

THE MAYOR AND THE MONKEY

by

William O Campbell

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website: www.woc.talktalk.net

NED: That so? (SHOUTS) Dee! A new 'un here for you.

JOHN: Thought I'd use the long weekend to have a look round. And you? Are you from Italy? The "Ciao, Signore."

NED: We go Italian at Whitsun. It's a tradition and we like to keep it up in this pub. Goes a long way back. I suppose traditions tend to do that, don't they? Ah, Dee, half of Guest for our guest. On the house. Excuse me, I've things to get ready.

JOHN: Thank you, but I shouldn't.

DEE: Dead right – you shouldn't look a gift horse in the mouth, er . . . ?

JOHN: John. Jonathan actually, but I prefer John. Though my mother insisted on j-o-n, without the 'h'.

DEE: Hi John. I'm Dee. Short for Daphne. Y'know, the flower.

JOHN: No. That's another name I didn't know about. Forgive me asking, but aren't you too young to be pulling a pint in a pub?

DEE: No. I'm the Chalvey Whitsun Princess. I was crowned yesterday and this is one of my duties.

JOHN: Serving in a pub is a strange duty for a Princess.

DEE: Not round here. I was picked from loads of girls. It's a tradition and goes back ages and ages.

JOHN: Another tradition? In this brick and concrete wilderness?

DEE: Here you go, your welcome drink. A half is as far as Ned's generosity goes. Good job you didn't bring your wife.

JOHN: I'm not married.

DEE: Really. Ever? Girl friend? Sorry, poor you. Brothers? Sisters? You must have a mum and dad.

JOHN: They cleared off to Spain years ago. So effectively – no one.

DEE: (SHOUTS) Ned! John's all on his own. You should make the incomer proper welcome.

JOHN: There's really no need.

NED: (OFF) Take him through to the garden.

JOHN: Really. I'm happy where I am.

DEE: (JOKING) The Whitsun Princess, that's me, commands it!

SCENE 2 GOOD HOPE PUB – GARDEN

DISTANT STREET ORGAN MUSIC INTRODUCES
THIS TRANSITION.

DEE: John – this is Ashley. What Ashley doesn't know about Chalvey ain't worth knowing. She and her family's been here forever.

ASHLEY: I'm not that old, Dee. Hi, John. This is Mayo. Oli, Neville and Dec over there. You need a top up – my treat.

JOHN: I'm fine, thank you. Mayo is an unusual name.

DEE: Some treat, Ashley. Beer from these two barrels is free, John. A Whit tradition. "And Sir, 'tis rude to refuse the Whitsun pint."

JOHN: Oh, all right. Just a top-up.

ASHLEY: "And Sir, Mayo, 'tis death, not salad dressing." Mayo's name means from the yew tree.

JOHN: Really. I'm getting quite an education, coming here. Why is the beer free?

GRAMS: _____ STREET ORGAN UNDER.

ASHLEY: It goes back to the mid-1800s. The landlord of the *Cape of Good Hope* gave two barrels for the Whitsun ceremony on the Green in front of the pub . . .

JOHN: Goodness, this beer is strong.

GRAMS: _____ OUT.

I'm feeling light-headed already.

NED: (COMING FORWARD) Good to see you're into the festivities, John. Pour him another Whit pint, Dee. The girls have been telling you about it, have they? The Stab Monk?

JOHN: The what?

NED: Enlighten him Ashley.

ASHLEY: It's Dee's story this year.

DEE: That's right, Ashley, mine this year. There's this bunch of Italians living in Windsor and –

ASHLEY: (EXASPERATED) When?

GRAMS: STREET ORGAN MUSIC BUILDS UNDER

DEE: Oh yeah. Middle of the 1800s. So there's these Italians, and one of them, Eduardo, is an organ-grinder.

JOHN: Aren't all Italians? (GIGGLES)

DEE: The organ-grinder comes over to Chalvey on Whit Monday and he has a little monkey with him to collect the money.

EDUARDO: Bella, bella musica. Com-a close.

DEE: There is a little girl in the crowd called Laurel.

EDUARDO: Ma musica makes you feel-a happy. Si?

DEE: Laurel is fascinated by the monkey.

EDUARDO: You give money to ma monkey, per favore.

