

CLEANLINESS IS NEXT TO GODLINESS

Written by

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The second part in the mini-series 'The Falconers'

FADE IN:

INT. WILLETTS FARMHOUSE 1942 - PARLOUR - DAY

Brothers, BOB(11) and TERRY(9), sit naked in an old tin bath in front of a blazing fire. They playfully splash each other.

Terry squeezes the soap between two hands, it shoots into the air and slides along the stone floor.

TERRY

Bugger..!

MRS WILLETTS(55), a jolly faced farmers wife, walks in.

MRS WILLETTS

We'll have no more of that language in here, if you please.

She picks up the soap and starts to roughly scrub Terry's back with it, Terry tries to protest.

MRS WILLETTS

Oh stop your bellyaching, a little bit of soap never hurt nobody.

She quickly rinses Terry and makes her way to Bob.

BOB

I've washed.

She grabs Bob and inspects his ears.

MRS WILLETTS

Goodness me, looks like a potato field in there.

She gives Bob the same roughhouse treatment.

MRS WILLETTS

Cleanliness is next to Godliness, you never been told that?

She hands the boys a towel.

MRS WILLETTS

Right, get dried and get dressed. I've got a message for you to take over to the Conroy farm.

Mrs Willetts disappears into the kitchen. The two boys puff their cheeks and slowly dry themselves.

TERRY

Did you hear that, Bob? She wants us to go over to the Conroy farm.

BOB

Mmmmmmm...

TERRY

I heard that Mrs Miller down at the post office say George Conroy is a bit mad.

BOB

If you ask me they're all a bit mad in the country.

TERRY

Yeah, I know, this is the second bath we've had, and we've only been here a fortnight.

INT. WILLETTS FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Mrs Willetts is wrapping up a small parcel, the boys stand side by side looking quite well groomed.

MRS WILLETTS

Right, now I want you to take this over to George and Mabel Conroy. I want no dawdling, no mischief, no nothing, got it?

The boys nod.

MRS WILLETTS

And you give it directly to Mabel...!!

She hands the parcel to Bob.

MRS WILLETTS

And don't go making any of them daft noises, neither.

Mrs Willetts licks her hand and smooths down Terry's hair, Terry flinches and immediately ruffles his hair.

MRS WILLETTS

Old George Conroy is not a well man, he don't need no pestering off you the likes of you, right..?

BOB

Right.

TERRY

Right.

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - DAY

The boys set off down the country lane.

EXT. CONROY FARM - GATE - DAY

The boys stand nervously at the Conroy Farm gate.

TERRY
I'll wait here for you.

Bob grabs Terry's arm and drags him towards the farmhouse.

EXT. CONROY FARMHOUSE - BACKDOOR

Bob knocks on the back door. No answer.

Terry looks around nervously.

TERRY
Perhaps we ought to leave it on the
doorstep, they're bound to find it.

BOB
Yeah, and someone might just nick
it, and then we will be in bother.

Bob knocks again, the doors slowly swings ajar.

BOB
It's open.

A loud COUGHING is heard coming from inside, the boys freeze.

Suddenly a gruff voice bellows out.

GEORGE CONROY (O.S.)
WHO'S THAT? WHO'S THERE?

The two boys take a step back.

GEORGE CONROY (O.S.)
SPEAK UP OR I'LL SET THE DOGS ON
YOU...!

The boys take a sharp intake of breath. Bob swallows hard.

BOB
Mr Conroy, it's us, Bob and Terry,
we've got you a parcel.

GEORGE CONROY (O.S.)
Well don't just stand there, bring
it up.

The boys look at each other with some trepidation and enter the farmhouse kitchen.

GEORGE CONROY (O.S.)
Come on, show yourselves.

Bob and Terry walk slowly up the stairs.

INT. CONROY FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

GEORGE CONROY (67), a wiry old man with long, straggly grey hair and matted beard is sitting in bed, he's holding a large, old fashioned, double barreled shotgun.

The boys can be heard slowly CLUNKING their way up the stairs, the door handle slowly turns.

GEORGE CONROY
Come on in, and no funny business,
I got a gun.

The bedroom door slowly opens, Bob cautiously peers into the room.

GEORGE CONROY
So it's you making all the racket
is it? Come on in, let's get a
proper look at you.

Bob and Terry edge into the room.

GEORGE CONROY
Oh, two of you. Come to do me in
have you?

BOB
W.w.we've brought this.

George snatches the parcel, quickly unravels it and sniffs at the contents.

GEORGE CONROY
Mmmmmmm, chicken, if I'm not
mistaken, my favourite.

TERRY
It's from Mrs Willetts.

George starts to devour the pie, Bob and Terry watch open mouthed.

GEORGE CONROY
So, you must be the two London
boys.

The two boys look to each other and back at George.

GEORGE CONROY
Been hearing all about you, I have.
Right little tearaways I heard.

George stares at the two boys whilst continuing to consume the pie.

