

# The Revenge of the Feral Dogs

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This is chapter one/story one of the collection, "Tales of Friendship, Folly and Faith". Each story is in the creative non-fiction genre, being based on fact, but with names changed, and serving as a short story.



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# The Revenge of the Feral Dogs



## Introduction

Another name for a feral dog is a pariah dog, although the term tends to be applied exclusively with respect to a handful of countries, notably India, when in fact feral dogs are to be found all throughout the world. They are widely believed to be the descendants of discarded domestic dogs, although unlike the latter, they are hostile to humans, which is understandable, given their history of abandonment. If one is to believe the news, attacks on humans by such animals are more common today than ever, although the truth is they have always existed, as the following tale attests.

It was based on actual incidents that took place, and I know this to be a fact because the character of Sean is based on myself, while all the other characters

also existed, although their names have been changed to protect their privacy. That said, what follows is a somewhat sanitised version of the events as I remember them, and I do so thanks largely to a short story I based on them in about 1977 and which forms the foundation of what follows.

It was a city-port on the Atlantic Coast of France, in the summer of 1975, a time very similar to our own in a vast variety of ways, and yet a million galaxies away.

Then, as today, the youth of the West ran wild to an electronic Rock soundtrack – and even though the Rock and Roll era is now over half a century old where it was yet in its adolescence in 1975, the hedonistic lifestyle it fostered has differed little since then.

In other ways though, it was altogether a different age. There were no cell phones back then, nor personal computers, nor iPods, and if you wanted to hear the latest album by your favourite act or artist, you had to save up for it and march to your latest record store to procure it on vinyl or cassette.

Subsequently, most people only ever heard a fraction of the music that was available, unlike today, when you can hear any song, any album, ever recorded in whatever era you choose through the simple click of a mouse.

It was about 8.30pm, and a quartet of young British naval ratings, hailing from HMS Royal, a minesweeper attached to the shore-based London Division of the Royal Naval Reserve, were enjoying their – run – ashore, which is to say a short period of leave coming in the midst of an exercise at sea. At one point, they decided to split into a pair of duos with one of these returning to the Royal, and the other, setting out into the night in search of whatever delights their temporal city had to offer them.

They were an unlikely pair. 27 year old Kevin was a genial-looking salt of the earth Londoner, while Sean, was an angelically handsome youth of just 19 from a privileged upbringing in Surrey, although not from

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Surrey per se so much as a little blue collar village that had been swallowed up by London's urban sprawl, and that was only nominally part of Britain's wealthiest county.

Yet, they were also unusually akin by dint of their gentle easy-going ways, and all-round nice guy naivety. Things happened to them rather than the other way around—and that was especially true of Sean. With his blond hair and baby blue eyes, he was the antithesis of the domineering macho male, and yet a magnet for attention nonetheless—although not all of it positive.

“Oh, what a pretty sailor,” a flame-haired woman of a certain age proclaimed as she passed him by in the busy, bustling streets.

“And you, madame,” he replied, with typical obsequious gallantry.

“How comes you speak French so well, then Sean?” said Kevin, “ain't you German?”

But before Sean had a chance to properly answer his friend, three youths, dressed in battered blue jeans, and sporting long greasy hair, approached the two sailors. One was white, a second black, and a third North African. Their eyes were suspicious, but Sean's potent pretty boy charm caused them to look kindly upon the sailors.

“Hey there, sailor boys,” said the white youth, who was extraordinarily handsome, with long dark eyelashes, and a dazzling smile that revealed broken and discoloured teeth. The single gold earring he wore in his left ear lent him the air of a beautiful romany boy.

“All right?” Sean replied.

“Are you French?”

“No, I'm English,” said Sean.

“Hey, how's it going with the girls, huh, is everything OK with the ladies?”

“Sure,” said Sean nonchalantly.

“They're all insane, insane, insane,” said the angel-faced romany, dismissing the entire female race with a drunken wave of his hand, before being borne away by his cohorts, much to Kevin's evident relief, as he'd already started to distance himself from the trio, despite their friendly intentions.

In time, the two sailors had attained the town's central square, where a bedraggled sextet of Jazz musicians were blowing Dixie as if their lives depended on it for the benefit of tourists dining on sea food. Many of them looked up from their fishy repasts as Sean passed by. In time, they found themselves in a tavern which had been taken over by a large gang of rowdy revellers, presided over by a strolling guitar player, and a young expatriate Welshman with the burly body of a prop forward.

Needless to say, the sailors were singularly conspicuous by dint of their uniforms, and at one stage, Sean's cap was removed from his head and passed around the tavern to be gawped at by the assembled clientele like some imperialist curio. It may have been this mortifying incident that provoked the minstrel's sympathy for Sean, and his subsequent efforts at befriending him.

He was a strikingly handsome man, probably of Spanish extraction, as his name turned out to be Javier, of about 28 years old, at least in appearance. In fact he was 40.

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“Give me your address,” he said to Sean, taking his hand in his, “I believe in true comradeship, real friendship—we will be friends.”

“OK,” Sean agreed, whereupon Javier disappeared.

Just then, Sean noticed that he was being intently observed by a beautiful girl of the gamine kind with short lemon yellow hair and distant, pale-blue eyes wearing a strange, melancholy smile, who presently seated herself behind him. She turned out to be Javier’s girl friend, Catherine.

“Bonjour,” she said, “I am Catherine.”

“Hello,” said Sean, in his usual shyly charming way, “isn’t Javier a great guy?”

“Oh yes,” Catherine replied, “I have been with many men, but this is the first time I have been with a real man.”

