



Stories of Stuff



Human Kerplunk
by Joshua Edwards

As told by Army Veterans in Liskeard

He leaned against the doorway of the mess as we went to work, just watching. None of us paid him any mind. He could join in if he wanted to, but no one was going to invite him in. We all just kind of let the S.A.S chaps get on with it.

Volks didn't resist anymore. He'd resigned himself to the ritual.

(Paul Beadle to Beetle to Volkswagen Beetle to Volkswagen to Volks. Y'know, because he's small. It makes sense.)

Volks was watching Downton Abbey when we grabbed him. The boys had all gotten into it whilst they were going to [Name of region redacted for reasons of national security] the long way round to act as a deterrent for pirates. As ever, we had hoisted him up and, using six full rolls of duct tape, secured him to the ceiling. Then the game began.

Each sailor would take a turn removing one strip of duct from Volks, then the next would take his turn, then the next, going round again when everyone had had their turn. The person who removed the strip that caused Volks to fall loose from the ceiling would lose the game and then they'd start again. Originally, we'd tried securing the loser from round one to the ceiling for round two, but no-one else was slight enough to be held in place long enough to make a game of it, so Volks would just go up and then come down until the game had finished.

The S.A.S chap just watched. He didn't ask any questions. At one point, he opened a can of beer and drank it, but that was it.

I didn't think he looked all that, really. You hear S.A.S and you think of some kind of super soldier, all sinew and furrowed brows, but he didn't look any different to anyone else in the mess really. Except Volks, who, as I've said, was very small. We were taking him to to [Name of region redacted for reasons of national security] with us so he could meet up with his squad, or perform some task. The details were muddy; he'd only ever tell anyone who asked that his mission was classified.

We'd picked up people before; the squaddies we housed had mostly spent the jaunt looking green and throwing up over the side of the boat whilst we carried on as normal, not even spilling our tea whilst the waves rose and fell the height of tors. The S.A.S guy had none of those issues.

In the gym the next day, he walked in. No-one would tell you that they were bothered, but we all added a little extra weight to our work outs or ran a little faster on the treadmill with him there.

He didn't do anything that we were doing. He just picked up a large kettle bell and swung it in great wide arcs as if it weighed nothing. When he switched arms, he removed his top and we all saw him bare chested. He looked as though he'd been press moulded into existence. To this day, I've never seen a more defined and ripped human body outside of superhero cartoons or action figures from the 1980s.

We docked at [Name of region redacted for reasons of national security] for a couple of days en route. I was waiting with Volks on deck for Ryan so we could get out on shore and let our hair down. We leaned over the side of the boat having a cheeky tab. The S.A.S chap walked up next to us and looked out into the harbour. Its waters were grim, filled with oil slicks and detritus of questionable origins.

"I fancy a dip," he said. He then leapt, fully clothed into the water and just swam about, his great arms cleaving through the water so that his pace seemed mechanical. Volks and I stood dumfounded.

"Oh bugger," Volks moaned, as he saw Smiffy walking back onto the ship, a blue carrier bag in his hand, pregnant with duct tape.

... Actually, Josh, you'd best remove the place names from your notebook. I'm not sure I'm allowed to say where we were.

As told by Army Veterans at the Tabletop Wargaming night at the Little Shop