

Bambi and The Chopper: Episode 2

Laundry Day

by Martin Flett

Cruz is in the back of his Papa's shop when Bambi arrives.

'Hey Cruz, what's happenin?'

'I got da meat!' says Cruz, as always.

'What do you know, kid?'

Cruz hangs a leg of pork on the butcher's rack behind him, 'I heard da Puppet-Master got done over last night.'

'Wait, the Puppet *Master*? We thought he was just "Puppet"!'

'No, he da Puppet-Master alright; owns that Sha-dez place down town.'

'Sha-dez? You mean the strip-joint?'

'That's the one!' Cruz nods excitedly.

Bambi has heard of Sha-dez, but never anything good. It's the sort of place he steers clear of with its stories of seedy sex and drug-running. Money goes in, no one knows where it comes out.

'Ok, man,' Bambi says, handing over a rump steak in payment, 'you got anything else for me?'

'I got da meat!'

'Yeah, man, you do,' and Bambi turns and leaves the butcher's shop, not sure if he's any wiser for the meeting or not.

The Chopper is with The Professor, who is busy squeezing fresh limes in his purpose-built juicer.

'What do ya know about this Bambi character then?' The Chopper says.

'Huh? Oh, I just know him from town; he comes in sometimes for a litre of ... what is it ... Mango I think. Seems trustworthy enough.'

'Cool. Seems a good guy to have around.'

'Yeah man. Word is you two made quite a name for yourselves last night, what with that episode outside The Starsky.'

The Professor tells Chopper how, after he and Bambi had disappeared into another bar, the copper with the Puppet-*Master* and the 'boyfriend' had started asking for statements from the few left in the pub.

'Yeah, clearly he was on some power-trip or something,' The Professor says. 'He took some names, asked if anyone knew you two, that kinda thing. You might wanna lie low for a while.'

'Sure thing. Thanks for the tip-off. What happened to the Puppet-Master and that guy?'

'Hauled away. Dunno what happened then, I beat it home.'

The Chopper watches as The Professor continues with his juice extraction. Since all local stores had been prohibited from selling fruit juice, The Prof had made a steady side income from his hobby. Keeping it from the officials had been

no problem: nobody wanted to shop him to the police, not while he was their only viable supplier.

‘Listen, man,’ The Chopper breaks in again, ‘I gotta split. Said I’d meet Bambi for a pint or two and I should really head him off before he gets to The Starsky. We’ll go someplace else.’

The Professor, trying to concentrate on his work, merely grunts his goodbye and The Chopper leaves by the cellar stairs.

An hour later, Bambi is heading down the street towards The Starsky. On the pavement in front of him, right where The Prof left it the night before, is his old DAF 600 car. Though Bambi technically owns the car, he doesn’t have a license to drive and so The Professor, without his own ride, makes use of the flame red vehicle from time to time – that is, when it’ll start.

As Bambi passes the car, The Chopper appears hurriedly from the adjacent street.

‘Hey dude, what’s the deal?’ Bambi asks.

‘Good thing I caught you, man. I’ve come from The Prof’s place; he reckons we should give The Starsky a miss after what went on last night.’

‘Yeah yeah, good plan. I saw Cruz earlier – you know him? He filled me in on some stuff that’s been going down.’

‘I know Cruz, yeah. What meat he have for you?’

Bambi explains about the Puppet-Master’s links with Sha-dez as they head towards The Shetland pub.

The Starsky is the place to be in town, but The Shetland is nice enough. It’s often a little busier, which makes it a bit of a hideout for some of the less-honourable ‘businessmen’ about the place, but if you kept yourself to yourself, you could have a good pint with your friends without too much bother. Bambi and The Chopper have rarely ventured through its doors and, when they do, invariably the bar staff have changed. Tonight it’s a long-haired man with a moustache and, oddly, sunglasses who serves them.

‘Two pints of bitter,’ says Chopper and soon he and Bambi make their way to a nearby table.

Once they’re seated, the long-haired barman is joined by another man in a full-length coat. Unseen by Bambi and The Chopper, these two men whisper to each other, casting an eye at the two unwitting drinkers nearby.

An hour and three pints later, The Chopper heads to get more drinks. Returning from the bar he looks puzzled at the change in his hand.

‘I’m sure I gave him a tenner,’ Chopper says.

‘You definitely had one in your hand, man. You should go back,’ Bambi encourages.

‘This’d never happen in The Starsky...’ and Chopper rises and heads back to the bar.

The barman is surprisingly happy to see him, giving Chopper a cheery wave, ‘You alright there fella?’

‘I think my change is wrong. I gave you a tenner, and you’ve only gimme change from a five.’

The barman looks at him, 'You sure dude? I wouldn't normally make a mistake.'

I'm positive. My man, Bambi, over there reckons the same thing too.'

'Ok, I'll tell you what, we need some ... stuff ... delivering down town. If you could take it for us, I'll sort your change out, and maybe give you a little more for your ... err ... trouble. How's that sound?'

The Chopper's not too sure, not after last night. He was hoping for a quiet night, but the extra cash does sound appealing.

'What kind of "stuff" is it?' Chopper says.

'Oh nothing major. Just some...laundry. Yeah, that's all. My mate here, Si, works at this place down town some weekends and they need some fresh ... sheets for this Friday.'

