

Clive Gresswell

Burger Bar

& steve the short order chef flipped a burger. silly bugger he muttered as he often did. & carl cool dude paraded into the joint like the card he was. silently sitting at a stool your finest burger he drawled. & just then demon angel showed up all dressed in black & waved to carl cool dude. & i haven't seen you in here for a while he offered a smoke. the demon angel always gave out cigarettes. it was his angle. if you wanted one just go & see him. carl cool dude stuck it in the corner of his mouth & drawled thanks. steve the short order chef joined in & they all started to blow. & they took up a shanty song from the old times to the tune of salty sea dog & who should come in then but sea dog steve. he wore his sailor's outfit & whistled a tune no-one understood while rasping for breath. seadog steve & carl cool dude started up a game of three-card brag in the corner. the burger joint was along barton bay & everyone who was anybody went there. he walked in & said his hellos before accepting a joint from demon angel. & steve made burgers all round & they all merrily tucked into them. & the joint was always jumping & demon angel went & put some alice cooper on the juke box. even simon sheriff came in & mixed with the lunchtime crowd. he sure did love his burgers from the one-stop café entrance for many a nefarious soul into the portals of hell.

which was guarded by vivian vinegar & the brothel queens who were always coming upstairs & eating the burgers made by steve the short order chef. & they mixed with the customers & the other two were known as salt & pepper. to be blunt they were the human meat of the joint or the joint of human meat. & they will drag you down to their level & laugh in your face as you pass them coins & cutlery & share with them the combination to the safes. & all around town they danced the fandango to the tune of an accordion. & returning late & shinning up a drainpipe & back down into the dark dampness of the dungeons where they sleep.

here below it's all guns & garters & the film stars all hang around the wishing well by the back door & that leads to the passage where the more potent burgers are flipped by acid head alan. & the further down you go the worse it gets until you reach the very last & this is reserved for the super rotting flesh & its torn off in strips from the body corporeal. simon sheriff knows all the wise guys from top to bottom of the café & he keeps his beady eye on the powder keg business & a cork lid on it so that when he wants he can put his finger in the dyke of it. & he can say i have pulled out a plum what a good boy am i. & above steve the short order chef takes all the calls for those below & relays the messages & takes the money & sends down the burgers. nobody else can read his writing except dan the doctor & he hands out the prescriptions on level four. dark angel pops down for a snack & comes back with only one arm. & it's the price i had to pay he tells carl cool dude.

vile vince comes in & farts in the face of the present company. & he orders the biggest meanest motherfucker of a burger available in the joint & the order goes downstairs for administration by dan whose eyes glisten at such a pleasing order & he writes out the script in his spidery writing & laughs out loud to himself before sending it down the chute to the chemists & vile vince nods at sheriff & you know the two

men have a mutual respect & an enmity. & in minutes vince gets his burger & eats it in seconds. he walks over to sheriff & nods. & it's how you doing sheriff & what goes on & any trouble in the neighbourhood just let vince know ok. & it's keep the peace man good for business.

& the smoke & smog of it is filling up the room & steve the short order chef says bugger it silly bugger which he very often does. & paula puberty walks in & says to everybody who is anybody come out the back & i'll show you something & she has a green carnation pinned to her jacket. & outside the wind is blowing & the hogs howling as sam superior waltzes in calling on carl cool dude to read the bible with him outback & he says the angels of mercy are coming to save them all. & dark angel just laughs & puts sympathy for the devil on the jukebox & the whole damn lot of them start dancing like maniacs. well by now sam superior is getting pretty cross & he's a big man & when he goes & pulls the plug out of the juke box nobody who is nobody dares to move. & he is the only one & he fixes the juke box & just then paula petulant rides in on a pig & says give me some ham on rye & the short order chef winks & sends down to the doctor for some of his special tonic.

& simon sheriff climbs down the stairs to the basement & petitions wendy whore & they make it in her bedroom & they are filmed by the hidden cameras that pete the pimp keeps just in case. & everyone in the place is indebted somehow to pete the pimp who has his fingers in all the sockets.

& out of the cake in the laundry room the monroe look-alike jumps out & blows a kiss at all the hoods. & their vicious eyes twinkle as they throw firecrackers at the queens dancing in the hall.

& j edgar hoover known as harry the hoover brings over his home movies to show on the giant screen starring all the good old boys & girls who sucked up the corruption and the stink of it lingers around their clothes and bodies. & napoleon sneaks past shouting up the english & laughing like a maniac comes crashing

through the screen during a french kiss & all the audience shouts at him to get out of the way but he's also
ian impervious & takes no notice.

