

## There's Numpties in them thar Hills

By Hughie Wilson

Rab and I,  
February,  
some years ago during a city-link special;  
two singuls tae Aviemore.

The walk in; high preshur, the auld wummin toeterin aboot abin the Chalamain gap hursell, surreal, forrinurs in wee snaw shin, hmm, the goggulls oot fur the Pools `o` Dee, magik. Blue skies again et the mooth o the great Garra corrie, where an aul baoy wiz pitchin his tent, picturesque. "Theres wur thing Rab, `Angels ridge`, " lukt Alpine tae us, "an that, `The Demons wullie`, " scary luckin, is ye`d expect.

Oan arrivul et the Courroure we wurnny really greetit wi the young German couple in occupancy, who only jist managed tae pick their faces aff the flair long enuff tae tell us they didny sprakendy English, as they angult their chairs away fae us. Aw weel, its no our tryst ur dissapintment.

Wunner whit they expectit? Wunner if they speak perfect English?

Ootside we spoatit a crowd descendin Macdui, "coming here likely". " Aye, its getting caul innit".

"freezin". We wur in wur bags, acroas the widest poasible boardur, us et the door gabul en, when aboot an oor eftur the storrs came oot, in they troopt, eight young soonin English, female vices tae , no sae bad. It wizny long tull aw wiz quate, no that we wur boathurt. That aul boay`ll huv been here before, up there oan his wee bit heathur.

Some time latur we wur aw wakent wi anithur entrance, east coast vices, three o them, an Goad o aw Goads, wan ca`ed Hamish, we aw rummult aboot the flair jigsaw like. Ah determined tae dream aboot getting up an oot o here quick the day, Hamish an thaim wur in pole poseetion noo, roon aboot the cookin area, we wur next.

The same vices wakent me again, this time accompanied, wi the soon an smells o bacon fryin. Ah lukt iver tae the wurktap, ah blinkt, Hammish wiz iver six fit wi rid hair an beard, his pals wurnny wee boays eithur, they wur made fur the hills, last in furst oot, ah felt a grin. Cranin ivur the snoring Rab a seen a deflated bouncy castle like boady o the kirk, ah nearly laft oot lood, some een wiz peerin oot unobtrusively, aw that wiz missin wiz the wee fingur tips like 'kilroy was here' ur wiz it kiljoy?, Disney maitur, time tae get up, " haw Rab, cumoan, awright boays?" "aye awright?"

There wiz space made fur wur stove an shin we wur ootside wi wur pre-prept egg pieces an fresh tea jist is Hamish an thaim wur feenishin theirs. A hauf a rowy later a poppt ma heed back in, wan stove being attendit wi two boadies, everybudy else stull lying clappit, oor stove hud went oot. Rab nickt back in tae soart it fur the flasks.

Two meenits latur we wur stertult wi a volley o squeeks an squeals fae within, the flames fae Rabs spult meths wur three fit in the air abin the wurktap, him an the two unfortunates valiantly managed tae grab the fuel boattuls while the rest bagwrestled. We watched is the fire deid suddenly, its shoart life spectacular. Hamish an thaim deapairtit laffin tae thursells, ah went right in tae assess the damage.

Wur trangia hud nae strap left, gone aw the gither, behin it sat a wee boays Charlet mosers, wan o the straps wiz aw shrivult up like a miniture snake skin cast oaf in the desert, it hud tried in agony tae dissapear up its ain erse, the ither like the stove`s, history, no evin a wee souldified puddul oan the table. Rab said "sorry pal" (the only words ivur passed atween us an thaim), as the boay liftit the crampons so as no tae hurt thaim onymair. We felt incredulous een oan us as we addit the rattly stove, fuel an empty flasks tae wur waitin rucsacs and leavin wur beddin tae Goads mercy wur oan wur wiy wi the risin sun oan wur backs.

We stertit up tae wur furst exercise,`the high snaw traverse roon the shoodur ablow they roacks there`, guid it wiz tae, then drapt doon tae the lochan tae full wur flasks unner anithur big blue sky. We reflectit oan events up tae noo,

"whit aboot Hamish an thaim?"

"h`aye sum boays"

"did ye see that baldy crampon?"

"see it? Ah tried tae rescue it twice!"  
"yur suppost tae cairry spare straps"  
"dae you ?"  
"naw"  
"hope the beddins awright, its no oors"  
"no much is"  
"acht it wiz an accident"

Jist et that, their came fae aboot the watterfa, a lone stranger. Before he`d reacht us fur pleasantries, we`d agreed tae let him go weel oan, he`d two drapt picts an a Lowe alpine mountain cap, " he lucks the pairt." It wiz anithur east coast man headin west.

Next time we seen him close up wiz et the rocks near the tap, we wur aboot tae right flank when doon roon he appeart, enquirin if we hud a rope?" Aye how?", nae ansir , he jist dissapeart back up roon, we wur puzzult no detert. So there we seen im, in against the roacks twinty yairds up luckin doon. The snaw slope swept long an wide tae the baotum an steepent jist enuff et the tap. The wiy wiz obvious so oot we stept an sterted up, wur man din the same an nivur luckt back tull we wur stonin oan the tap, where we took phoaties fur each ithur an depairtit in oaposite directions wi weelwishes, hivin nivur fun oot whit the problem wiz ur who it affectit.