LAUREL: Here, monkey. Come to Laurel. Let me hold you. What funny hands, and funny little face. You'll be my baby. I'll cuddle you. Stop wriggling. Now I have to hold you tight. Babies must do what mummy tells them. I'll smack you. I will. (SCREAMS)

EDUARDO: Wassa happen?

LAUREL: It bit me! I'm going to die. It bit me on my heart. Bad monkey.

EDUARDO: Non. Is good monkey.

LAUREL: Isn't. Bad monkey. Evil monkey. Evil.

CROWD: Evil monkey. Kill the monkey. (REPEATED CHANT)

GRAMS: _____ OUT.

ASHLEY: Laurel's dad raced from the pub, and stabbed the monkey to death in front of the organ-grinder.

JOHN: Cheers, Laurel's dad!

ASHLEY: Eduardo was so upset, the villagers took pity on him. The money they raised paid for a wake and burying the monkey in Chalvey Grove. It bought a new monkey for the organ-grinder and two barrels of free beer for the mourners.

JOHN: Cheers to the villagers. Goodness, I'm drunk.

NED: About time you lads went Ditch Dodgin'. You too, John.

JOHN: Not for me, thanks.

DEE: "Good Sir, I command you to come Ditch Dodging." You mustn't refuse the Whitsun Princess.

JOHN: On this occasion . . .

DEE: It's fun.

JOHN: Oh, all right.

SCENE 3 CHALVEY BLACK DITCH

BESIDE A MOTORWAY EMBANKMENT.

JOHN: Along the rail? Why can't we just walk over the footbridge.

ASHLEY: It wouldn't be the point. It's not Cheddar Gorge, it's Black Ditch. A brook. The aim is to dodge falling in the Ditch.

JOHN: I'll be soaked, and stung to death by nettles.

ASHLEY: So – don't fall in. You saw Mayo do it. Look straight ahead, not down, and keep moving. The faster you cross the easier it is. Like riding a bike.

JOHN: Exactly. I nearly fell off mine along . . . ?

ASHLEY: Telford Drive. That was a pothole in the cycle lane. There's no potholes on this handrail. Look, we'll practise across the bridge. Eyes up! Walk. Keep them fixed on that second lamppost. Keep going. Good. Now you're ready for the rail.

JOHN: As much as I'll ever be.

ASHLEY: Put a foot in Mayo's hands. And – hup! Remember, concentrate on the second lamppost. Walk. You're doing great. (LOW) Did you fix it, Mayo? Right. There's a first; Mayo with a bar of soap.

JOHN: It's not so bad.

ASHLEY: Good. You're almost half way already. The quicker you walk the sooner you'll be done.

JOHN: (CRY OF ALARM)

F/X: SPLASH OF PERSON FALLING INTO WATER.

SCENE 4 GOOD HOPE PUB – BACK ROOM

NED: Get this whisky down you. How's the clothes?

JOHN: A bit big. I'm like a stick in a sack. And they're too . . . bright for me. I'll be glad when mine are dried out.

NED: Don't worry about that.

JOHN: And, I feel . . . exposed.

NED: This is your regalia as Mayor of Chalvey.

JOHN: They're very loose. Mayor? What do you mean?

NED: For the past 150 years, the first male to fall into Black Ditch on Whitsuntide becomes Mayor.

JOHN: You're kidding.

NED: John, it is my honour to proclaim you: Mayor of Chalvey for the ensuing twelve months.

JOHN: It's a joke, right?

NED: Let me refill your whisky. No, it's a Chalvey tradition. Down in one. "To the Mayor of Chalvey."

JOHN: I'm really Mayor? Then a refill, my man! Do I get a limmo?

NED: No, but you are entitled to graze your livestock on Chalvey Green free of charge and encumbrance.

JOHN: They'll starve to death, it's all paving slabs and concrete. What else do I get?

NED: One pint of best from the *Good Hope* for each day of your tenure. (SHOUTS) Dee! Bring the Mayor's special pint.

JOHN: How about a glass of white wine instead?

NED: Afraid not, beer is traditional. There's one more privilege.

JOHN: I have to wear this silly outfit every time I come here.

NED: So long as you hold the office of Mayor of Chalvey the Whitsun Princess is at your service.

JOHN: What? Dee? She'll deliver my newspaper, or something?

NED: Whatever the Mayor wishes.

JOHN: Like . . . cook my meals?