& upstairs larry landlord waltzes in to collect his dues with a peg over his nose. & steve the short order chef
distracts his attention while he grabs a baseball bat from behind the counter. it's a blow for liberty he tells
himself as he brings it down with considerable force on larry landlord's head. the skull is smashed open &
blood seeps out all over the dance floor. vile vince & simon sherrif haul the body to the swamp outside
muttering this is bad for business & all the others just ignore the goo and grime of the remnants and dance
around it as before etc. freddie the frog is doing the hop with lithesome lucy whose been after his business
for ages. she reckons she'd be a big hit on the betting front & cucumber wouldn't melt in her mouth since
she got out of the espionage business & started driving trucks for a living.

carl cool dude & some of his mates from back at the shack venture outside into the darkness. it's getting
close to midnight when bernie benefactor will come down & hand out his gifts to those who have been good.
gold & iron ore & amulets & valerie vulgar, stephanie sugar & pamela pervert will make their appearance as
the three witches. they normally exact a terrible price for the mirth of it but little do they know that tonight
simon sherrif is in especially bad mood over the killing of larry landlord & annoyed that he will definitely
have to make some arrests. after quick talks with vile vince and steve the short order chef it's decided that
freddy fry should take the rap & so outside under cover of the stars simon sherrif reads him his rights and
puts him in the wagon & leaves

in the next scene the baker brothers are counting out the gold & this one goes on forever never coming to a
conclusion. they just go on counting and counting & the gold is passed continuously day and night down the
chute to their level & the figures are passed on to alison accountant who puts them all in columns. the

columns too never end in the great ledger which was watched over by larry landlord until his sudden death. it is a bitter blow to the burger kings around these parts but there were always replacements & another larry landlord would be found – in visage & in gate exactly as the first & he would not be the last either.

& the big snake from downstairs slithers its way up to the bar and hissing at the feet of steve short order chef its big eyes whirling in hypnotic fashion says come on now and eat the apple with me. & steve is kicking at its heels & telling it to go back to hell. & the snake laughs and belly-wriggles across the bar looking for other victims. & demon angel grabs it by the tail & says by god i remember you when you were but a wee worm. & in a fit of pique he bit off his head. & he spits out the goo all over the floor & the sherrif's deputy darren deputy turns up & wants to know from everyone all the details & all innocence abroad can say is that she did not see or hear anything. & all the others too state that they never saw anything. & darren roars out but a man is dead godamn it & tom tomato bursts his skin laughing. no one ever said there is any justice in this place he tells darren deputy. tina temptress pops up from the shadows below and puts her arms around darren deputy & kisses him full on the mouth. no harm done she whispers in his ear as she leads him downstairs & he's never seen again.

& the china figurines enter wearing their japanese clothes & go round to everyone offering incense and virtue. they slip inside their kimonos the cash from the farm hands & the lorry drivers & blow them kisses & giggle into their hands & fan out in line each waiting for an inspection & they introduce mike magician who reads the tarot & he deals in future & other misdemeanours & on stage with him is his carefree parrot which says what the cards all mean. & it's all a stacked deck & the trick is on the house.

& from the terror of below come the angels of darkness with their colours and special codes & they pick on shabby simon who everyone else always leaves alone. & they tear him from top to bottom with a butcher's

knife & even vile vince is powerless to stop the carnage. & they have the alsations and the chants & the chains & the machettes & the will to destroy. bleeding of death shabby simon gets up and with one huge rattle scares the shit out of them & the angels of darkness wonder what sort of sorcery goes on. & the new larry the landlord walks in & he's just the very model of the last & he calls for a free burger & his ledger & the column inches written about him increases.

& he spies banned barry who comes in and shits on the floor and all the gypsies & fairies dance around the turd & it's a heigh ho and a heigh ho & the violins play & the crowd claps and sings in time with an accordion. meathead matthew and shallow sidney whirl around & around until reaching the ladder they climb onto the roof with drunken dave & there they meet asking for trouble who lends them a trombone each & says blow from the heavens blow for your lives. & the ace of hearts walks in & all the heartstrings of the women pound away & fiona flush takes her pick saying any card while darren dude throws up in the corner & several actors bundle in with signs saying eat me quick.

on the third floor peter painter & peter poet exchange art & bodily fluids & they are filmed by men and women dressed as cowboys & cowgirls. & billy bible is on his soap box in the middle of the room saying it's all unnatural. & the others are shouting you're a redneck you're a redneck as they drink down the vodka & peter painter paints a penis & peter poet writes a poem about one. just then derek dancer waltzes in carrying a tray of chinese food which he hands around shouting out who among us is not immortal.

& good god groucho marx is in the garden with gorgeous gertrude & they are mimicking a wedding complete with vows and promises on the back of a broken wagon. along comes kiss me kate and her carnival of carnivorous clichés & they surround the wagon & slaying the bride feed off her carcass & afterwards the clichés stand in front of a wall while kiss me kate throws her knives at them & some get hit & fall to the floor

while those that remain start a gruesome dance around the fallen. just then timmy tax walks into the festival disguised as hieronymous bosch disguised as sexy susan & he says i want what's rightfully mine. & the girls giggle and offer up the dead & timmy tax takes his fill & then goes lower underground into the bowels of the burger bar demanding one and all pay up. & it's revenue for the government he says & it's good for business & we slip into your dreams late at night.

& steve short order chef flips another burger for little bo-peep who's going down to the torture room with mike the spike & they're going to split it with french fries and tomato sauce & the home workers who operate the machinery will open the sachets & distribute the liquid across the floors & down the stairs & around the walls to the tune of a pig on heat.

