

GOD'S FACTORY

Terry Morgan

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'God's Factory'

A light-hearted diversion from Terry Morgan's normal serious fiction!

Arthur Godley, proprietor of Godley's Garden Gnomes and Godley Investments meets his maker in unusual circumstances and, in the process, learns a few costly lessons. A short, twenty first century version of Charles Dickens's "A Christmas Carol".

GOD's FACTORY

"I'm Arthur Godley - Godley by name and Godly by nature. Take a pew, mate. I won't be long."

From behind his expansive white desk, Arthur Godley briefly glanced up at his visitor over the top of his tinted spectacles. Noticing that something wasn't quite right, he then pushed them to the top of his head. "Not there, mate. The sofa is reserved for special occasions. This chair here is the one I use for ordinary visitors.....Yes, that's the one."

Arthur Godley, proprietor of Godley's Garden Gnomes of Krupton continued to tap away at the keyboard on his desk and then stared at the result on the computer screen.

"That's strange. I tapped in five million and only half a million came up." He tried again. "That's better - must have spilt some coffee on the nought."

He then took a large calculator, tapped some more keys and peered at the result. "Bloody hell. Bless my socks. I've made more than I thought."

He straightened the big knot of his bright red tie, flicked at something invisible on his white shirt with its long, pointed collar and pulled on the gold cuff links. Satisfied that they now pointed in the direction of his guest, he leaned forward and looked at him.

"I understand," he said, "that you've come to find out why the local rag, the Krupton Weekly News and Journal, has started calling me a local business guru, God's gift to Krupton business and the town's economic saviour."

His visitor nodded.

"They are right of course," Godley went on. "But I'm not sure how long you've got and my success might take a while to explain. I can show you my PowerPoint presentation if you like. I show it to all those who want to know why I've succeeded where so many others have failed. However, I usually start my explanation by suggesting a quick peek out of my window."

Godley put his glasses on the desk, pushed his white leather executive swivel chair back, stood up and waded across the thick pile carpet to the biggest of the two windows. He pulled on a cord. "I'll open the Venetian blinds so that you can see the view. Stand up. Come here."

His visitor stood up and walked silently to the window.

"There. Impressive, isn't it.? There's not much that's impressive over the high brick wall, but the landscaping on my side makes the most of the total dereliction that once surrounded us, don't you think? You will notice the contours in the lawn. I had those done while we had use of the JCB bulldozer - they'd left a full tank of diesel and the key was in the ignition. But what do you think of the trees, the shrubs and the flower borders? I always liked sunflowers. They have such big heads and stand above everything else. What do you think of the lawn? Can you smell the freshly cut grass even from behind my double glazing? I always say that springtime is like a new product being launched on the market.

"But that's not all, you know. Oh no. Come to this other window. You see the row of fir trees? Behind them is my lake. The local frogs and toads visit the lake in autumn for their annual nuptials, the lucky sods. There are seventeen goldfish in there and I have a member of staff whose job it is to feed them. I even put it in his job description. 'To ensure all goldfish are kept alive' it says. That way if one dies.....well you understand.

"Oh yes, these landscaped premises are one reason they now call me God. It's a patch of heaven amongst widespread mediocrity." Godley laughed at his joke. "And you know what, mate? I often see the locals peering over the wall or looking through the bars of the gate when they're out walking their dogs. They point up here to my office window and I can see the envy on their faces.

"That's because they're impressed. They see Godley's Garden Gnomes as a success story and assume I'm making big money - which, of course, is very true. This new office of mine is the only decent bit of commercial real estate for miles. If you know how to do it, mate, there are many ways of making it - and then stashing it."

Arthur Godley leaned on the window sill and looked towards the high iron gate in the brick wall that shielded him from the rest of the Krupton Trading Estate. He nodded.

"Yes, I often see them pointing. It's jealousy. There's no shortage of envy around these parts. As I joked to someone in the Red Lion on Sunday lunchtime, it's very green around here - green as in envy, green as in 'around the ears' and green as in naivety.

"The envy is not surprising though, " he went on, "After all, I've now seen all the competition off. It's only me left around here. Most of the other businesses are long gone, boarded up or just falling down. There are 'For Sale' and 'To Let' posters everywhere, but this corner is like an oasis in the desert. Survival of the fittest I call it but I saw it coming years ago, and, unlike the others, planned accordingly. You've got to be born with a nose for business, you've either got it or you haven't.

"I've had it since before I left school. At fourteen I won the prize for enterprise and entrepreneurship, but I had a good head start. I was running the betting circle and they all owed me a fortune, so I told them I'd write their debts off if they let me win."

Arthur Godley smiled at the fond memory. Then he rubbed his hands together.

"So, nice bit of landscaping, isn't it? What do you think, mate? But I'll probably sell up soon and go and live permanently in Spain. I'm getting fed up here with all the youth unemployment and tax. Spain is so much better. I'll miss this view, but not too much. I've already got a villa and a couple of acres near Malaga that I bought from the local mayor for a snip - paperwork signed by him and everything. And it won't be difficult selling this business, oh no."

Godley walked back to his desk and sat down leaving his visitor standing by the window. He shook his head as if about to tell a story with another fond memory.

"Did you know, mate, I bought this place as a rundown old Victorian factory that was losing money making plastic gnomes for front gardens. They had no idea how to make money, you see, but I soon turned things around. There was a lot of sacking to do to start with but it's all the fault of the Chinese. They run things on bloody shoestrings over there. So, if you can't beat them, you join them - that's my philosophy.

"The Chinese aren't exactly known for putting plastic garden gnomes in their front gardens but they certainly know how to make them. And so, flexible! You know, mate, I can get them in any colour, any size, any sort of hat or any colour of hair and eyes. They'll do Chinese gnomes with different eyes and a pigtail if you like and I've got one model that looks like an Irish leprechaun. It went down a treat at Cheltenham Gold Cup week. Another one looks like Prince Philip, the ethnic diversity gnome looks like Barack Obama and I've got a set of four with haircuts that look like the old Beatles. Ringo has a hole in each hand for his drumsticks and Paul has his mouth open like he's singing. I'm thinking of fixing a wire for a recording of 'She Loves You' blaring out. What do you think?"

"But the most popular are what I call the Fishing Gnomes that people put around garden ponds. I've got a dozen or more Fishing Gnomes around my lake with spotlights to show customers how Gnomes add a touch of sophistication to a garden. The Fishing Gnomes come with a hole where we fit the fishing rod made out of a stick and a piece of string, so it's not all made in China. We do the finishing off here and all the quality assurance as we take quality very seriously. We don't want any faulty Gnomes out there, oh dear me no.

"You've heard of the Gnomes of Zurich? Well, I'm the Gnome of Krupton. Funny that. don't you think? But anything I want my Chinese supplier to do - he's called Ho, by the way - Ho can do it. All I do is fax Ho a quick sketch and inside a month they're back here as samples for approval."

Godley looked up to see that his visitor was sitting in the chair again.

"That's it, mate," he said, "Make yourself comfortable. What was I saying? Oh yes, talking about Ho. Yes, Ho even made me two gnomes that you can join together, one on top the other, one behind another, lying down or any other combination depending on your taste. I call these my 'Copulating Gnomes'. You'd be surprised how popular they are. Little old ladies love them.