NED: If you wish. She is for you to do with as you like.

JOHN: You mean . . . You're joking, aren't you? Don't just clear off.

DEE: Here's your special ale, Mister Mayor. Is there anything else I can do for Your Worship?

JOHN: It's true? You know about it?

DEE: Anything you desire.

JOHN: But you're . . . very young.

DEE: Am I? It's the greatest honour for a Chalvey girl. I'm thirteen, the luckiest year. I'm pretty. I've started my periods. I was the one chosen to be the Whitsun Princess.

JOHN: Periods? If I actually . . . you know . . .

DEE: Yes.

JOHN: It's illegal.

DEE: It's expected. It's the tradition. No one would tell. Don't you want to? Aren't I pretty enough?

JOHN: Yes. No. No! I didn't mean . . . I need another whisky.

DEE: You don't have to do everything, not if you don't want. But you must do something. Else I'll be the first Whitsun Princess ever to be a utterly useless. It'll be total humiliation. I'll have let down my whole family. Everyone.

JOHN: I don't want that.

DEE: What do you want? It's yours, Your Worship. (CLOSE) D'you want to kiss me? Do you want to feel my breasts? Or touch me . . . I've nothing underneath.

JOHN: Someone might come! (GIGGLES)

DEE: They won't. They want you to. They know I'm yours, Your Worship.

JOHN: But the toilets are back there.

DEE: Oh yeah. And you're much too tense. I know a place where we won't be disturbed. It's not far. Are you up for it?

JOHN: Yes.

DEE: I was getting the feeling you were. Come on.

SCENE 5 CHALVEY GROVE COPSE

BESIDE A MOTORWAY EMBANKMENT.

DEE: Just push those branches aside. Cosy, huh? Lie down. Bit noisy with the motorway, but it keeps this place private.

JOHN: It's like . . . a four-poster bed. With trees.

DEE: Yeah, the Mayor of Chalvey's bed in Chalvey Grove. With his Princess. (KISS) No, you lie back. I'll do everything. Let's have these off you for a start.

JOHN: What's that . . . (SIGHS)

DEE: Got to get the mayor's cockade on display, don't we?

JOHN: . . . that on your head?

DEE: Isn't that better? (KISS) This thing? The Whitsun Princess' crown.

JOHN: It's a garland. I didn't see you bring –

DEE: Where's Your Worship's mace gone? I can hardly see it.

JOHN: It's chillier here.

DEE: Well, I'm hot. Put your hands here. That's it. Go on. Let's see now. Oh dear.

JOHN: Loads to drink.

DEE: Don't let me down, Your Worship. You want to, don't you?

JOHN: Yes,

DEE: I want you to. I need you to. Don't I get you going?

JOHN: Oh, yes.

DEE: Well then?

JOHN: It'll come.

DEE: When? (CLOSE) I brought something to help. Just in case. Wanna give it a go?

JOHN: What kind of thing?

DEE: Stiffening stuff. It'll make you stiff like never ever.

JOHN: It will? Viagra?

DEE: Do you want it?

JOHN: I don't know.

DEE: For me. For the two of us.

JOHN: Oh, all right.

DEE: Say: pretty please.

GRAMS: STREET ORGAN MUSIC UNDER

JOHN: Please, Princess. (BEAT) That's a hypoderm- (SHRIEKS)

DEE: Did it hurt a teeny bit? I'm sorry. Straight in the gut gets a quicker effect. There, there. I'll cuddle you. My baby. (KISS) Here, take your mind off the nasty hurt. (KISS) Kiss my breast. Go on. Harder. I'll hold you tight. (CLOSE) Bite it. I know you want to. For jabbing you. You really want to. Bite me. Hard!

DEE: (SCREAMS) It bit me! It bit me on my heart.

JOHN: You told me –

DEE: Bad monkey.

JOHN: What?

DEE: Evil monkey.

JOHN: What're you on about?

DEE: Evil monkey. Evil!

JOHN: Stop that! You're hysteric- Arrgh! (GAGS) Shit! What's happening?

DEE: The poison's starting to work.

JOHN: Poison! (GAGS)

DEE: Your lips are burning. Not from Dee's kisses, from Daphne's berries. Concentrated, injected, deadly. It'll take an hour or two.

JOHN: This can't be real! Why?