& anton angel leader of the angels from below asks for a leg & steve the short order chef complies with a smile on his lips. & he cuts up the hips & distributes them to all the hipsters in the bar.

hairy hogg & tramp tommy trip over a samba in the light fantastic electronic ballroom & the ears are bleeding & the caged baboons take out their machine guns & shoot up the whole damn place & demand protection. & the sheriff's back in town blowing on a harmonica & says he knows nothing about any murder & sometimes he goes downstairs himself to sample the goods. & flash gordon is flashing his money around offering tea and sympathy to queenie & her dogs of war who one day will just have to be released.

wendy waitress complete with bandana is taking the orders for the fourth floor where the crap game's being played & there's dice & blackjack & roulette wheels & wendy's waiting for her tip & barry bandnose says ours first my lovely and then you'll get yours. running the gambling hall is granny gertrude who must be 110 if she's a day & has been around forever. some say she was born there on a wild & windy night.

upstairs gary gourmet is ordering his second burger to be followed by four helpings of ice cream washed down with bourbon. steve the short order chef flips it & says silly bugger which he often did. he's just about taken a spoonful when charlie chain and his gang saunter in & giving everyone vicious stares orders free drinks on the house for everyone. & downstairs they are still counting out the money but larry landlord says it's not enough & they just need to use their imaginations and get more. gipsy gill and lucky heather bless the place for a coin & join the ladies downstairs to make a bob or two.

mike the spike has his way with little bo-peep & then casts her aside all cuts & bruises & she goes looking for vile vince & the sheriff but they just laugh at her & she rushes out of the joint screaming about justice & vile vince & simon sheriff shrug & exchange a glance which says something like & another one bites the dust.

there's a commotion in the hall where shirley temple is throwing a hissy fit & demanding a better dressing room & she wants one with a star on the door but pamela producer is saying there's no stars in here love we're all in the same boat. wait until payday you'll feel better. but payday never really comes to the illusion of barton bay. though plenty are paid off.

Pervert politician hides his pistol behind a newspaper & whispers to desmond private dick that this is not the place to be seen. alley al & all the other homeless come in for warmth & shelter & they bring in their crazy dreams of drawings & of poetry. & some of them have been olympic sportsmen & others university professors. celluloid clint was once a famous movie star until the mcarthy era. & uncle bulgaria rides in on a unicycle declaring that the war is over but no one takes any notice & anyway he's drunk on lager & whisky. fallen angel asks to what war he is referring & he says he doesn't know king john of jute just asked him to deliver the message. & don't shoot the messenger he pleads. hannah hallucination trips over him & bursts out laughing while the rain lashes down outside.

crazy horse & his minions are holding a pow-wow in the cemetery out back where all the cupid & chocolate lovers end up after the electrocutions. & he says the joint is just being taken over by west indians & the truce with the pale skins is under threat. they have all that jazz music & all that jitterbug & jive & all those honking horns. & it's not our kind of music complain the truckers & the builders & the engineers. larry landlord says they have to keep the customers satisfied but steve short order chef knows it's impossible to keep them all happy all of the time except for sex & death.

& the saints downstairs in the hallway all catch colds while reciting the lord's prayer through chattering lips. they are pushed for time & have no one to convert in this den of thieves and actresses.

& sometimes jesus h christ sticks his snout into the trough for the scent of it & he vacuums up all the harlots, whores, saints, sinners & lepers & says come over to my party it's much cooler. & just as they are about to depart who should show up but sebastian satan complete with entourage & electric guitars & says that cat may be clean but he sure ain't got no drugs & would you want to have sex with that?

where's your mary magdeline now he taunts him & what good has all your bellyaching done over the years? leave my kind to themselves and stick to your own. convert, convert, convert, that's all you wanna do while i look after my people.

jesus h christ stormed out of the diner urging anyone who had the nerve to go with him but they all laughed & watched him go & then it was full on again with the merriment & the haymaking & the lovemaking.

al capone came out of the bathroom having thrown up & with him was mickey moose they got the lowdown there had been a commotion with the lord's name taken in vain. anyone upsets my man is a dead man dead meat understand says al before returning to his crap game

upstairs steve the short order chef is preparing burgers for laurel and hardy & countless other silent screen stars & everyone's drunk as larry & falling over just like in their silver screen routines.

i guess we all become what we do says someone from behind a chairleg & someone else puts stairway to heaven on the jukebox.

grim gerry jokes with steve short order chef: "that's gonna compete with american pie all night yes siree mark my words."

& demented dali and the daleks dance like dervishes in their floorshow on entrapment level a. lenny bruce is talking to some cops about the future price of coffee & puppet brains has some interesting analysis to offer on that score.

& the cowboys raid the place looking up calamity kate whose taut body is still rotting in the fridge. & they muss the place up a bit with their firecrackers & rootin' tootin' guns.

& the drinkers and drug addicts scurry down to see the ants & actresses who staring into a mirror realise at last their fading beauty.