

REVENGE OF THE SHOPPING TROLLEYS

Geoff Davies

Harold had parked on the wide slip road, leading to the unloading area, that ran alongside a drainage ditch because the inadequate car park was full up as usual. Many other drivers had done the same, so he even had difficulty finding a space here. 'Stupid' he thought. 'They build a supermarket here out of town and don't provide enough parking spaces'. The fact that Harold chose to shop at the busiest time was irrelevant. Anyway, why should he change his shopping habits? Besides, if he did, everyone else would do the same and he would be no better off. Harold was in a grumpy mood. He collected a trolley from one of the trolley parks and pushed it across the car park dodging more irate motorists trying to find spaces to park their vehicles. He crossed a vacant parking space. "Typical" he mumbled to himself. "As soon as I park somewhere inconvenient everyone else decides they have finished shopping". He was certainly in a bad mood today. In fact he was in a bad mood every time he went food shopping, which he hated. Taking a short cut to the store he struggled to pull the trolley over a kerb and across a grass verge, getting the wheels stuck in the soft soil.

It was getting dark and cold and he shivered when he finally returned to his car, fumbling in his pocket for his bunch of keys. The alarm beeped as he pressed the button to release the locks and pulled open the boot. "Oh no!" he muttered to himself; it was still full of his wife's Brownie kit. He savagely rammed the Brownie stuff to one side, hearing a faint 'crack'

as he did so. "Oh God, now I've broken something". Still, it wasn't his fault. How was he expected to check that the boot was empty before he went for the monthly shop. In fact, how did it end up him always having to do the monthly shop; wasn't it supposed to be a woman's job? Unloading the trolley he eventually had everything crammed into the boot and slammed it shut, not really caring if he had squashed the bananas or broken half the eggs in the process. He grabbed the trolley and looked back across the car park, which was slowly being enveloped by a drifting mist. Seeing how far away the trolley park was, he again muttered "Oh Sod it" and, looking about guiltily, pushed the trolley around the car and down the bank into the ditch. Quickly he got into the car, belted up, switched the lights on, started the engine and was off like a shot. The poor forlorn trolley lay in the ditch waiting for corrosion and decay to set in. Gradually, other shoppers finished their chores and it wasn't long before the car park was dark and deserted.

A few hours passed by when, at about half past midnight, a faint rattling could be heard coming down the slip road. The sound gradually grew louder as it approached the discarded trolley, which rattled gently as though in a shiver from the cold. Louder grew the rattling until it finally stopped alongside the ditch. Bumps, followed by faint squeaks were audible and when the trolley in the ditch looked up it saw three others staring down at it.

"My God" said, what appeared to be, the leading trolley.

"Did a human do this to you?"

The dumped trolley rattled in confirmation.

"Come on, let us get you out of there".

It soon found itself free from the muddy ditch and being hauled up to join a group of about ten other trolleys in two columns across the road. "What the ...?"

"Don't worry", said the leading trolley, "we are a recently formed vigilante group fed up with the way humans treat us. All of us have had various experiences of mistreatment by humans with crimes ranging from kidnapping and being locked up in a shed to let out only to fetch weekly shopping, to being dumped in ditches like you. Others have been abused by being overloaded and end up deformed, whilst Joey over there on the left was actually thrown up into a tree and left to be pecked at by birds. Yet others have had their wheels damaged so that they are permanently disabled and either end up being wonky or going off in all sorts of directions". The trolleys started moving slowly along the road. "This is not the first time we have tried to form a group like this" the leading trolley continued. "Previous attempts at rebellion have always resulted in the ringleader being identified and recycled or crushed to death. This time we managed to form an underground cell and found a way to disconnect ourselves from each other in the trolley parks. All of those you see here are volunteers, risking their lives for vengeance against human vermin".

"Wow, I never knew this sort of thing existed" the rescued trolley said in reply.

"Well it does, so go join the second column about halfway down. They will look after you. By the way, what's your name or number?"

"Serial number 543217".

"Good 543217, off you go".

Trolley number 543217 joined the ranks and the party moved off rapidly towards the town.

The town itself was quiet and deserted, except for the occasional late night motorist, when a patrolling constable appeared, which froze the trolleys. When he came across the immobile group, outside one of the town's newsagents, he just muttered to himself "Daft place to leave a load of trolleys if you ask me". He pulled out a small pad to make a note to report it to the station when he reported in, then continued on his beat. The trolley pack moved on when he was out of sight and, hopefully, earshot. It wasn't long before they heard a commotion of yelling human youths accompanied by squeaks and violent rattling coming from the municipal car park. As the party rounded the council offices building they were horrified to see three human youths pushing a poor shopping trolley around and laughing when it fell over. Sometimes one of them jumped in and the others pushed him around in it. It was horrible.