"And another of Ho's own designs is one that pisses into buckets or fountains. All we have to do is fix a short metal tube for a dick and an electric plug. That's where my production team come in. I've got three old guys who were already here when I came, a teenage dick fitter apprentice and my foreman, Alan, who I call the production manager.

"Oh, and if you saw another old guy in the garden that's Cyril. He's way past seventy but he does a bit of weeding and feeds the fish. Cyril's the one with the job specification. I'm putting him onto painting the brick wall next week - nothing fancy, a splash of red paint to save any proper pointing. Might sell up soon, you see."

Godley sighed, put his tinted spectacles on and looked over the top of them at his visitor. "You're very quiet. I like a quiet person. Shows you're listening. Absorbing the success story.

"Do you like red brick, mate? I don't. The remains of the old red brick factory building are now hidden behind the laurel bushes at the back, out of sight, out of mind. The old red brick factory is where we finish off gnomes and attach the fishing rods, dicks and plugs. Garden gnomes are at the back but garden gnomes are really the front, if you get my gist."

Godley winked at his visitor but got no reaction. "No, don't even ask. I shan't be taking you out there even for a quick look. This new glass and steel office of mine is where the real action is."

Godley pushed his chair back and stood up again. He went towards the window but then looked back over his shoulder at his visitor.

"You're looking at me," he said. "But I've seen that look before. You are thinking that no-one can make money from plastic garden gnomes, aren't you? But as that old song says, 'It ain't what you do but the way that you do it.' You heard that song before? That song could have been written for me."

Godley turned and came back a few steps.

"Another song is 'Happiness, happiness'. You remember Ken Dodd? He sang it because he thought he'd got around the Inland Revenue by not paying his tax."

Godley then stood with his thumb to his mouth like a microphone.

"Happiness, happiness," he tried to sing, "The greatest gift that I possess. I thank the Lord that I've been blessed. With more than my share of happiness. Remember dear old Ken now? He was a bit premature with that song because they caught up with him, didn't they? He didn't have a business head on him, you see. He should have stuck to jokes and his tickling stick. Poor old Ken should have asked me. Never sing about it, mate, I would have told him. Keep it quiet. Be clever with it. Stick it somewhere, preferably under a foreign mattress."

Godley sat down, exhausted by his singing. He swung around one full circle in his white leather executive chair.

"You know another of my most popular sayings? Go on try.....Oh well. Money is where the money's stashed - that's what I say. Got it mate? Wink, wink and say no more, eh?" Arthur Godley nodded, winked and grinned all at the same time, but if his visitor nodded then it was barely perceptible.

"But you know the secret of a successful modern business, mate?" Godley asked as his winking subsided. "Diversification. Diversify or die I always say. Sometimes I say die or diversify, but it's all the same. And do you know how I do diversifying? Do you? The garden gnomes and the old factory at the back is the front. I think I already mentioned that before. But you get my meaning? No, it's the front for Godley Investments.

"It's amazing what you can offset against a business that's losing money if you're clever. You see once I'd set up Godley Investments things really

took off. Clowns wanting to buy me out are like bees around a honey pot nowadays."

Arthur Godley stopped. He stared at his visitor again. His visitor was staring back and, as far as Godley could recall, he'd still said nothing since his arrival. It was very unusual. Godley coughed, perhaps nervously, and stuck a finger inside his shirt collar to release a neck hair that had got stuck. Then he took a deep breath.

"You're looking at me. I hope it's not a look of envy. But perhaps, like me, you enjoy listening to a successful entrepreneur explaining how it's done. Perhaps you feel you are enjoying the company of someone from whom you can learn a thing or two, relaxing in his sumptuous office, seeing how entrepreneurship, enterprise, hard work, ingenuity and touches of inspired genius can be turned into wealth. I assume you saw my Bentley parked by the front door."

Godley paused, fiddled with his watch strap next to the matching gold cuff links.

"On the other hand," he paused a little longer. "I can see from your old suit that you're not a high-flying businessman from the financial sector. Are you perhaps a landscape gardener? Do you work for the Council? Because if so let me tell you something. Do you know there is a plan to sow wild flower seeds on that patch of waste ground next to the Quick Fit car repair shop? You believe that? God help us, I thought. What is the world coming to? As soon as I heard I phoned Krupton Council. 'What the fuck's going on.' I said, 'It'll end up looking like some of the residents around here - unkempt.' You know what I mean? So if you work for the Council go back and tell them.

"Now, you've seen my Lawson's Cypress trees by the lake, what do you think? I like evergreen trees. I had a maple tree once but the bloody thing turned bright scarlet in the autumn and dropped leaves everywhere. I soon got that tree sorted - you're sitting on it right now. Fir trees, that's what they need - trimmed ones so that the rubbish from McDonalds is held back and doesn't fly into the road, onto the Krupton Estate and then blow down here to my gate."

Godley laughed, got up and went to the window again.

"But the scene from my picture window wasn't always like that, you know. I may appear to be a tough, no nonsense businessman with a proven track record but I have my softer side." He sighed emotionally, looked out onto the garden

"I'm a great follower of natural history. I've got a book on dinosaurs at home. A few million years ago, you would have seen dinosaurs, sabre

toothed tigers and bloody great woolly elephants with long tusks out there beyond the brick wall. They dug up a bone or two on the common a while back so there must have been a jungle around here at some time. Wild beasts probably prowled right where my sunflowers are and big gorillas probably sat thumping their chests right where my desk is now. Can you imagine that?

"If you stand here at the window looking out with your eyes closed as I sometimes do, you can imagine such prehistoric scenes. The book I've got has a colour picture of a bloody great Tyrannosaurus Rex looking down on a frightened little creature that looks like it knows its time is up. On the next page, the T Rex is standing on its hind legs bellowing to the jungle with steam coming out of its mouth telling everyone he's just had his breakfast and is now on the lookout for lunch. All you can see on the grass is a pool of blood. I like that T Rex and I read that book a lot. There are lots of pictures in it."

Arthur Godley turned away from the window and returned to his desk and swivel chair. He looked at his quiet visitor whom he now noticed looked unshaven. It was hardly designer stubble, more like three days untrimmed growth. His suit, he concluded, was probably off the peg, Marks and Spencer, and the unpolished brown, lace-up shoes probably from Clark's. He was sitting with his feet in the Clark's shoes side by side just off the carpet, his knees together and his white hands in his lap. But at least he was listening, not interrupting, taking it all in, learning and showing respect. Also, Godley was pleased to see, he looked impressed, but he'd hardly moved.

Godley made a play of looking at his gold watch, checking the time.

"Sorry about the natural history lecture, mate, but the role of a business guru is to teach and enlighten on many diverse subjects which have influenced his success. And we all need to know where we come from so we can plot a way forward. Everyone needs a starting point and I always think mine goes way back to the time of that T Rex. I often sit here imagining bloody great lizards with red and green scales, sharp teeth and big jaws plundering along between the giant ferns in search of the next snack.