Fae Cairn Tool we left the Demon tae his privacy an headit fur the courror, the dorkness bate us, it came doon in warm still air, right doon low, pitch black. We reacht the desertit refuge et the furst attempt wi skull an luck, fur ye couldny see it fae ten yairds away tae fin the door.

We wur fed an wattert, suppin oot o thermul mugs an talkin aboot strangeness, "this weather, man, its no real." " ah ken, ye could wear shoarts oot there" " ye could go in the bare buff, naebudy`d see ye"

Wur heedtoarches wur iyways oan an aff an we`d a connul burnin in the windy, " it`ll help oanybudy fin the boathy" , " aye they`ll shin fin me sleepin then" "ach its Sunday, there`ll be naebudy here noo" " aye wull hiv a smoke an get the heeds doon"

Ah wiz sittin et the windy en, Rab between me an the door, he didny hear it ur wiz in denial, he`s deaf et times, "haw Rab, theres sumbudy et the door!"

It wiz rythmic yet there wiz an uncertainty in the three faint chaps. As we baith luckt ivur, this time, the dept collector that kens thurs sumbudy in chapt it three times. Rab's luck returtn as ah reverbiratit, it wiz me thit hud been in denial, Rab didny ken oany o the ghost stories oanywi. Then, still in the silence, ah didny shout, " come in its no loakt", ah switcht aff ma heedtoarch an muttert "see who it is Rab". He wiz the closest, it wiz an unwritten rule.

Up he goat wi a backward glance, ah noadit encouragement while thinkin aboot para-normal chap door run, bit fearin wurse. Rab walked the rice paper, then in wan move positively swung the door open taking hisself in a sweeping sidestep back against the gable w`a. The tension floodit the interiur fur a micro secunt, before being suckt back oot as in stummult a wee boay no long oot his teens, he`d obviously tane the wrang turn et the highstreet. He hud two biggur, bit mair sheepish pals oan his tail.

The three sanctuary seekers stood jist inside, strainin tae see as the wee desperado spread his hons tae the flair, palms up an says tae Rab, " sorry for wetting your floor", in the semi dorkness ah asked masell these insane questions , hus he jist hud a wee accident? Is the grey man involved eftur aw ? His accent though slightly hysterical, came fae aboot England.

His een noo encompass the area mappt oot wi his hons , he saw earth, ur wiz it concrete? Luckin up wi buildin shoke he seen the utter sparcity o it aw, then the chairs fae McBeth in the flickerin shadas an there facin him, the soul destroying hert o a long barren fire place. The tin roof an wa`s o boulders closed in oan him, the figure in the coarnur cote his attention , so his een tried tae meet mine, his hons stull palms up began tae rise, as he made tae staggur furrit he shyly pleedit " are you the mountain rescue?"

"im ah fuck" ah retortit, turnin ma heedtoarch oan, it wurkt, he stoapt.

The biggest stooge elaboratit , " he fell in the stream, we`re wet as well"

"aye well yir stull lucky, we don`t live here, we`re here fur fun, shut the door an come in ,whits happent?"

They set oaf fae the sugar bowl fur a circular roon Lurchers crag in their clubbook timberlands, two pair o bare hons an wan bare heed among thaim. Sandwiches an juice , nae flask, jaikits ah widny

wear tae ma wurk if ah hud it, aye an a crispy new pathfinder, like me wi war and peace. They`d wan aipple left an they wur cauld.

The sun hud drew thaim intae the long, lurin line o the Lairig Ghru, where eventually, the snaws et the Pools o Dee spookt thaim in the gloamin an shin the totality o the dorkness complicatit thoughts o a return via that elusive left turn.

The warm air enticed thaim oan an noo doonward wi the misleadin thought that civilisation canny be for away. Progress wiz slowin worryingly when they saw, then realised whit they thought wiz a solitary stor, wiz a light et a windy. They came tae that Light in a straight line. We disht oot aw the spares, some scoff an brewed up, it wiz enuff tae dae the joab oan a night like this, thur wiz nae nakit heeds ur hons in the hoose; but they wur insistently gurnin fur hame.

We`d two heed toarches an a nine mull rope fur honloops fur the blind. So we oafurt this as a lesson in futility, packt up, geart up an wur back in the boathy in an oor. Noo the three men wiser wur resigned tae an uncomfortable night oan tap o oor empty rucsacs an their skull bags wi only oor bivvi bags is a toeken duvet, while we goat sum sleep. When we arrived here yesturday, Rab hud viced concern et his ain wisdom fur packin his trainurs, fur his pack wiz heavy, bit his feet wur weel kent. Noo he thought, whit aboot, weathur permittin, enjoying the stroll oot the moarn in trainers, wi the option o bootin up, while the three numpties took turns each et cairrying his ruc sac. The weathur permittit an that's the wiy it went . In the guid six oors it tane, it goat steadily cauldur an windiur, tull the prodiguls wur delightit tae see reliable machinery again, in noo sub zero temperatures. So wi the lessun suitably underlined, they aw vowed no tae take it up, no evin in the summur, we advised mair research as we moaturt taewards the Winking owl, "plenty o room in the back here, eh Rab?

There wiz jist enuff time fur thaim tae buy us a pint o guiness before we`d tae catch wur bus. They wurny delightit enuff tae take the thirty mile detour getting us hame, they wur greeting aboot their wurk, miby it wiz the weight o Rabs rucsac that din it, ur last nights promise that they`d buy the diner the day.

Best o luck tae thaim o oanywiy.