

## The Night-Time Traveller

*A short tail by Bob Forster*

Dusk was turning to night. Typical February. Bitter air with a chilling wind, the remains of the day's rain leaving the roads shiny and hissing beneath the occasional car. It was time for home. Time for rest, time for family. Roland's day had been a long one.

### Spicy Ratatouille

Despite fatigue, he lingered beside the wall opposite the Red Horse. That smell wafting from the kitchen window - warm and pungent. What was it? Yes, spicy ratatouille - that was it. Wonderful name. His nose twitched appreciatively. With regret, he edged away from the wall, crossing Coombes Close carefully. Poised outside the shop, he indulged in his favourite game of taunting the automatic doors: open, close, open, close... Voices floated out, one in overseas accents, one Scottish. Roland prided himself on his linguistic knowledge. He understood every word of the foreign voice plus a certain percentage of the Scottish one. Quickly bored, he moved on. Past the ever-flowing concrete spout and the school, he paused briefly beside a garage no longer fringed with yuletide's dazzling lights. He crossed over, above the stream, to one of his favourite autumn memories. Yes, there it was silhouetted against the dark sky: the apple tree. Standing alone in its field it always glowed in October with red apples, red apples that nobody

picked. But he appreciated them. Many were the evenings he'd climbed over the stone wall and gorged himself on their plenty. Pity it was February.

### Outcasts from the Quart Pot

It was getting late. Past the village hall with its new windows. He recalled smoothing his coat in their reflection. Even at this hour, as Roland simply watched, shoppers were passing to and fro through the Co-Op door, always late, always rushing. Had they nothing better to do? He was thankful he'd left the rat-race behind. He rounded the corner, nose sniffing antagonistically at the smell. Yes, there they were, outcasts from the Quart Pot, cigarette tips glowing in the dark. They ignored him as he slipped past. Nearly home. Past that smart house on the left, the one that in former days had been fronted by an ironmongers selling everything from candles to rat poison. Roland caught his breath and hurried on. Now at last, the Baptist chapel. Almost there, Roland found himself humming his favourite chorus, one that on this dismal winter's night seemed most fitting; *'Shine Jesus, shine, fill this land with the Father's glory.'* Roland smiled. He squeezed into the gap next to the grating. Greeted rapturously, he snuggled down with the rest of the family, sleep not far away. And as his eyes closed, he mused to himself. ***"Yes, we must stick together, us rats."***

### King Stone Mummers

King Stone have struck another success with this season's tour of their wholly original Mummers' play, breathing new life into this tale of love, death and resurrection. The troupe is proud to have raised some £1,200 for The Katharine House Hospice. To contact King Stone please visit their website at [www.king-stone-morris.org.uk](http://www.king-stone-morris.org.uk).