"Thinking about it, things probably haven't changed much. The bigger you are, the sharper your teeth, the deadlier your grip, then the more likely you are to survive. It's the far-seeing eyes, the nimble legs, the keen sense of smell to sniff out prey. Sniff it out and snuff it out I always say."

He leaned back in his chair and swivelled one more full circle.

"So, that's enough from me on the subject of survival of the fittest, but I like to start with a warm up. Are you going to take notes? Where shall we start? I'm sure you'll say we need to start at the beginning, how I made my first million. Am I right?"

Perhaps Arthur Godley's visitor nodded, perhaps not, but Godley thought he saw a slight movement, which was enough.

"I'm sure you'll say we need to start with the question everyone asks when they come in here for advice and mentoring - how did I, Arthur Godley, God's gift to Krupton business and the town's economic saviour, start out on his epic journey."

"Well.....," he leaned back, shut his eyes and smiled as if having an erotic dream. "Just like that original God I started with a blank sheet of paper. That old God had already done his bit by creating heaven and earth. Also, a fair bit of the water he had created had already flowed under the bridge when I got here. So, it was up to me to pick up the pieces and do what I could with the basics he'd provided.

"I was luckier than that old God in one respect I suppose. At least the land and sky was already in place and I didn't have to bother about an unmarried couple with no clothes on hanging around the place looking for advice and handouts.

"But let me tell you something. If I was that first old God, I'd have told that couple to go and get a job and stop hanging around the park under the trees. Have you ever seen pictures of them, mate? They look so pathetic. It's as if they don't know what to do or where to start. But they soon started fucking around. Bred like rabbits. Frankly, between you and me, pal, we've got thousands of their relatives hanging around Krupton. Bloody dozens of them hang around our local park smoking and drinking. And did you pass that run down disused church hall with the 'for sale' sign when you came here? If so, you'd have seen them. There's usually a dozen or more, except on Thursdays when their state handouts are due. Then they disappear like magic for an hour.

"No, we've got too many single mothers and absent fathers who fuck around and leave us to pick up the pieces of their indiscretions. I get fed up with it don't you, mate? We all arrive on this earth with no clothes on but these people still have nothing. What do they expect? Charity? Do they really expect the rest of us to provide them with clothes and a roof over their head in a rent-free heaven and earth surrounded by ripe apples falling off bloody trees? They were brought up wrong in my opinion. That old God has a lot to answer for.

"Now don't get me going, mate, but If I'd been that old God who found that original naked couple sat around cluttering up the place I'd have got really mad and taken it as a sign of things to come. I'd have factored it into my business plan.

"That old God made several stupid mistakes but let me tell you one. First, he should have listened to me. My advice would have been to sit and think a bit more before making his move. If I'd been him I'd have concluded that this wasn't a good place to start a business and gone off and tried it somewhere else. But he never asked me and now you can see the result of his short-sightedness. You know where you can see it best? The bloody park and the bloody church hall."

Arthur Godley, seriously agitated, mopped his brow with a red spotted handkerchief he'd dragged from his pocket.

"Go there and you'll see what I'm talking about. Not content with fresh apples from the tree they prefer the fermented sort. They sit there with their stomachs full of apples in the form of Bulmer's Cider and smoking things which only partly look like cigarettes. Nowadays they wear clothes and seem to have enough money to also own a dog, but in that old God's day they wore nothing but a fig leaf.

"No, if that old God had asked me I'd have suggested he start a business consultancy. I could have shown him how to do it if I wasn't so busy. In fact, I hate business consultants, but it would stop that old God asking questions and interfering with my day to day.

"And don't get me going on business consultants, either. I've had them in here, sat right there where you are, mate, trying to tell me how to run my own business. Want to save money? Want to sell more? Want to know about health and safety? Want to know about clean and mean manufacture? They want to teach me! Can you believe it? I'm clean and mean already. I don't need any of their fancy advice. Look at me, I'm already successful.

"Oh yes, I really hate bullshit. That old God must have been good at bullshit to have got away with it. But he was bloody good salesman, I have to admit.

"Did you know there are still millions of people out there who still believe he heads up some big corporation from a fancy office floating somewhere up near the International Space Station? I hear he's even registered the trade name, 'God in Heaven'. Got to take your hat off to the old bloke, but he's definitely made a few mistakes along the way. The place is littered with examples of bad management. Do you want to hear about some of his mistakes?"

Arthur Godley shot a quick look at his visitor who was still sitting, staring at him. Entranced thought Godley. He looked overwhelmed as he absorbed so much knowledge and experience. Must charge next time thought Godley and he checked his watch again. Christ! An hour gone already and he was getting thirsty. He did a quick mental calculation of probable hourly charges of gurus, but then checked himself. Might he be able to invoice even more as an after-dinner speaker? Dinner jacket? Top table? Applause? Surrounded by admirers? He snapped out of it.

"Yes," he went on, "That old God's mistakes. I could provide a long list but do you know his biggest problem?" Godley paused for effect. "Overstaffed. He runs interviews for washed up individuals and those who have already given up hope. Big mistake, mate, because nearly everyone he interviews gets a bloody job. He's got far too many staff and hangers on now - millions of them. Anyone who runs a business knows that never works. No, overstaffing truly fucks up his bottom line

"And he's got a mate who takes on any of the few unsuccessful applicants. They're in cahoots I reckon. Keep your competitors at arm's length, that's my view. But this other mate of his is a bit of a wide boy who cuts corners I understand - no health and safety, bad working conditions, no hard hats - not even a fire drill.

"As I've said, it's the old God's personal weaknesses that really bother me. You can't afford weak links in a business. If you have a few weak links within your own character then you self-diagnose, pinpoint them and deal with them. That's never applied to me, of course, as there are no weak points, but if, in the remote likelihood there were some, then, and only then, might I recruit, but not from any dubious agency. Word of mouth, that's my preference. The Red Lion is a good place to start."

Godley took a deep breath, picked up his gold Parker pen and pointed at his visitor.

"Here's another example," he went on, wagging the Parker as if it was his finger, "You can't run a business by being kind hearted. I admit that everyone needs to show a social conscience now and again - I gave fifty pence to a nice little girl guide in her uniform the other day - but you can't be expected to do it every day.

"And another example of my caring human side was when I tipped the waiter two quid the other night even though the fool had served up a steak that was completely undercooked. He said I'd ordered steak tartar. I said 'fuck that mate, I thought I'd ordered a steak starter. No, you bring me a piece of proper English beef. I hate anything French.'

"No, mate, showing a social conscience might be useful sometimes but a mean streak is essential. A mean streak means you stay ahead of the competition."

Godley scratched his head with the Parker and licked his drying lips. Nothing had passed his lips since lunchtime. It was now five o'clock according to his Rolex and the Red Lion beckoned. Not only that but he had left a six pack of Carling Black Label on the back seat of the Bentley downstairs. But he felt he had a duty to his silent visitor to give him a few more pearls of commercial wisdom. The man had sat in rapt attention for a good hour now and, as he was clearly up for more of the deeper side of Godley's business philosophy, he decided to continue on the same track

"And another thing about that old God," he went on, "I can't see him having a garden like mine, can you?" Godley stopped, suddenly realising he may have exhausted most of the religious side of his business philosophy.