“Is he really forty?” Sean asked her.

“Yes, forty years old, but he will always be young, he’s not aged along with the rest of his generation. We travel together, we are very much in love.”

Soon Javier returned to engage in further praise of his new found friend:

“Sean is our friend,” he enthused, “he is our true friend.”

“Oh yes,” Catherine agreed, “he’s really sweet isn’t he, and cute, and nice, you are our friend, Sean.”

“Thank you,” Sean replied, overwhelmed by their effusiveness.

“You are going to give us your address before you go, OK?” said Javier.

“Sure,” Sean replied, before getting up to check on Kevin, who was engaged in an intense conversation with the Welshman, Gryff. Realising that interrupting them was not in his best interests, he sat back down and starting sipping from someone else’s wine glass.

Before long, the entire tavern had erupted, and people started dancing around the tables, with some electing to actually dance on the tables. Sean thought it best to leave at this point, and went to say his goodbyes to Catherine, who took hold of one of his hands, while smiling warmly and gazing directly into his eyes.

“Oh,” said Sean distractedly, “I must give my address to Javier.”

He walked over to Javier, but no sooner had he done so, than he was grabbed by the arm, and virtually thrown into the back of a rickety grey fiat being driven by Gryff, which then leaped and screeched through the city’s dingy back streets for a few brief terrifying moments before alighting within a short distance of a discotheque. As soon as Sean was out of the car, he noticed a bewildered looking Kevin among the disco party, of which Gryff had taken charge:

“How are we going to get the sailors in?” he asked out aloud, “they are not allowed here.”

“Smuggle them in,” someone suggested, “take their hats and jackets off, and sneak them in.”

Gryff set about divesting the tars of much of their attire, with the result that they soon found themselves among the city’s beautiful people, including young heavily made up belles, several executing the most

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complex and obscure of dance manoeuvres in small groups, and tall, thin young men who punctuated their terpsichorean histrionics with high-pitched squeals.

After a time, it occurred to Sean that unless they set off soon, theyâd never get back to their ship, and this time, Kevin was in accord, and so they set about retrieving their clothing. Then, Catherine walked over to them to see them off.

âYou should take care,â she told Sean, âI meanâ your uniforms, your hats, your symbols donât mean a thing here. I mean none of it means anything here.â

Sean smiled weakly without answering, and she went on.

âBut youâre so cute, you knowâ, she said, stroking Seanâs cheek.

âGood byeâ, said Sean.

âGood byeâ, Catherine replied, visibly upset.

Soon, the young sailors were groping their way in the dark towards the cityâs main port, with only the crunching of their navy issue boots to break the menacing silence.

âItâs late isnât it, Kev,â said Sean, as the lights of the disco faded into the distance.

âI donât care,â Kevin replied, âI thoroughly enjoyed myself.â

âWhat if we canât find the ship?â

Within an hour, they reached their destination, although neither knew exactly where their ship was located, and each thin strip of dusty road resembled the last.

Just when theyâd turned down yet another one, a feral dog emerged from out of a decaying chalky dwelling, baring its salmon-pink gums and emitting falsetto squeals which attracted a second vicious, fearless canine, this one resembling an Alsatian cross-breed. Sean panicked and picked up a stone, before threatening his aggressors, then running first from them, then towards them, screaming at them, shrinking from them, but nothing he did served to deter them.

Kevin preferred the role of pack leader and with index finger pointing directly at the dogs, started to command them in tones of masterly severity, but they refused to accept him as alpha male, and continued to circle him as if theyâd earmarked him for an early morning feast. And the dogs squealed, and slavered, and snarled, and the more they sensed the sailorsâ fear, the more hysterical they became.

The sailorsâ fate seemed sealed. Theyâd surely pay a high price for separating from their companions in order to seek out stimulation in the depths of a city in which their status as strangers rendered them deeply vulnerable. Kevin was easily the more streetwise, while Sean was to all intents and purposesâ prey on legs; and it was only a matter of time before this truth became evident to him. Yet, nothing would have stopped him stepping out of his comfort zone that night, as millions of his kind have done since, and continue to do.

âYou should take care,â Catherine had said, almost prophetically as it turned out, âI meanâ your uniforms, your hats, your symbols donât mean a thing here. I mean none of it means anything here.â

Epilogue:

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Some time towards the end of the old or the beginning of the new millennium, possibly around 1996, a middle-aged-man received a phone call straight out of the blue from an old friend.

He was still youthful looking and his acting career hadn't yet been entirely forsaken, while much of his music career lay in the future. In other words, there was still some chance he'd amount to something in a worldly sense.

He'd converted to Christianity some years previously in 1993, following many years during which his consumption of alcohol was at lethal levels, and he was barely to drink again thereafter, notwithstanding a long series of relapses, most as insignificant as they were incapacitating.

His friend spoke of many things, but while most of these were to elude his memory as the years proceeded, one especially remained. This was the time they found themselves cornered on some dusty street in a city-port on the Atlantic coast of France by wild dogs; but he never mentioned how they managed to extricate themselves.

Some fifteen years after the call took place, he reflected on his luck that night and wondered if the reason he emerged unscathed was that God had better plans for him other than to become food for a couple of feral canids. And this provided him with a goodly amount of consolation for the teeming multitude of failures and follies, mistakes and losses that had blighted his life ever since.

However, it's significant that the vast majority of these took place prior to his acceptance of Christ as his Personal Saviour, and that while his life had been far from perfect since '93, which is not surprising under the circumstances, God had restored to him the years that the swarming locust had eaten.

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