

THE INDENTED

V

Ballard's Backyards

By
J W Bowe

Contact details:

Serious Biscuits.

admin@seriousbiscuits.com

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SCENE 1:

Clive Ballard opens the door of his static caravan to let Ralph inside. They both stare at a large map of Norfolk that has been stretched across the far wall.

Clive: That's what I've been working on, Ralph; what it all totals up to...

Ralph: What the fuck is it, Clive...?

Clive: It's Norfolk...

Ralph: Why have you scribbled on it?

Clive: They're markings, sightings... I wanted to get a clear picture of where the local stuff is going on. This is how it came out...

Ralph: These are UFO sightings?

Clive: Marked as carefully as I could, yes.

Ralph: And they're confirmed sightings?

Clive: Oh yeah, I've chatted to all the people who saw them. Four of them are my own.

Ralph: Fascinating... what do you think the pattern means?

Clive: It's the Fibonacci spiral, Ralph.

Ralph: It is? Sorry I don't know enough to know if that's already an answer.

Clive: The golden ratio, an Indian mathematics sequence that makes things go like spirals. It shows up naturally all over the place, but what the fuck is it doing on my map of UFO sightings?

Ralph: A reasonable question; pretty evocative to look at as well, Clive. So that's us at the start of it, here in Hempnall?

Clive: That's the caravan park, yup.

Ralph: So the spiral goes counter clockwise?

Clive: Maybe that's how the Indians write things down...

Ralph: Let's have a closer look then... Brooke village is the next sighting, what was going on there?

Clive: That was one of mine. Three luminous green lights overhead, 03:33 in the morning like always. I was in my car for that one.

Ralph: And the next one at Ashby St. Mary?

Clive: That was our good friend Eugene who caught that one; a blaze of light that went over his house. He said that it wasn't a helicopter, and the look on his face told me he was telling the truth.

Ralph: And what time of night was it?

Clive: About midnight. I'm not that sure, I think he was pissed when it happened. He was taking a leak outside over the geraniums at the time, he said.

Ralph: Sounds like Eugene so far. He's never mentioned it to me.

Clive: He's pretty quiet about it, and he knows you like to make notes.

Ralph: He doesn't mind you marking his house on a map then?

Clive: I've been doing this a long time, Ralph, he knows I'm kosher.

Ralph: I'm not doubting your enthusiasms, Clive, and it's a pretty far out thing you've done to the map. Do you mind if I go for a seat? I think my leg wants to pass out.

Clive: Of course, of course. Would you like a cup of tea?

Ralph: Of course!

Ralph goes to take a seat and rest his stick.

Clive: So how are you going there? What news from the front?

Ralph: Well it turns out that I'm in love...

Clive: Right. I suppose you'll want congratulations for that? Milk?

Ralph: A little please, thank you. That map is pretty mesmeric, any guesses as to what it means.

Clive: Plenty of guesses, Ralph. It's obviously some kind of message but it's come at a pretty busy time.

Ralph: Because of your trip to Cerrigydrudion? How did that go?

Clive: We'll get to that, I just meant that there's a lot of work on at the moment, a lot of lawns to maintain. I just started repairing peoples mowers as well, Keith Gram lets me use a shed out the back of his truck yard.

Ralph: He gave me a lift to town a few days ago. I like the view from a truck.

Clive: Gram doesn't after thirty years at it. Anyway that's Grammy; you wanna have a cup of tea and exchange stories?

SCENE 2:

Ralph and Clive are sat inside the caravan still staring at the map.

Ralph: It definitely looks like some kind of invitation. I don't know though; did you input everything you've got?

Clive: Everything from the last two years, as best I could get it.

Ralph: How many more sightings do you think are out there that you don't have?

Clive: Probably not many; and they're probably from around the same areas as these ones.

Ralph: Have you been back to them regularly?

Clive: Yeah, and my watch always says 03:33 when I see something.

Ralph: And that is the true time when it happens?

Clive: ... I don't know anymore if I'm honest, Ralph. The more you look at the details the less you see where they're from.

Ralph: Who?

Clive: Whoever they are up there; and why they're are up there and not down here with the rest of us.

Ralph: Perhaps they're shy?

Clive: Then why go to the bother of making all that spectacle after hours?

Ralph: Well I think the same of people down here...