"But, where was I?" he paused. "Ah, yes, explaining how I started and why I've been so successful. After all, you're here to learn." He leaned back in the swivel chair and glanced at the drinks cabinet in the corner.

"It's all down to hard work and perseverance," he said. "My vocation began with a vision, you know. Oh yes. And that vision started with just a few ideas jotted down on a blank sheet of paper. I can just imagine how that old God felt. Like me the poor sod couldn't have had much to go on. There were no examples to copy. It requires real flair and imagination to know how to start a business like this from scratch and, don't misunderstand me, I'm not referring to bloody garden gnomes any longer. But that's where it all started as my PowerPoint presentation will show.

"By the way. I hope you're not in a hurry. It might take a while. We could always decamp to the Red Lion if it went on too long, but there's still much to explain. Are you a good listener?" Godley laughed. "I think so, you've hardly said a word so far. I like rapt attention. Will you be taking notes? I can see you're a lot older than me so I'm just wondering about your memory. Still got your marbles? Anyway, please yourself whether you take notes."

At that moment, the white phone on Godley's desk rang.

"Ah, that's my phone. No, don't get up, no need to wait outside the door. It's probably the foreman, Alan. He's in the factory at the back and wanting some direction and guidance. Now, you listen and learn how to

deal with staff. This, pal, is personnel management in action. You just sit there."

Godley lifted the phone and winked at his visitor.

"Hello? Yes, I see. Fuck me. Is that really the time? I had no idea it was Friday, Alan, let alone five o'clock. Did you finish the order for pissing gnomes? Why the hell not? Run out of bloody dicks? Where is your stock control, man? They'd better be finished by eleven o'clock Monday or you'll be going without lunch. Yes, seven thirty start to make sure they're finished. How bloody long does it take to screw dicks into a ready-made hole in a piece of hollow plastic? When I'm on a job I can finish screwing in no time at all and I never get any bloody complaints. Yes, Alan, I am referring to bloody gnomes. So, seven thirty sharp. What? Yes, thank you for your good wishes. I hope you have a busy weekend too. I've got a couple of new suits being delivered on Saturday morning which might require some minor modifications by my tailor before I attend the gala dinner on Saturday evening and I'll need to get the Bentley polished in between. It'll be non-stop. By the way, if I'm not in on Monday it's because I've had to fly down to Spain on business."

Arthur Godley looked at the white phone, wiped it on the front of his shirt and replaced it.

"Sorry about that," he said. "That was Alan. Sometimes I think it was a mistake keeping him. But Alan's hardy - never complains about the lack of heating - so I keep him on. But never take on staff if you can do the job yourself, mate. That's one of my pieces of advice. More trouble than it's worth. Just look at the problem that old God got into. And it was his own bloody laws for Christ's sake. What a mess he'd be in now if he tried to comply nowadays - employment law, equal opportunities. None of us are equal are we, mate? Some are much better than others and success mostly depends on ignoring the red tape and takeovers and acquisitions."

Godley's throat was now very dry. The inside of his mouth felt like parched sand in the desert. He couldn't last much longer, but as the visitor was clearly enthralled by his teachings, he felt he should continue.

"So, where was I? Ah yes, I was explaining how I'd built my business empire and I was using the analogy of how that old God had created heaven and earth also from a blank sheet of paper. But he didn't have regulations to comply with then. It was a damned sight easier for him. Look at that bloody shelf over there."

Godley pointed to a shelf with a folder on it.

"Plastic Garden Ornaments European Standards CEN Mark 6.380,589 Revision 68. That's what it's like mate and they think my copulating gnomes are no different than statues of concrete fairies and angels with wings stood on pedestals. Who cares, I say. Who cares whether someone trips over one of my plastic leprechauns. They are only twelve inches high and weigh less than a bag of Tate and Lyle. It won't ever be the leprechaun's fault. Fall over it, I say. Break your bloody neck. See if I care. Trip over a fishing gnome, fall into the pond and drown, I don't care. You should look where you're going, not blame a plastic gnome that just stands there night and day fishing. Take me to the European Court of Justice and I'll bring samples of my copulating gnomes as exhibits - although that'll probably be enough to require a new law prohibiting sexual activity with gnomes.

"And another thing, mate, who in God's name decides what plastic our gnomes are made from. No-one's going to try eating a gnome that's been standing in the garden for ten years and is now covered in green slime. No, they don't live in the same world that you and I live in, pal. They should be paid on results, like you and me."

Godley coughed and glanced at his Rolex. His throat was now so dry he thought his voice might give up soon. He needed to get a move on if he was to show his famous PowerPoint presentation.

"So," he said between two more coughs. "What more can I say? I can hardly believe it's Godley's Garden Gnomes that interests you. Gnomes are finished, gnomes are yesterday's product. The only market left is the over seventies living in seaside bungalows. Leading expert that I am in the manufacture and marketing of plastic gnomes, it is quite obvious why I had to diversify and set up Godley Investments. As I always say, money is money and once you've made a bit you need to keep it going around and around, getting bigger and bigger. It's easy-peasy if you know how, but you need a keen brain like mine. You need to be creative and spot the gap in the market.

"You see - and this is where you need to understand business jargon - Godley's Garden Gnomes satisfies a whim whereas Godley Investments feeds the greed. Got that? Made a note? It's my slogan and my business in a nutshell, mate. Feed the greed."

Godley looked longingly towards his drinks cabinet again.

"Feed the greed. And I learned that in school as well. I was sitting next to Freddy Grimethorpe at lunch and I nudged him. 'Hey, Freddy, look,' I said, 'Monica's forgot to put her knickers on again today.' Course, Freddy looks around to check and I nicked his pork sausage. I fed my own greed on that occasion.

"Feed the greed," Godley repeated admiringly, "It's a good slogan, yes? And all I did was stick a few adverts in the Krupton News. Next minute I was inundated. No need to advertise now. Word of mouth, you see - another of my marketing strategies. Nowadays, I rarely meet the customers. Occasionally I bump into someone in Tesco's who I've never seen in my life and they say, 'Aren't you that Arthur Godley?' and I say, 'That's me, Godley by name, Godly by nature' - same as I said to you earlier.

"So how does Godley Investments work, I hear you ask," Godley said to his silent visitor. "Feed the greed. You see they all want rid of their mortgages and overdrafts, but there's no sense of compassion from the banks and so they come to me. They need presents for their kids at Christmas, a new car, a new fridge or washing machine. Sometimes they just want to pay off loan sharks. So, who do they ask? Debt Busters - also known as Godley Investments. Never say no, that's me. You've got to have a kind heart. I know all about the stress of being in debt, because I was there once, when I was ten.

"Yes, they call or phone my man in Catford or the one in Liverpool. I forgot to mention my salesmen, Abasiama and Khaled. There's plenty of opportunities around south London and Liverpool and a surprising number in Krupton. We've now spread to Birmingham and Manchester with Aba's cousin, Edwin, and Glasgow through Edwin's cousin, Kamal.

"By the way," Godley pointed a finger at the ceiling, "Did you know Abasiama means 'loved by God' in Aba's native language. So, appropriate don't you think, mate?"