GEORGE CONROY

You don't look quite like the pair
of scruffs I expected, quite the
opposite, I'd say...

BOB

We've had a bath.

GEORGE CONROY

Oh...?

TERRY

The second one since we got here.

GEORGE CONROY

Is that so..?

The pie is quickly disappearing.

BOB

Mrs Willetts says I was to give the
pie directly to Mrs Conroy.

George stops eating and stares at Bob.

GEORGE CONROY

Well happen she ain't here, is she?

Bob nervously bites his top lip.

George puts the last piece of pie into his mouth.

GEORGE CONROY

Mmmmmmm, now that was what I call a
pie, that was. She always was a
wonderful cook that Doris Willetts.

George licks his fingers and thumbs.

GEORGE CONROY

I knew I'd gone and married the
wrong sister, who knows, I might've
even got a bath every now and then,
too.

George leans forward and grabs Bob and pulls him to him.

GEORGE CONROY

Do I smell?

Bob puffs his cheeks and pulls his head back with disdain.

BOB

Just a little.

George pushes Bob away.

GEORGE CONROY

Not surprised, been over two years
since I last had a bath, you'd
smell too if you'd gone two years
without a bloomin' bath.

TERRY

What's stopping you?

George sits back on the pillows picking crumbs from his beard.

GEORGE CONROY

Bloody government, that's what.

Bob and Terry give each other a puzzled look.

GEORGE CONROY

Just turned up one day, they did,
right out of the blue and before
you knew it, they buggered off with
me own tin bath, bastards..!

George puts the crumbs from his beard into his mouth.

TERRY

But why would the government take
your tin bath?

GEORGE CONROY

To turn it into a ruddy Spitfire,
they says.

George shoves the empty plate back at Bob who shows it to Terry. Terry shrugs his shoulders.

GEORGE CONROY

Half the Royal Air Force flying
around in tin baths and here's me
lying here stinking, what a way to
run a ruddy war.

The boys look a little sorrowful at George.

George suddenly becomes dismissive.

GEORGE CONROY

Anyway, you better be getting on,
my Mabel doesn't take kindly to
strangers.

The boys turn to walk out the door, Terry turns back.

TERRY

Can we come and see you again?

George scratches at his beard.

GEORGE CONROY

Don't see why not, you can bring
another one of them pies if you
like.

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - MORNING

Bob and Terry are walking through the village, only their legs can be seen as they are carry a tin bath upside down on their heads.

EXT. VILLAGE BUTCHER SHOP - CONTINUOUS

PC PENDLETON(45), a large, barrel chested, village policeman, and STAN MOSS(48), a portly butcher, watch in bewilderment as the boys walk past.

STAN

What do you suppose...?

PC PENDLETON

I don't know, Stan, and to be quite honest with you, I don't really want to know.

PC Pendleton mounts his bicycle and rides off in the opposite direction. Stan shakes his head.

STAN

Them Cockneys is a strange bunch,
right enough.

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - MORNING

The boys peer over a hedge, MABEL CONROY (62) a thin, gangly, woman, rides out of the Conroy Farm on her bicycle.

As she disappears from view the boys smile at each other, replace the tin bath on their heads and carry on walking.

INT. CONROY FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

George Conroy lies in bed, he is disturbed by a CLANKING and BANGING noise coming up the stairs.

GEORGE CONROY

Who's that...?

The door bursts open with a THUD, Bob and Terry traipse in and dump the tin bath on the floor with a large CLANG.

BOB

Hello George..

TERRY

Hello George..

George looks at the boys and the tin bath with astonishment.

INT. CONROY FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

George sits in the bath, Bob is pouring in hot water from a kettle. Terry is scrubbing George's back with a large loofah.

Bob wipes the sweat from his brow.

BOB
I reckon that ought to do it, don't
you think?

George beams.

GEORGE CONROY
I reckon you're right.

He beckons the boys towards him.

GEORGE CONROY
If you boys go and have a look in
the pantry, you're bound to find
some lemonade and a biscuit or two.

The boys smile from ear to ear.

Suddenly some soot falls down the chimney sending a plume of smoke into the room.

Outside a crow CAWS loudly.

GEORGE CONROY
That ruddy bird...!

TERRY
Bird..?

GEORGE CONROY
Yes, a bloomin' great crow, stuck
its nest right in the middle of the
chimney, makes more mess than
enough.

BOB
Why don't you shoot it?

GEORGE CONROY
Wish I could, son, wish I could.

George points to his scrawny legs.

GEORGE CONROY
Old war wound, can't get about like
I used to.

Another fall of soot litters the hearth.

GEORGE CONROY
Garrrggghhh...! I'd gladly pay a
tanner for someone to wring its
ruddy neck, I would an' all.

Outside the crow CAWS louder.

INT. CONROY FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

The boys sit at the table drinking lemonade and munching on
biscuits.

TERRY
It's a pity Old Ma Willetts threw
your catapult on the fire, Bob, you
could have swatted that old crow,
no problem.