Clive: Then they're just as fucked as we are... shame because there was some amazing activity in Cerrigydrudion when I was up there, as it happens.

Ralph: Go on, I was hoping that you'd come back from Wales with tall tales.

Clive: Well you'd love to meet the landlord of a pub I went to, he'd keep you busy with that Biro of yours.

Ralph: Not sure what to make of that... carry on though, what happened?

Clive: Well... word had been coming through channels for a while that there were... activities going on around there.

Ralph: Anything specific?

Clive: Little that I can confirm, besides a very close encounter with a saucer outside the aforementioned pub's car park. Very peculiar that one, there was music coming off it and everything.

Ralph: Prog rock?

Clive: I don't really listen to music so I don't know what it was. It looked out of control, juvenile... five of us saw it and then it took off again with the music leaving after it. It's up there with some of the cattle mutilation I've seen on the odd front.

Ralph: What did the landlord think of it?

Clive: He immediately offered me bed and breakfast if I wanted to come back. I'm thinking of moving up there, Ralph. That map is pulling me, but outside of Norfolk, up in north Wales... there's all kinds of stuff heading for a fan up there.

Ralph: Yeah... I know how you feel I think, Clive...

Clive: You fancy coming to the valleys?

Ralph: Thank you, but that's not how I meant it.

Clive: Oh yes... you've fallen in love haven't you. How's that going?

Ralph: ... it feels like some of my conversations are starting to point towards a worrying finality, if that makes sense?

Clive: Twice divorced, Ralph so I can tell you that that is love. Where are you heading to?

Ralph: Hereford, perhaps.

Clive: Any reasonable attitude for not going?

Ralph: Plenty; I'm sentimental. But then that's the draw as well isn't it...

Clive: Is it the girl from the Morris dancers?

Ralph: Yeah...

Clive: You talk about her quite a bit. Well good on you, it'll give you things to keep writing about. Have you...?

Ralph: Yeah... in the back of her Polo.

Clive: And it's still love?

Ralph: The eyes have it, it's love.

Clive: It's the lights for me these days... I can be honest enough to say that these days, too. You should go to Hereford, it's nice there and we wouldn't be too far away from each other, if I move to Cerrigydrudion.

Ralph: You think you might do that?

Clive: I think I might... I'm getting too old to still be chasing things too late after they've happened; I need to be where it's going on.

Ralph: Then you gotta go Clive, I know what all this means to you. Can you promise me that we'll go UFO spotting again before either of us does something radical?

Clive: We could go out tonight if you like, I've only got an old Hayter mower to work on tomorrow. Head out to Lakenheath, see what's going on there...

Ralph: Do we have to wait until 03:33 a.m.?

Clive: That's just always what the time stands at when it happens. You ever taken drugs, Ralph?

Ralph: Not really, not that much.

Clive: Well it's a lot like that, more corridors than doors... you ever read The Anti Gravity Handbook?

Ralph: Haven't got round to that one yet...

Clive: It's enlightening stuff, keeps *me* up at night.

Ralph: What doesn't?

Clive: My ex-wives, Ralph. I can't blame them, but that's probably just the age talking.

Ralph: Do you think some aliens are ex-wives too?

Clive: You don't know the ways that I could go about answering that, Ralph...

Ralph: No, but I would like to know.

Clive: Save your notes for when we go out spotting, do you know short hand in case things start going down fast?

Ralph: Not really, I tend to take my time over these things.

Clive: Then that might make you more of a historian than a chronicler but we'll say no more. I'll give you a lift back when we're done if you like.

Ralph: I'd appreciate that, it's a bit of a wait for the bus at half three in the morning.

Clive: I usually come back and do some work here after a sighting, make a few notes myself and have a cup of tea, have a think on things.

Ralph: What do you think about at that time of night?

Clive: I tend to wonder what the fucking hell I'm up to. But then something like that Fibonacci spiral happens and I get excited about the possibility of it all again, where it might be going. Fuck it, I'm moving to Wales, Ralph.

Ralph: What about Ballard's Backyard's?

Clive: I can take the surname and the lawn maintenance job with me; find a whole new bunch of lawns. Get my feelers out with the local watchers, see who's up to what...

Ralph: And...?

Clive: And probably stay right out of the way of the rest of them. You get more done on your own with spotting UFO's. No one really has much of a fucking clue as to what is going on up in the skies so you might as well do your own furrowing.