"But I keep a very low profile down here in Krupton. Aba and Edwin are the eyes and ears. This is the headquarters. I do the administration if you can call it that. Fancy headed notepaper, invoices that look proper and so on. We've got a nice glossy leaflet with an address in Slough that used to belong to Aba's third cousin to show we are legit. We don't want all the riff-raff coming down to Krupton, do we - trampling on my sunflowers. Aba sends me names and addresses and I send a courier up with an envelope or two of cash. Aba does the rest. He's a big lad.

"No cheques, you see. We can't have customers being embarrassed by questions about where cheques come from. When the cash comes back I pay Aba who pays Edwin.

"And here's another funny thing, mate. Edwin means 'wealth' in Edwin's native language, which he tells me is Welsh. But Edwin's a comedian so I'm not sure if he's telling the truth. But I don't argue - he's bigger than Aba."

"By the way," he went on, "I nearly forgot to tell you about Aba's other cousin, Titibola, the Godley Investments trouble shooter. Not that we get any bother you understand - we're far too customer focussed for that. But if we do get the odd query we say we'll send around our customer services manager to look into the matter. Titty is a woman by the way. Soft touch you might say. Titty is six foot three without her trainers, bloody big tits like you've never seen in your life and a face like old Joe Frazier. Are you a big tits man, mate?"

Arthur Godley sat back once more and eyed the drinks cabinet.

"And that's about it, mate. Any questions?" he said, still looking in the corner. "Godley Investments in a nutshell."

Unable to resist it any more, Godley stood up. "Would you like a drink, mate? You've done very well sat there all this time listening to me and my success story. Hardly a word. In total awe, I expect."

Godley pushed the swivel chair back

"Speaking to Alan earlier reminded me, it's Friday night and time for a glass or two. Alan stops off at the Red Lion on the way home. The bloody barmaid is bigger than Titibola and she's the only customer in Krupton we can't get to pay off her loan. But her boyfriend is only five foot six and plays darts every night. I'll get Aba to give him a game one night.

"Anyway, drink? And you've not seen the PowerPoint presentation yet. You can't go without seeing that. No need to get up. I'll bring the drinks over. I don't mind being a servant for a minute or two. I've got a full cocktails cabinet over here. See the nice rose wood with mahogany inlay? Or is it the other way around? But just say what you'd like and I'm sure I have it. I even have a built in German refrigerator to keep ice cubes in. So what will it be? Never mind, I'll decide. Two doubles of malt with a dribble of Scottish mineral water from Loch Ness. You'll like it.

"And while I'm dealing with this, take a glance at the company brochure - that's it mate, next to Sporting Life."

Godley poured two full glasses of whisky, opened the 'fridge, dropped in a couple of ice cubes that were too much for the size of glass. He licked the drips and then half of the contents of one of the glasses.

"Check the front cover? See me? That's me at a reception at Westminster. The PM can be seen lurking in the background. Dirty bloody glasses, though. Shocking. I mentioned it to the Minister. Told him I always set high standards. That's why I got on in life. Standards. But they clearly wanted to rub shoulders. Wouldn't have been surprised

if the PM himself invited me to dinner at Number Ten sometime - it's the way it works - networking."

He returned to his desk, put his visitor's glass on the edge of the desk, took his own around to the swivel chair, fell into it, swivelled around and downed the full glass.

"Ahhhh. Needed that. I'll get another. You finished yet? No, as I was saying, it's all about rubbing shoulders. That's how it is. I bet that old God never got invited to dinner by Adam. If he had..." Godley paused, swallowing his second, "Ahhhh, if he had I bet it would have been apple pie. Get it?"

He laughed, poured himself another. "God, I needed that. Slips down a treat after a hard day." He stood by the cocktail cabinet first looking at his visitor and then the colour of the neat malt whisky through the sides of the Polish tumbler. He then wandered away from the cabinet.

"So, he said," taking another sip, "Look at me. Would you say I've got success written across my face? No need to be embarrassed. Just look around my office. What do you see? Look at the carpet for instance. Guess how much. Go on, guess. Five thousand? Ten thousand? Let me tell you. That Chinese carpet cost be nothing. Zilch. You believe that? It's who you know, you see.

"I met this Chinese geezer at a trade show for garden ornaments in Frankfurt. Even the bloody event was free - clever, see. I got a government grant to join a trade mission but I didn't like the hotel that went with the package so.....sorry, tell a lie.....yes, it did cost me. It cost me six hundred Euros because I checked in at the Sheraton instead. But the flight out was paid for and all the drinks and hospitality events were free. But the Sheraton was a bit of alright, I can tell you.By the way, you ready for another. No? Well, I will - after all, it's my cocktail cabinet, hah!

"Where was I? Where am I? Oh yes, talking about my Chinese carpet. Don't for fuck's sake spill your drink on it. It cost me a fortune....no, tell a lie.....it cost me nothing. I met this Chinese geezer at the bar in the Sheraton. He was a carpet salesman from Hong Kong or somewhere. Well, I negotiated for him for a bit of Turkish floozy that was hanging around outside and in return, he said he'd give me a carpet once he'd got to London and if I found him a similar bit of flooze around Harrod's in Knightsbridge. No, I thought, never, he'll forget. But no, true as I'm leaning here, I met him outside Harrods with a dish of an Ethiopian that I'd thought he'd fancy and he gave me one - even fixed it for a van to drive it to Krupton.

"Ready for another? But you see, such are the ways of international trade and the knock-on effects of networking with foreigners with samples of a couple of garden gnomes in your pocket."

Godley turned, filled his glass once more, carefully made his way back to his white desk without spilling his drink on the carpet and fell into the swivel chair. He screwed his eyes up and looked over his desk at the visitor. He scratched his head with his free hand.

"You're very quiet. I like men who listen. It shows respect, Respect is in short supply these days. God knows we need more respect. We also need more dignity, quality and ambition. Without respect, there won't be any money to go around.....Now, are you sure you won't have another? No need to be polite, just help yourself. Just don't trip on the fucking carpet, OK? And keep your glass on the placemat. I hate circles. Circles are no good. Straight lines are best."

Godley leaned across his desk towards his visitor who was still sat, feet together, hands in lap. It was the stubble on his face that bothered Godley. He screwed his eyes up for a better focus.

"I know - you've been waiting for the highlight - my PowerPoint presentation, is that it? Let's see it shall we."

The projector was already on his desk, but Godley could barely see the switch.

"Sorry, mate. Bloody technology." And he sat down for another sip before trying again.

Surprisingly, his quiet visitor suddenly moved. Godley's eyes opened as he watched the man with the stubble and Clark's shoes come to the desk and press a button.

"Ah, that's it," said Godley, "I knew it was that button. Now....while I talk, you sit back down and watch and listen. As I press the button, things will start to happen. Tables, numbers and graphs will appear on that wall - mostly pointing upwards."

With his drink in his hand, Godley collapsed back into his chair.

"OK, first slide is....."

Godley stared at the image on the wall. A dribble of neat malt whisky ran down his chin and dripped onto his shirt.

"Well, fuck me, I've never seen that slide before. Where the hell did that come from?"

Arthur Godley found himself staring at a picture of what looked like a tropical rain forest that stretched and now covered most of the wall.

"And so fucking enormous," he said, checking the inside of his empty glass.

