

Tales of My Mate Graham
by David Silver
Chapter I - The Internet

It was in the mid-nineties, when the Internet wasn't that well known to the majority of people. My mate Graham, who lives opposite me, a droll little man who has never ceased to amuse me with his various antics, was always an early adopter of new technologies. I long ago lost count of the number of times I had to go over and bail him out when he'd tried the latest performance improvement tweak on his PC and managed to burn out his CPU, crash his hard drive or set fire to the printer. I'll never forget calling on him one day when what I thought was a party clown answered the door - a multi-coloured face and hair standing rigidly on end. It was of course Graham, after messily attempting to re-ink his printer cartridges followed by the poking of a screwdriver into the computer's power supply without first having disconnected the mains plug.

Now Graham had discovered that by trawling the Internet you could possibly discover long lost friends and relatives. Remember that in those days Broadband was a rarity and everything went over a slow dial-up connection. Ancestry.com wasn't even a twinkle in the eye of its inventor who probably hadn't even been born yet. Graham searched by day, he searched by night. His long-suffering wife Sheila became neglected and rejected. His children and grandchildren would call round but Sheila would sadly have to deny them access to Dad/Granddad as he would fly into a foaming rage if interrupted. He would occasionally emerge from his den haggard, with several days of stubble, a strange, far away, other-worldly look in his bleary eye and so ravenous he'd absently eat the dog's dinner.

After many weeks of this behaviour Sheila was awoken at three o'clock one morning with the sound of a blood-curdling shriek from somewhere downstairs. Quivering – she wasn't sure whether her emotion was trepidation or anticipation – she crept downstairs and opened Graham's study door the tiniest crack. What looked like flames flickered around the walls whilst a gibbering naked figure pranced wildly around a fire in the centre of the room, waving its arms wildly whilst a bat flew crazily in circles around its head. Almost fainting with shock she recoiled out of the room and rushed upstairs to the bedroom and bolted the door behind her. She'd picked up the phone to call the police and fire brigade when she managed to get a grip on herself. There was something about the anatomy of the strange figure that was familiar. For a moment she forgot the ongoing crisis and sat back on the bed smiling dreamily as she was momentarily transported back to her honeymoon many years before.

Returning to reality with a jolt and coming to terms with the present situation, she braced herself and once again crept downstairs.

Cracking open the study door for a second time she was able to take a calmer view of what was going on. The mad gyrations had slowed somewhat by now. The wild naked figure was indeed Graham. The flashing lights were caused by the computer monitor which had been pulled to the centre of the floor and was flickering rapidly in various colours and the 'bat' was in fact the computer's mouse which had somehow become unplugged then entangled around Graham's elbow and was now whizzing around his head as his arms flailed in a frenzy.

She gently took hold of him and led him into the lounge, mopping his feverish brow with a screen wipe and gradually getting him to become aware of his surroundings. She spent the rest of that disturbed night calmly talking to him and reminding him about his happier years, before his great obsession had taken possession of his senses. She recounted the wonderful holidays they'd had, not forgetting their honeymoon, and of course one thing led to another...

Anyway, it seems that the latest manic display had been triggered by Graham's discovery that he had found a long lost relative, a great aunt on his mother's side, who lived on the other side of Wheyford, the very town he lived in!

After further recollections of their honeymoon Sheila managed to persuade Graham to get some sleep and not to worry about the great aunt until the morning.

To be continued ...

Note: Names have been changed slightly to protect the innocent. This article is entirely factual other than the 95% which isn't.