



CLOUTS

Announcer:

“Ladies and Gentlemen it is my duty to announce that we’ve had a fan letter. (*Sound of crowd going oooo!*) Ahem, it reads as follows; Dear sir, I must protest! Why? Because it’s fun. Also I’m a miserable old git and I smell, and ... Listen do I have to read out this load of old fiction? (*Phone rings, picks it up, listens and puts it down again.*) Ah! Apparently I do”.

“Ladies and Gentlemen we present “CLOUTS” an epic story in one part.” Was that alright? Not over the top was it? I could do it in a silly voice.”

No it was fine, you can have a lie down now.

My name is Olive Terrace, according to a computer error. I think I’ll have a few words with the council and see if I can get an upgrade, maybe to Olive semi-detached or something like that. Anyway I was relaxing down at my new local ‘Ye Totally Flattened Whistle & Vole’, watching the semi finals of the bow makers knothole of the year contest on the TV and getting ready to make a call to vote off the person who had the worst set of piles I’ve ever seen, when I saw the latest edition of OK.ARCHING among the heap of papers waiting to be burnt on the gas fire. Rescuing the magazine from its fate, I then ordered a swift half of the latest trendy tipple, you know, the one that looks and tastes a bit like central heating fluid, and settled down to read.

While thumbing my way through, I came across a letter asking about clout shooting, what is it and what is a clout? Time to investigate. (*Action music*).

I made my way to the secret BCOA library. First hut, under the floorboards, down the stairs, turn left, second door on the right, you can’t miss it, where I was met by a wizened old man, wearing a long white beard and Jesus boots. He took me down a long corridor until we reached a door with a plaque over it, which read. ‘To Rufus the Unmentionable, hidden but not forgotten’. The old man opened the door and then disappeared off the page. I entered the room. There were books everywhere and on every subject.

In the middle of it all, behind a counter sat the chief librarian, a small lady with glasses on the end of her nose, going by the inevitable name of Ava Stogie. I explained what I was looking for and she led me into the depths of the library.

We passed the hatched, matched and dispatched section or births, marriages and deaths. The Great Tome Of Magical Delights aka the latest Argos catalogue. Until finally she pulled out from on top a dusty shelf, a dusty book with dusty pages. On its dusty spine was the dusty title ‘How to have a good clean out’ by Dickey Socket. “Oh dearie me! Wrong book”, said Ava throwing it in the bin. “Best place for it, now then, here we are” ‘The Observers Book of Clouting’ by Sir Arthur Bladder CDM and bar. Eagerly I took this small tome into a quiet room and began to study its contents...

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To my surprise I discovered a clout was in fact a small furry creature with keen senses, about the size of an armadillo! It had four legs, a target like pattern on its back and two appendages, which resembled large humanlike fingers that it often flashed. It liked to scuttle about the Somerset levels making raspberry noises, making it a rather annoying little b*stard that deserved to be shot at, which it frequently was.

If you got one, apparently it made a wonderful gourmet meal. While the use of bows and arrows meant the Clout usually got away, (blowing raspberries as it went), because of the distance required to shoot them at. Unfortunately the introduction of high-powered rifles, field artillery and the Somerset Horses and Hounds Clout Hunt, made them an easy target and they were hunted virtually to the point of extinction.

The Somerset Wildlife Organisation asked the government to step in, because the racket was scaring the cows and Clout hunting was outlawed. By way of compensation, archers using flags and a rod devised a shoot. When you finish this story, scroll up the web page and click on clout and it will tell you how it's done.

According to Sir Arthur, the Clout is still extremely rare. But if you're on the Somerset levels maybe towards evening time and if you're very quiet, you might hear one scuttling about in the undergrowth, flashing its appendages and blowing raspberries at anyone and anything.

Other books on Clouts include:

Clouting for boys, by Lord Baden Powell

My favourite Clout recipes, by Gordon Ramsey

Never cast a Clout till May is out and other fishing Tales, by Audrey Halibut.

Clout watch, by Bill Oddie.

Clouting in Boxing, by Frank Bruno.

Raspberry Blowing Clout style, by The re enactment Society.

These are the kind of books that one will never find anywhere, ever, honest.

Good shooting

Nigel.