"That's it" said the trolley leader. "Now we go on to the offensive".

The trolley pack wheeled itself across the expanse towards the youths. When the yobs heard the rattling of the trolley pack they immediately ceased what they were doing and looked round. Dumbfounded expressions appeared on their faces when they saw what was coming towards them, not believing their eyes. The sense of aggression conveyed itself to the youths who glanced at each other and slowly backed away. The trolley pack continued on towards them avoiding the poor abused trolley now lying on its side. The last two trolleys in the pack stopped to help their comrade up onto its damaged wheels. The youths couldn't comprehend what was happening and started to run in different directions. Unfortunately, one ended up being trapped between the eight foot wall down one side of the car park and the public conveniences. He was now hemmed in with his back to the

'Gents' entrance, but at least the toilets, even with its horrible smell, would be a sanctuary for him. Unfortunately for him it was barred and locked. The trolleys were steadily moving in and were only a few feet away when the youth decided to make his escape and leapt up jumping from one trolley to the next. As his foot came down onto 543217 the trolley slid back and the youth fell amongst the mass of jostling metal.

The other two youths heard faint distant screams as trolley after trolley battered and rolled over the youth as he lay on the ground until he went still. The escapees were even more shocked with what they read in the local paper the following day. A fuzzy picture of the youth laying face down in the car park was published with the following story.

A youth was found dead last night in the municipal car park. Police are treating the case seriously as there is evidence of foul play. The body, still to be identified, was found with wheel marks over his clothes and exposed parts indicating that he might have been cycled over many times. In addition, strange reddened grid marks were also noticed all over his body. So far, evidence suggests that he was crushed to death and police are appealing for anyone to come forward in order that they can trace the youth's movements prior to his demise.

The dead youth's friends looked at each other with guilt and fear on their faces whilst shaking their heads thinking about the attack from the shopping trolleys. Who would believe

such a ridiculous story and just as likely, they would be accused of his murder. They decided to keep quiet.

During the following weeks other unreported incidents occurred. A housewife had her car rammed by a pack of trolleys after she left one by the roadside, not bothering to take it back to the trolley park. The subsequent row with her husband nearly resulted in her walking out.

"What do you mean you don't know how it happened? All those dents and scratches. Come on Hilary, what's the matter with you?"

Hilary thought for a suitable explanation and then, thinking it was a good idea, claimed that the supermarket trolleys had rolled from the trolley park and crashed into her car.

"Then we'll sue the supermarket" he said with determination.

"No, no John, we can't do that. They are not responsible for damage in the car park."

John got on to the supermarket management, but didn't get anywhere of course.

Another incident involved a man who gave his trolley a push to one side, again, because he couldn't be bothered to take it back to the trolley park. Somehow, his hand got caught in the frame and he found himself being dragged over to the trolley park where the trolley interlocked with its companions crushing his fingers in the process. He needed hospital treatment but could hardly claim that the trolley did it. In addition to these there were also reports of rattling and squeaking sounds moving around the neighbourhood at night, sometimes accompanied with screams of terror, but no one ever admitted seeing anything.

About four weeks after the death of the youth, a man was doing his usual monthly shop. His name was Harold and he was particularly irritable this evening after he had read a scribbled note from his wife.

*Harold,
I will be late tonight (special Brownie
meeting) so please do the usual monthly shop
and DON'T FORGET the extras for this
weekend's party – our 25th Wedding
Anniversary.
Love Joan xx*

They never got to celebrate it. Harold had some extra work to do in the office so it was later and colder when he went out to do the dreaded shopping. He reached the supermarket car park expecting to find at least one parking space; but all he found was a trolley right in his path as he turned by a line of Ford cars. He was so busy glancing left and right looking for a space he didn't see the trolley until it was too late and hit it, sending it careering off towards a flashy new royal blue Toyota. It bounced against the bumper and headed back towards him. With an evil expression on his face he glanced around and, seeing no one around, drove forward to hit the trolley again, sending it crashing back towards the Toyota. Then he swung off to go and park on the slip road.

Reaching the supermarket, he grabbed a trolley from outside the store and pulled it away from the others. It seemed to be stuck, so he gave it a harder tug. It came away with no problem but caught him off balance resulting in his falling

down on his back with the trolley on top of him. “Bugger” he yelled, to the disapproval of other secretly amused shoppers. He got to his feet and yanked the trolley towards the entrance nursing some minor bruises. He didn’t notice the serial number of the trolley. It was 543217.