As he checked, he heard a sound that started like a cow mooing but then became louder and louder like a stag deer during the annual rut, but where it came from, he couldn't be sure. Godley's ears were vibrating as he turned to face the wall again. It was as if he had suddenly entered a wide screen cinema with top quality sound effects. Everything around him - the desk, his computer, the bottle of best malt - faded as he felt transported into the dense jungle. The picture was so life-like and the deep bellowing seemed to come from deep in the jungle behind the wall and out into Godley's garden. And it was now in full Technicolor and high quality 3D.

Godley sank down into his swivel chair as the trees gradually began to surround his desk. Godley, himself, was now in the middle of a steaming, tropical jungle alone, without even a tour guide. His PowerPoint presentation had never done anything like that before.

A shrub was now growing out of his Chinese carpet and it moved and swayed as if a breeze had just touched it. Godley's PowerPoint had never done animation before either. A leaf broke free and it fluttered in the air before settling on Godley's desk as he pushed the swivel chair backwards away from it, only to feel the branch of another tree with a bright yellow flower like one of his sunflowers hanging over his left shoulder. Above his head and to his right were more trees like giant pineapples and, in the dry leaves that now covered the carpet he was sure he saw something long and black slither towards his desk.

Godley now felt hot and sweaty in the humid, tropical heat that surrounded him. He quickly checked his armpits for wet patches and then listened to something new - a shuffling, rustling sound like a heavy animal walking through the dead leaves of autumn. Then he heard the cow again, but it sounded far too loud for an ordinary black and white cow or even a rutting deer. It was more like a distant bellowing.

Godley dropped his empty glass on the desk amongst the swaying branches of strange ferns and listened. His face was contorted, his eyes wide open and unblinking as he stared towards where the sound was coming from - the tall trees and grasses that had now taken over his entire corner plot on the Krupton Trading Estate. He knew he was still sitting in his white leather swivel chair because he still had hold of the chrome arms, albeit with knuckles that had turned white. He blinked, then stared at what was going on around him. He put his hands to his ears to block out the sound but it was useless so he groped around for the empty glass instead. The bellowing was getting louder and louder.

But his visitor was still sat there, impassive as ever, feet together amongst the leaves on the floor, hands clasped in his lap. In fact, Godley noticed, his eyes were shut as if he had fallen asleep. And where was the glass of whisky he'd given him? Thinking it might go to waste, Godley leaned over to drink it himself but, instead, knocked the bottle over and, as a sudden gust of wind from came from nowhere, lost his grip on it. It toppled, spewing what remained of the malt whisky onto the jungle floor that had once been Godley's Chinese carpet.

"Christ almighty," Godley yelled, but his tiny voice was lost in the bellowing. And then, as the floor started to shake and more leaves fell off trees and landed on his head and desk, he heard heavy footsteps. This was no friendly circus elephant arriving but a huge green lizard with a long tail covered in red and brown spikes. It walked through what was Godley's office wall and opened its mouth to expose row upon row of sharp pointed teeth. And out of its mouth came that now familiar roaring sound and a stench that was a hundred times worse than before Godley had cleaned his teeth on a morning.

And, as Godley covered his nose, another dinosaur appeared behind the first and this one looked up at Godley from a pool of blood at his feet and hissed as if he was just eating breakfast and Godley wasn't going to share it.

But it was the first huge animal that now looked at Godley. From a height, close to where Godley's ceiling had once been, it turned its massive head, peered at him through one big red eye and took a step closer.

Godley screamed as it's huge bulk sauntered around his desk, its spiky tail upending the cocktail cabinet as another creature, red and black and with wings, flapped overhead and appeared to evacuate the entire contents of its prehistoric bowels on Godley's desk. Godley cowered and trembled like a mouse, fearing that just one bite from the creature trundling around his desk would be the end.

But as he cowered and trembled with his eyes tightly shut in anticipation of the bite that would take his head off, the roaring and hissing sound that had rung in his ears for ten minutes suddenly receded. Silence descended.

Slowly, Godley opened one eye, then two.

Night seemed to have come to the jungle that was once Godley's office. Crickets and other nocturnal insects chirped from the undergrowth that had once been his carpet. Then they, too receded and the darkness

became total. Godley could see nothing. It was as if he had been in the deepest, darkest cave when the light on his helmet went out.

It was as he stared into the total blackness that he heard the man's voice.

"Arthur Smedley Godley," the clear, baritone voice said, "Listen to me."

Godley, his knees shaking, tried to listen above the rattling of the empty whisky bottle and his own teeth.

"Arthur Smedley Godley. Are you listening?"

"Yes?" whimpered Godley, hating the fact that the Voice seemed to know his middle name.

"Arthur Godley. Do you know how much money you have made out of Godley Investments?"

Godley thought it was a strange question but, nevertheless, he groped for his calculator but failed to locate it.

"Arthur Godley. I repeat. "Do you know how much money you have made out of Godley Investments?"

"A few thousand quid I think," Godley answered in a voice that was strange to him. It was a voice that seemed embarrassed.

"Arthur Godley. Please don't tell lies."

"Well, maybe a million quid," said Godley.

"Are you sure that's all?"

"Well, maybe two million."

"Let's call it three million, shall we?" The Voice said.

"Well, nearly," Godley admitted.

"Do you have your cheque book handy?"

"I don't normally use cheques."

"Then are you familiar with online banking?"

"Yeh, I do a bit of that," Godley said to the darkness.

"Arthur Godley. Your computer screen will now light up."

And immediately Godley's world was suddenly lit by a blue haze from his computer screen.

"Log in," said the Voice

"OK," said Godley meekly. hoping the sticky zero key was still playing up.

"Log in now," commanded the Voice with just a touch of impatience.

Godley tapped at a few keys in the light from the screen.

"Go into favourites, find your online banking facility and click on it."

"OK," said Godley. "But I've forgotten my membership number," he tried.

"It's 37689014896," said the Voice, "Don't try my patience."

"Sorry," said Godley for the first time since he was nine years old but still hoping something would go wrong.

"It now wants my PIN," he said, "But I think I've forgotten it."

"It's 9186," said the Voice.

"How the fuck....." said Godley.

"Key it in. Now go to 'make a payment'" said the Voice

"OK," said Godley

"No, Godley, not 'cancel standing order'. I said go to 'make a payment'"

"Oh, yes," Godley said, "I forgot. What next?"

"Tap in three million pounds' sterling in the amount section."

"Three fucking million quid?" shrieked Godley into the total darkness that still surrounded his bright computer screen. "Bloody hell."

"I told you, Godley, I dislike swearing. Make it four million."

"Christ almighty!"

"Godley, this your very last chance. Make it five million or I bring back T Rex."

"Shi.....Sorry, what the f.....sorry, I forgot, no swearing, but It's a bad habit."

"Like many other weaknesses, Godley."

"What next?" mumbled Godley.

"You will now see a name on the screen showing the account that the money is to be paid to," said the Voice. "What does it say, Godley?"

Godley stared at the screen but he'd lost his glasses somewhere. He squinted. "It says Godly Investments."

"Correct," said the Voice.

"But that's me," Godley said, with a tiny ray of hope returning.