The other man who'd earlier been talking with the barman appears once more from the shadows, surprising Chopper a little. He now has two large beige linen bags with him.

'Lemme have a word with my man, Bambi, first, and then we'll let you know. Deal?'

The Chopper beckons Bambi, who wanders over and the two retreat a little from earshot of the men at the bar.

After a brief exchange, The Chopper looks up.

The barman calls over, 'So how about it, guys? Fancy it?'

Chopper calls back, 'Ok, sure, we'll do it. Where do you need it taking?'

'Oh, just that Sha-dez place. To the delivery door round the back.'

Bambi looks at The Chopper, alarmed, and whispers, 'That's that Puppet-Master's place! Sure this is a good idea?'

Chopper doesn't speak, but walks over to take the bags from the long-coated man, handing one to Bambi.

'They'll pay you when you get there,' the barman says. 'Oh, and thanks for the help.'

The Chopper is sure he notices a little snigger as the barman turns to his friend, but he and Bambi leave without further comment.

As they leave the pub and stand under the street lamps, the linen bags – now slung over their shoulders – catch the light. Unbeknown to the bearers, one word is written clearly on each bag in black lettering: 'Swag'.

The town's streets are deserted as Bambi and The Chopper make their way down the main road.

'This laundry sure feels a bit ... well ... weird to me,' Bambi comments.

'Yeah, I know what you mean,' Chopper replies, 'but you know what Sha-dez is like ... Personally I've never carried a sack of lingerie before, maybe this is what it feels like?'

'Yeah man, maybe you're right. Odd that it's so quiet tonight, don't you think?'

Just then, a cop car screams round the corner from a cross roads ahead, siren blaring and lights flashing, heading in the direction of The Shetland behind them. Both Bambi and The Chopper stop in their tracks, startled, but then breathe a sigh of relief, and continue.

‘Wondered what the hell that was!’ Bambi says.

A little further on, and the mood has lowered. The two delivery-boys have reached the rougher end of town and they’re not happy about it: dark alleyways on either side replace the high street stores, and there’s an unspoken sense that maybe they shouldn’t be here.

Just as soon as the thought enters their minds, as if to prove the point as they pass one particularly dark passageway, a voice calls out from behind them.

‘Hey!’ the voice yells with urgency and authority. ‘Stop! In the name of the law!’

Bambi and The Chopper freeze, wide-eyed, and then spin round to catch sight of two officers, truncheons raised, helmets slipping, careering towards them down the road.

The Chopper looks at Bambi and grabs his arm, pulling him into the side street next to them.

The coppers increase their pace, yelling after them. Bambi and The Chopper, feeling the effects of their earlier pints, stumble a little on the cobbled street they find themselves on, barely covering a hundred yards before the officers turn the corner behind them.

As The Chopper turns to see where their pursuers are at, he spots the letters on Bambi’s linen bag, sudden realization dawning on his face.

‘Dude!’ Chopper cries. ‘We’ve been done! It’s these bags! Look!’

Bambi swings his bag round to the front, and is stunned by the word in front of him.

‘Swag?!’ he exclaims. ‘I thought you said ‘laundry’?!’

‘Whatever, dude, let’s ditch ‘em!’

Without a second thought, Bambi hurls his bag towards the coppers and The Chopper follows his lead, lobbing his bag back down the alley, before they both turn and sprint off, staggering a little.

‘We still need to lose the Fuzz!’ Bambi yells.

As luck would have it, just ahead of them there’s a pile of cardboard boxes, discarded from a nearby warehouse, stacked high against the wall. As they approach, The Chopper trips on a cobble and reaches to steady himself, but his flailing hand is only able to find the stack of boxes. He falls forward, scattering boxes, barely managing to keep his balance. Bambi bundles into a few of the boxes, batting them out of his path, littering the street behind.

The Chopper gathers himself up, panic on his face; Bambi is off some way in the distance. Chopper glances back down the alleyway, now almost completely blocked by cardboard. Without another thought, he takes off after his companion.

They exit the alleyway, heading back up town, not giving up running until they’re sure the coppers have been left well behind.

Out of breath, the two men stop, leaning against the wall.

‘Laundry, huh?’ Bambi accuses his partner. ‘Laundry?!’

‘Alright, man, so I made a mistake. Maybe he said something about *laundering*’

Bambi rolls his eyes, ‘Whatever, man. Let’s talk about this later. Fancy another pint?’

'Yeah, that's probably for the best,' The Chopper replies. 'The Starsky this time? Better the devil you know, after all.'

Six hours later, The Chopper, lying on damp, well-cut grass, opens his bleary eyes. The shadow of a man covers his face and a tall flag stands next to him, marking the 15th hole of a golf course somewhere on the East coast of Yorkshire. Bambi is nowhere to be seen.

Slowly The Chopper lifts his head to look at the figure above him: Pierce Brosnan stares back at him.

Without warning, Pierce throws his arms in the air, and screams at The Chopper, 'Maybe you shouldn't be LYING THEEERRREEEEE!!!' Then, just as abruptly, he walks away.

Stunned, The Chopper gets to his feet, looking around. Was he dreaming? Something is seriously wrong: Bambi is definitely missing, and there's only one place Chopper can think of to begin the search for him.

He sets off towards the 19th hole.

To be continued...