sake of accuracy, while most people talked about a record having 'grooves', there was, in fact, only one continuous groove on each side. But he didn't expect anyone would ask.

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One

Genre: Commercial Fiction

Somewhere in the broken city you pull yourself from your rubble bed; smell the unwash of months. Bodies all around, dotted and jumbled. Those that move at the call make sound of sorts, grunt, and moan, shuffling to their tasks. Those that don't move are somewhere else. Perhaps on a Black Sea resort with wives or sweethearts, or making love in clean beds, or filling themselves somewhere in peace with favourite savoury pancakes. Perhaps.

Another dirty, shadow dawn. Comes soon the hobbling comrade with the brew. It's not tea, it's not coffee. It's hot, drinkable. Grab an offering of what was once a loaf of poor bread, adulterated with God knows what; a leaden sky commiserates. You say, Spasiba, though you don't know why. What you swallow spreads and fills your stomach.

You don't know why but it is important that you shave. For a man to shave is a human activity. It's human to wash – but not in this temperature. You hold your cup of ice over the flaming drum, compete, jostling and cursing. You feel in your kit for the piece of mirror. Soap is a luxury. There are no luxuries here.

At the first shell your stomach heaves. You run to your battery. Already there is Ilya, fifteen and frightened. You were his age seven long years ago. There are parallels, though you know he has been less fortunate. He has learned to trust you. He runs to you shaking, shouting. You care about only one thing.

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Staggering!

THE TRUE* STORY OF BRIAN TUMOUR, ROCK'N'ROLL CHAMELEON.

Genre: Fictional Biography

...and they all lived happily ever after. Yeah - they did! But me? That's another story... in fact, it's this story! Actually, that's wrong - so let's start with... Once upon a time there was a man named... Oh dear, more confusion. What was his name? What is his name? Let's find out. 'Man is who his name says he is. Any man not known by his name - but by another moniker, is often confused with himself or somebody else entirely' - Shakespeare. At least I think it's Shakespeare. Let's check... So, I just Googled it - it's not Shakespeare! It appears to be by Vernon K Scholtzberg - a Motivational Speaker from in Barrington, Illinois. Unfortunately Vernon is currently serving time in Stateville Correctional Center for impersonation and information theft. So maybe he stole that quote too? Maybe it was Shakespeare?

Chapter One

My parents were Idris and Elsie Guilliams, and they were Welsh. They lived in a crappy little town called Montgomery, that was just over the Welsh border - but far enough over, unfortunately, to be officially 'Welsh'. But the luckiest thing, that ever happened to me, happened on the day I was born. On the 1st April 1951 Mum and Dad were visiting relatives in the Black Country, and fortunately for me, mother went into labour prematurely, ensuring that I would be born in Wolverhampton General Hospital - and critically - not Wales, making me crucially - not Welsh! But that was when my luck ran out!

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