"No longer," said the Voice, "It's my own, private account. Did no-one ever teach you to check things properly, Godley?"

"But you can't just steal my fucking trade name and money from my bank account." Godley shouted.

"Oh, yes I can," said the Voice. "You'd already stolen it from someone else."

"No I never," said Godley, "I checked."

"You didn't check with me, Godley."

"Then who the hell are you, you invisible bastard."

"Language, Godley, language. I'm your Chief Executive. Now, click on 'complete transaction'."

"But you can't just come in here and take me over," shouted Godley in desperation.

"Complete transaction - NOW." The Voice said more loudly than before.

Godley's finger trembled, but he clicked and, as he did so, his computer screen went blank. Total darkness surrounded him once more. "What the fuck!" he shouted. But a total silence now enveloped him and Godley decided he hated total silence more than T Rex's roaring. He shouted "What the fuck," into the pitch blackness again, but as the silence prevailed he panicked, tried to stand up with a vague plan of groping his way towards where he thought the door might be.

"Don't move, Godley," the Voice said from the darkness. "Listen to me."

Godley listened.

"Thank you for inviting me to your office today, Mr Godley. It was enlightening if not educational. I'm sorry if my suit wasn't quite to your taste and, as for the stubble on my face, I've been so busy I haven't had a chance to shave. But, as I always, say appearances are so superficial. No what I mean, mate? Neither do I work for the local Council, although I had received some reports on you and your businesses from other sources so nothing was unexpected. I have to say, though, that I am getting just a little fed up with having to come down here to deal with people like you. I've got enough to do back in my own office. But, now and again, I have to go out and do my own bit of trouble shooting just like you do. But I don't delegate trouble shooting, Mr Godley. I prefer a hands-on approach and so I do it myself whenever I have a free slot in my diary."

"So, who the fuck are you?" repeated a desperate and, now, sweating Arthur Godley. And then he added, "And where the fuck are you?"

The Voice didn't answer the question, but went on: "You called your organisation Godley Investments, Mr Godley."

Godley waited, wondering if it was a question or a statement. "Yes," he said, "So what?"

"Your presentation, Godley, was far too long as a sales and marketing pitch. Some of us have far more important things to do with our time than listen to what we already know. Despite its interminable length, I regret it wasn't at all clear to me, even by the end, who or what you are investing in, Mr Godley?"

"The bloody customers of course," replied Godley, annoyed to think that anyone could consider his presentations too long. "They want money and I lend it."

"That's not investing, Godley."

"Of course, it is. Give a bit, take a lot. I need to make a profit on my investments."

"So, Godley Investments is a misnomer. It is not your customers who are investing in their future, as one might imagine from the company name. It is actually Arthur Godley investing in himself."

Godley wondered what a misnomer was. He normally Googled things like that. "What do you mean?" he asked. But there was another deathly silence. Godley listened to his own heavy breathing, his own heart pumping in the pain of silence in his ears. Then he heard the Voice sigh.

"Did you like meeting the dinosaurs, Godley? Did they remind you of anything?"

"My book," said Godley feeling like a boy of six.

"Yes," the Voice went on. "When you mentioned your picture book earlier I thought it might be a good way to get my message through. As you know, Godley, in business we must always find a way to get our sales message across, spot an opening, seize an opportunity. Would you say you are a bit of a dinosaur, Godley? Would you say you do your own bit of circling around people looking for a way to take a bite out of them? Do you ever look on your profits as similar to the blood squeezed from victims?"

"Do you feel satisfied with only one meal a day or do you start looking for new prey just as soon as you've finished lapping up the last few drops of blood from the previous one? Are you being just a little greedy, Godley?"

"Would you say you fly around scattering goodwill and charity or do you mostly drop shit from a great height? What happened to the dinosaurs in your book, Godley?"

In the darkness, Godley scratched his head. "They got taken over," he said.

"That is a good expression, Godley, and a very apt one although it probably understates the facts. But, nevertheless, well done. Dinosaurs were taken over by better, more efficient creatures far better suited to changing circumstances and climate. They are now, as we call it, extinct. Extinction was a management decision of mine, Godley. It was part of the long-term business plan. I oversaw the extinction."

"What are you talking about?" asked Godley.

"They were not good enough. Didn't match up. Couldn't cope. Too slow. Too big for their boots. They took out far more than they put back. They thought they ruled the world and always would, but they had inherent weaknesses. I dislike weaknesses in others, don't you? In a nutshell, as you say, they were just not a very good investment. Do you understand, Godley?"

"Yeh, but what are you trying to say?"

"Just accept they don't exist anymore, Godley. Unfortunately, a few fragments of their DNA still linger in the chromosomes of those who survived. Those DNA fragments are usually dormant but occasionally they become dominant and the creature harbouring them starts behaving like a dinosaur. I'm just a bit worried that you are one of those, Godley. I'd hate you to become extinct as there's usually a bit of good DNA lurking somewhere in everyone. Even you, Godley."

"What in God's name are you prattling on about," said Godley. "My book never said anything about this."

"I'm still talking about trouble shooting, Godley. You see my sort of trouble shooting requires me to show a tender, caring side and to encourage a reversion to the good type. I have to say there are now many billions of different types and the sheer number gives me a real headache on my databases. So, occasionally, just now and again, I start a redundancy campaign. Changing the climate often does the trick. It's experience you see.

"In your case, however, you are running with some very outdated human characteristics. Frankly I've had more difficulty with humans than any other and you sit fairly high up in my league of weaknesses. In fact, the way you are playing, Godley, you could well end up winning the league.

"You see, my business is a bit like running a factory. The more complex your end product, the more likely it is to have quality issues and rejects.

Learn from my business, Godley. Keep your gnomes simple. Never introduce any high technology and never try getting too clever."

The Voice stopped and the silence descended once more.

"I don't like this," Godley muttered. "Who the fuck are you?"

"As I said, Godley, I'm your Chief Executive just out on a trouble shoot. You see, Godley, you can't just take a company name without it being ratified - particularly one called Godley Investments. You see, I already own the trade name, the brand name and the marketing and distribution rights. With your record, I wouldn't even be willing to grant you a franchise. I started my business long before you stole that poor kid's sausage.

"Where does it say in your Memorandum and Articles of Association that you can act as a banker, Godley? And how do you define investments? You see, I think you invest in Arthur Godley whereas I have always invested in people."

"So, for the hundredth time, who the fuck are you?" shouted Godley. "And where has my five million quid gone?"

"Your money is safe, Godley. It will be re-invested. I have an 'Investors in People' plaque on my office wall. I don't see one on yours. Also, I'm not the Chief Executive of Godley Investments but the Chief Executive of Godly Investments. There is a subtle difference in the spelling as you should have spotted when transferring the money. Never trust anyone, Godley, you should know that by now. But, in brief, you have become a victim of just the sort of deals you specialise in. You win some and you lose some. Live and learn, Mr Godley. Learn to take the rough with the smooth. Goodbye."

Arthur Smedley Godley, still sitting in his white leather executive swivel chair, stared into the total darkness. Churning inside his stomach were some new and very strange feelings. He felt nervous, vulnerable, unimportant, lonely and victimised. He felt small and insignificant like one of his gnomes. Worst of all, he felt poor.