BOB
Hmmm, would have been the easiest
sixpence I'd ever earned, that's
for sure.

TERRY
Or your Gat, that would have done
the job even better.

BOB
Yes, my trusty old Gat...!

Bob jumps from the chair and swings around the room
pretending to be aiming and firing his Gat air pistol at
different objects.

BOB
POW, POW, POW...

Bob stops suddenly.

BOB'S POV He sees a large, old fashioned, double barreled
shotgun standing in the corner.

Bob smiles.

EXT. CONROY FARMYARD - DAY

Bob and Terry march across the farmyard, Bob has the shotgun
cradled in his arms.

TERRY
Are you sure about this, Bob?

Bob stops and turns.

BOB
Listen, one shot from this old
blunderbuss and old George will be
so pleased he'll probably give us a
tanner each.

Terry smiles.

EXT. CONROY FARMYARD - WATERBUTT - CONTINUOUS

The boys crouch low behind the water butt, they train their eyes on the circling crow.

The crow lands on the nest, Bob raises the shotgun and takes aim.

INT. CONROY FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - SAME

George is singing happily to himself and washing himself with a large bar of soap.

BANG. Soot, smoke and dust fill the bedroom.

GEORGE CONROY
What the blazes..?

EXT. CONROY FARMHOUSE - CHIMNEY STACK - SAME

The chimney pot has disintegrated, smoke billows, bits of nest and black feathers rain down.

BANG. A huge piece of the chimney stack is blown away, it teeters, twists and crashes down through the roof with a tremendous CRASH.

EXT. CONROY FARMYARD - WATERBUTT - CONTINUOUS

Bob lies on the ground rubbing his shoulder, the smoking shotgun lays beside him.

Terry stares up at the farmhouse roof.

TERRY
Blimey, Bob, you was only supposed
to wring it's ruddy neck.

Bob gets up gingerly, dusts himself down and inspects the damage.

BOB
Hmmm....

A bicycle bell TINKLES loudly.

Bob and Terry turn, Mabel Conroy is peddling furiously along the country lane towards the farm.

BOB
Bloody hell...

TERRY
Bloody hell...

The boys scramble behind the water butt and peer cautiously from behind it.

EXT. CONROY FARMYARD - CONTINUOUS

Mabel Conroy enters the house, a loud SCREAM is heard.

EXT. CONROY FARMYARD - WATERBUTT - CONTINUOUS

The boys give each other a worried look.

INT. CONROY FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Water is gushing through the ceiling.

Mabel rushes up the stairs.

INT. CONROY FARMHOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mabel enters the bedroom, the bed is covered with bricks and debris from the fallen chimney stack. Smoke and dust circle the room.

A dazed George and the tin bath are lying on their side, water is disappearing through the floorboards.

Mabel SCREAMS.

Mabel opens the window to let out the smoke, she sees Bob and Terry racing through the cornfield as fast as their legs will carry them.

INT. WILLETTS FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mrs Willetts sits stern faced at the kitchen table, there's a knock at the door.

EXT. WILLETTS FARM - FARMYARD - CONTINUOUS

The door opens, PC Pendleton and a sullen looking Bob and Terry stand there.

PC PENDLETON
I believe these two toe-rags belong
to you, Doris.

Mrs Willetts gives the boys a look that could kill.

MRS WILLETTS
IN...!!!

The boys enter the farmhouse, skillfully ducking Mrs Willetts flailing arms as they go.

INT. WILLETTS FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

MRS WILLETTS
Get that supper downed and then get
straight to bed..!

The boys rapidly disappear into the parlour.

MRS WILLETTS
Where did you find the little
buggers?

PC PENDLETON
Tom Hawkins spotted them skulking
about down at the old boat yard.
Probably planning to steal a boat
and emigrate off to South America I
shouldn't wonder.

Mrs Willetts shakes her head.

MRS WILLETTS
And what about poor old George?

PC PENDLETON
Apparently he escaped with just a
few bumps and bruises, he'll be
right as rain in no time. I'm
afraid the house didn't get off so
lightly though.

Mrs Willetts cups her chin with her hand.

MRS WILLETTS
Goodness, Frank, what am I to do
with the pair of them?

PC PENDLETON
I'll pop round in the morning,
Doris, have a word with them, lay
down the law, so to speak.

INT. WILLETTS FARMHOUSE - PARLOUR - CONTINUOUS

The boys sit at the table in silence, they drink their milk
and chew ruefully on their slice of bread and dripping.

MRS WILLETTS (O.S.)
Okay then, Frank, I wanted to speak
with you about something, anyways.

PC PENDLETON (O.S.)
Oh?

MRS WILLETTS (O.S.)
Yes, it's the strangest thing.
Someone only went and stole my tin
bath.

The two boys give each other a wide-eyed look.

PC Pendleton enters the parlour.

Two half empty glasses of milk are on the table, the door to
the stairs swings back and forth.

Rapid footsteps STOMP loudly up the stairs.

A door CREAKS open then SLAMS shut.

FADE OUT.