As usual, the supermarket was crowded and particularly so tonight. It would be of course. He had temperedly threw cans and packets into the trolley, ramming old ladies and ‘accidentally’ knocking children over. He squeezed down the aisles; in his impatience getting his trolley interlocked with another, to its owner’s annoyance. He had his own heels bashed and bruised by other impatient shoppers behind him but there were some partially amusing episodes. In one aisle he was so busy ogling a young long legged woman in a miniskirt that his trolley hit a ‘special offer’ stack of carefully balanced baked bean cans and sent them all rolling about the floor.

“Don’t worry sir” said a staff member, fuming silently at his crassness, “I’ll pick them up”.

Finally he escaped from the place by joining one of the many long checkout queues; but of course it had to be the one where the shopper ahead of him chose goods with unreadable bar codes, had done enough shopping to feed twenty people for a year and couldn’t find their credit card.

Outside at last, he banged the trolley over the grass verge, knocking a wheel off in the process, and dragged the laden basket down to his car. Having crushed everything into the boot once again, with the sound of more crunches and cracks, he took the trolley around the car and, glancing up and down the road, pushed it down the slope towards the ditch. Somehow his hand got caught and he found himself

being dragged with it. Both he and the trolley tumbled down crashing into a tree near the bottom.

Sometime later, Harold came to. It was dark, with a rolling mist and he heard the distant hoot of an owl. He shook his head and found himself at the bottom of the ditch with a muddy suit and a few scratches and grazes. A bruise on his head and a slight headache told him that he had hit his head on the tree and had been knocked unconscious. He scrambled up the bank not noticing that the trolley was not in the ditch with him. As he reached the top he had a peculiar sensation that someone or something was watching him and looked up quickly. He was amazed to see a group of about twelve shopping trolleys – six in front of his car and six at the rear. ‘Who the heck left them there?’ he thought to himself. He stumbled round to the front of the car and pushed the trolleys to the other side of the road. One made a scraping sound and he noticed that one of its wheels was missing. ‘Strange’ he thought subconsciously, looking down the bank into the ditch.

Then a strange thing happened. The trolleys started to roll back towards him and those at the rear of the car also began to move around the car. With a feeling of unease he fumbled for his electronic door key and opened the locks as the trolleys started to accelerate. He pulled open the door and leapt into the seat as trolleys crashed into the closing door sending sparks and flakes of paint into the cold night air. “What the hell’s going on?” he asked himself loudly. “Is this some kind of sick joke with remote operated shopping trolleys?” The rest of the car park was deserted, which puzzled him. Why hadn’t anyone seen him laying down there

in the ditch? He quickly inserted the key into the ignition, turned on the lights and started the engine, not noticing that a group of trolleys had moved a few yards in front. As he put the car into gear and started moving off, the trolleys started rolling towards him. Before he even made second gear the trolleys crashed into the car smashing the headlamps. A scraping metallic sound and the sound of a clattering cooling fan also told him something more serious had happened. He turned the engine off and heard a faint gurgling. The trolleys in front backed off – one with a protruding piece of metal. 'Bloody punctured radiator' he thought, now shaking and frightened at what was happening.

Now all the trolleys were on the attack battering the car and causing it to rock. His decision to remain in the relative safety of the car changed when he saw dozens of other trolleys in mass formation charging down from the supermarket trolley park. He glanced up and down the slip road and noticed security lighting over the supermarket's unloading yard. Yes, he could make it; better than sitting here being bashed about. The disintegration of the passenger door window told him that he had to move quickly. Counting to three he threw open the door, knocking some trolleys out of the way, and made a dash towards the wall of the loading bay. He knew he could climb the security gate and would probably set off the alarm. Still, better to be fined or imprisoned for breaking and entering than be attacked by hundreds of shopping trolleys. He couldn't help notice other groups of trolleys converging towards him as he ran. He was now running for his life perspiring profusely and unaware of the trolleys nearly on his heels. Suddenly he found himself caught up by the leading trolleys and being carried faster and faster towards the wall. He thought he

could hear them rattling and squealing with delight as his body was smashed against the wall with such force that it collapsed about him leaving his mangled body amongst a pile of bricks in the unloading yard, now noisy with the wailing security alarm. Most of the trolleys made their way back to the trolley park as a large group left to position the man's car before the police arrived.

Joan couldn't believe what she was hearing when the police arrived with not only the tragic news of her husband's death but also with a search warrant. The incident had been reported as the work of a ram-raider, but a raid which went badly wrong. Had he done it before and was there a stash of goods in the house?

The fact that a number of shopping trolleys were also damaged persuaded the supermarket to abandon the idea of using electronic serial numbers to track their trolleys and to use a coin operated release mechanism instead. Maybe it was this that cut down the amount of trolley abuse or maybe it was for some other unreported reason. Certainly the incidence of nocturnal rattling and squeaking decreased markedly.

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