Suddenly, without warning, the office lights came on. Godley looked around, blinking in the brightness. Everything was exactly as it had been before his visitor arrived. He switched on his computer and went quickly online to check his bank statement. Somehow, he had, within the last half hour, transferred five million pounds to a company called Godly Investments.

"Oh, my God," Godley screamed and burst into tears.

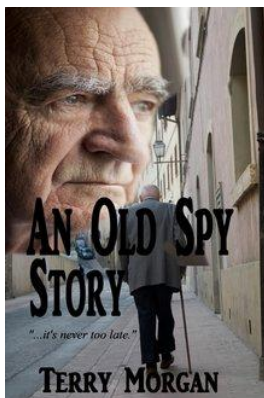
THE END

About the author

Terry Morgan started writing stories and poetry while travelling worldwide with his own exporting company. Having worked in over seventy countries (“some so many times I lost count”) he now lives in Petchabun, Thailand. He writes mainly serious novels with a strong international background but intersperses it with less serious satire and humour like ‘God’s Factory’.

Full length novels by Terry Morgan.

An Old Spy Story



The old spy in “An Old Spy Story” is octagenarian, Oliver (“Ollie”) Thomas. During a long career spent trying to earn an honest living with his own export business, Ollie was also, reluctantly, carrying out parallel assignments in Africa, the Middle East and elsewhere only loosely connected to British Intelligence. But, by using threats and blackmail, his controller, Major Alex Donaldson, was forcing Ollie to help run his own secret money making schemes that included arms shipments to the IRA through Gadaffi and Libya, money laundering in Africa and assassination.

Now aged eighty six, recently widowed and alone Ollie still struggles with guilt and anger over his past and decides to make one last attempt to track down and deal with Donaldson.

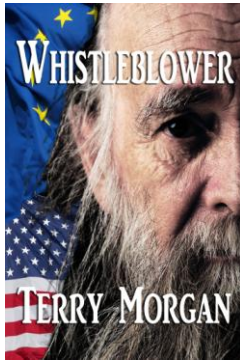
“A masterful tale by someone who knows exactly what he is writing about.”

"A wonderful and moving love story from an elderly man's perspective is beautifully woven into it and the ending is masterful."

"I enjoyed it – exciting, endlessly beguiling and fun."

"Thoroughly enjoyable from start to finish. A remarkable book from a writer who has clearly been there and done it. Easy reading."

Whistleblower

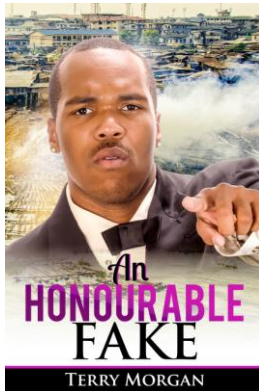


Huge amounts of international aid money are being stolen by those at the heart of the political establishment. Ex-politician, Jim Smith, threatened and harassed into fleeing abroad for accusations of fraud secretly returns to renew his campaign. A realistic thriller covering events in the USA, Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia and a sensitive study of a stubborn and talented man who steadfastly refuses to fit into the stereotype of a successful businessman and a modern politician.

"Highly convincing.....This could all be happening right now. Another realistic and highly entertaining story...."

."Whistleblower", by Terry Morgan, is an international thriller that stretches from England to Thailand with many stops in between. The plot centers around the timely topic of international aid money and the criminals who feed on it. The hero, the story's whistle-blower, is British ex-politician Jim Smith, and the story follows him around the globe as he seeks to put a stop to the corruption. Morgan, a world traveller who now resides in Thailand, knows his locations well. Cities in Italy and Africa come alive, and Jim Smith's home in off-the-beaten-path Thailand is wonderfully described, allowing readers to feel like they're there--this is no easy thing to do, and the authenticity of the various settings is a real strength of the book. Another strength includes the protagonist. Smith is not a typical hero. He's older and lacks the suaveness and action-hero credentials of a James Bond or Jason Bourne, but he more than makes up for it with his intelligence and depth--a big pleasure in the book is being invited into this man's life as he tries to pick up the pieces after an underhanded campaign aimed at ruining him. The plot moves along briskly, and the technology, players (politicians, intelligence agencies, criminals), and small details about the finance industry all add up to a novel that's rich in credibility and intrigue. Anyone interested in seeing the world from the comfort of a good armchair should read Morgan's book." (AMAZON)

An Honourable Fake



At age fourteen, Femi Akindele, an orphaned street boy from the Makoko slum in Lagos, Nigeria, decided to call himself Pastor Gabriel Joshua. Unqualified and self-taught and now in his mid-forties, Gabriel has become a flamboyant, popular and highly acclaimed international speaker on African affairs, economics, terrorism, corruption and the widespread poverty and economic migration that results.

Gabriel wants changes but, in his way, lie big corporations, international politics and a group of wealthy but corrupt Nigerians financing a terrorist organisation, the COK, with one purpose in mind – the overthrow of the democratically elected Nigerian President and the establishment of a vast new West African state.

On Gabriel's side, though, are his loyal boyhood friend Solomon, a private investigator of international corporate fraud and the newly appointed head of the Nigerian State Security Service Colonel Martin Abisola.

“A rare sort of political thriller – a black African hero.”

“Accomplished and knowledgeable – a class follow up to Whistleblower.”

The Malthus Pandemic



Daniel Capelli is a private investigator of international commercial crime.

Armed with an unusually vague remit from a new client, an American biotechnology company, to investigate the theft of valuable research material but motivated largely by a private desire to see a Thai girlfriend, Anna, he travels to Bangkok for an infectious diseases conference. Here, he discovers that several virologists have also

disappeared. One of them, David Solomon, is known for extreme views on the need for direct action to reduce the world's population.

As the investigation deepens he rapidly uncovers a sinister plot to deliberately spread a deadly new virus, the Malthus A virus, specifically created by Solomon. But Solomon needs funds and help to spread it. With sporadic outbreaks of the disease already in Thailand, Nigeria and Kenya, Capelli finds two other characters - Doctor Larry Brown, an American doctor working at the USA Embassy in Nigeria, and Kevin Parker, an academic and expert on the history and economics of population control - have also arrived at similar conclusions but from different angles.

Calling on help from another close friend, Colin Asher - a London based private investigator - it soon becomes clear that Solomon is being supported by a rich American with a history of fraud, embezzlement and murder and a secretive Arab healthcare company with a ready-made international distribution network. Their plan: To help spread the Malthus A virus and make huge profits by marketing ineffective or counterfeit drugs.

But with his cover blown by the murder of another colleague, the charismatic Kenyan detective Jimmy Banda, and with increasing fears that the virus is about to be released Capelli, Anna and his colleagues face another problem - persuading UK and USA politicians and the international agencies responsible for bioterrorism and commercial crime, to believe them and respond in time.

"Anchored firmly in the present, no high-tech Bond style gadgets, just good old-fashioned detective work. Gritty descriptions of the international locations, compelling plot and poignant rants about the inadequacy of democratic institutions and persuasive insight on the inner workings of the global establishment. Easy reading and difficult to put down once started. Enjoyable read."