Ralph: So you weren't with other watchers the night you saw and heard whatever came over the pub, at closing time...

Clive: No I was up there for Keith, doing an articulated run to bring him back some larch wood. I was staying locally and just stumbled into the pub after a wander abouts. I chatted to a guy with most of a missing hand for a couple of hours and then the landlord sent us out the door. Bang, that's when it happened.

Ralph: What music do you think was coming off of it?

Clive: I told you, I don't listen to music.

Ralph: But you must have some idea, Clive. I'm intrigued, I want to help...

Clive: Bloody awful, that's what the music was.

Ralph: So what did everyone else think?

Clive: Well it's tough to hide your enthusiasm when something like that happens so I got pretty animated and the landlord was straight in with the offer of bed and breakfast. He promised more activity in a manner that suggested it would back. Or else other things like it; there seems to be a broad spectrum up there. It's pulling my magnets, Ralph...

Ralph: I can see. I'm glad you invited me round.

Clive: It's my time, Ralph... fuck knows I've seen enough of it that wasn't. You too I imagine.

Ralph: Yeah, maybe... What time do we have to wait for until we go spotting?

Clive: Better all round after dark, in case we have to go through a few fields.

Ralph: I don't know if I can do that...

Clive: No I take a flashlight, its fine. Oh yes, of course... we'll just stay close to the car then. I'll take you over to Freethorpe if you like?

Ralph: That's not marked on your map as a hotspot.

Clive: You got me! I'm happy to take you out but I don't want to cover marked terrain; that bloody map is pulling me in enough as it is. I ought to take it down...

Ralph: No! Leave it up... or else fold it up neatly and let me look after it.

Clive: I'm not going to take it down Ralph, but I think it has made its point...

Ralph: Yeah... you mean something specific there, Clive?

Clive: I wonder if that spiral has a very specific centre.

Ralph: Doesn't it start here in the caravan?

Clive: I had to mark it a little roughly, Ralph. I can't mark my caravan exactly on a whole map of Norfolk.

Ralph: Can't we use the mathematics of that spiral to... determine where it would be?

Clive: I do engines and lawns and engines for doing lawns.

Ralph: And trucking... do you have to go back and get some more larch wood anytime soon?

Clive: Well see... I can't leave it to that chance though. I ought to get to Cerrigydrudion before December; stuff is always going down on the solstices. Anyway, let's have an early dinner and if you're still game we can take the pickup out and be ready for when we are left for shadows.

Ralph: Sounds foreboding...

Clive: The truth of things always is. You like beans?

SCENE 3: Ralph follows Clive back into his caravan
having been out spotting. They both stare at the map.

Clive: 03:33 a.m.! Fuckers... they don't drop a beat, what did I tell you!?

Ralph: You did tell me just that; fuck me... I am impressed, Clive. Maybe they're after your pick up?

Clive: Why don't they just pick me up then?

Ralph: I don't know, I've never seen anything like that before.

Clive: That's how it starts. You fancy a cup of coffee, I can't see that I'm going to try and sleep any. Dribble a little blend in there too...

Ralph: Why not, it's been an exciting night. What does it mean for your map though? Tonight's sighting isn't on the trajectory of the spiral.

Clive: It means that it's all fucked, Ralph. But never mind, one door closes and another opens.

Ralph: So you are moving...?

Clive: One last roll of the dice. I'll not be the first person to have done that and end up in Wales. The last bastion...

Ralph: Are you sure you have to?

Clive: No-one ever went there who didn't. I'm wasting time, Ralph. This outing tonight has proved it for me. That spiral should have been the next door, but with the sighting earlier its all fucked. Damn shame, Ralph, that's the best looking map of Norfolk there ever was. Do you want it?

Ralph: Of course, I really think it's beautiful.

Clive: It still would have been if we hadn't gone out.

Ralph: You know I didn't force you to go out.

Clive: I know, don't take that wrong. You know, Ralph... sometimes it would be better if people like us didn't go out for an evening...

Ralph: But then we'd have to mix with the daytime folk...

Clive: True enough. You're good company for my brighter side, Ralph. Would your new bit of crumpet mind if I stole you away to Wales with me?

Ralph: She's pretty tenacious, Clive.

Clive: Her name is Ivy, isn't it? Makes sense... you're a lucky boy, Ralph; at least you better hope so.

THE END