DEE: Because I am the Whitsun Princess,

JOHN: You're crazy. Why me?

NED: (COMING FORWARD) Perchè, Signore – because Sir – you are the Mayor of Chalvey.

JOHN: Ned? Thank goodness. Get her off – Arggh!

NED: Mayo, peg his legs down. You know the way.

JOHN: Ned, what are you doing? For mercy's sake.

NED: Neville, Oli, peg his arms. Hold his head still, Ashley.

JOHN: (SHOUTS UNTIL STOPPERED) Help! Somebody. Help me!

DEE: That's it, Your Worship. Shout. Mouth wide open and – in they go. My pretty garland. In, in!

NED: (CLOSE – COMMENTARY TO JOHN) You are a bad monkey, Your Worship. You've made our Whitsun Princess ruin her garland. They're Daphne leaves. Don't swallow them, they're poisonous. Ha-ha.

ASHLEY: Whitsun Princess, I hand to you the 'monkey knife.'

NED: (CLOSE) Your Worship, don't make such a fuss. You've no further use for your balls. Look on the positive side: you're donating them for the prosperity of our village.

DEE: Spread him wider, Mayo. Give a girl room to work.

ASHLEY: (REPRIMANDING) Princess! Princess Laurel.

GRAMS: STREET ORGAN UP.

LAUREL: Hear me, ancient monkey. We know it was from fear you bit little Laurel. It was through anger our forebears killed you. On this your grave I, the Whitsun Princess of Chalvey, give you this offering. Let it appease past wrongs. May it be a potent for good fortune to our village. With the sacred monkey knife I, the Whitsun Princess of Chalvey – sever the past.

JOHN: (STIFFLED SCREAM)

LAUREL: Thus the fresh life-blood seeps into the monkey grave to nourish and enrich the ground. So I, the Whitsun Princess, take this offering of manhood and fertility. Let the sacrifice flow through me as the spiritual embodiment of Chalvey womankind. "*Testiculus gluttio*." (SWALLOWS THE TESTES)

GRAMS: STREET ORGAN LOW.

NED: (CLOSE) Aren't you proud, Your Worship? You got your semen in our Princess after all. And into every woman of the village.

ASHLEY: You did fine, Princess, on the whole. It's actually 'portent' not 'potent', but we never expected perfection with you. You two – give me a hand helping Dee back to the *Good Hope*.

NED: (CLOSE) Now, Your Worship, your second great honour is for your body to be buried across the length and breadth of Chalvey. Your heart will be buried here in the Monkey's Grove. The rest will nourish many gardens in the villag. I'm sure you understand we have to protect the ceremony from ignorant discovery. (COMMANDS) Begin!

CROWD: (REPEATED CHANT TO SOUND OF CHOPPING AND HEWING) Evil monkey. Kill the monkey.

CHANT FADES UNDER CHALVEY WHIT SONG.

NED:

There is a spot in this beautiful land,
That has a tale affixed to a monkey.
It's close to a castle, famous and grand;
It's the village that is known as Chalvey.

Every year at Whit a new mayor is found,
Amid devilment, fun and ribaldry.
A man who'll give all to enrich the ground,
Of the village that is known as Chalvey.

A pretty maid is crowned the Whit Princess,
With four Stab Monks – to honour the monkey.
For tradition demands a yearly largess,
From the village that is known as Chalvey.

END

Cast list

John	Easy-going but reserved, mid-late 30s.
Ned	Landlord of pub. Edward.
Eduardo	1860s Italian organ-grinder. Same actor as Ned.
Dee	Daphne. Whitsun Princess, just turned 13 years. Older than her age.
Laurel	1860s young girl. Same actor as Dee.
Ashley	Around mid-late 20s. Versed in local knowledge.
(Crowd)	A chanting mob.

Disclaimer

All characters in this script are fictitious and any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

Chalvey folklore includes the tales of the Stab Monk, the Black Ditch and the mayor-making. These are recorded in the references listed below.

Everything to do with the Whitsun Princess is fiction.

The Chalvey Whitsun Song is a pastiche rewording of the “Chalvey National Anthem” written by Dick Pond of Chalvey Grove about 1910.

References

Strange Berkshire published by Strange Folklore Society 1986.
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Slough Museum

<http://www.sloughmuseum.co.uk/>

Slough History Online

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