

***Monte MINI
AND
Friends***

Basil's Brooklands Bash

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**For Nicola
and
Emily**

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It is early in the morning and the sun is just coming up over the hill at Lickeys End.

His **BOSS-ship** is still asleep and **Monte** who has just woken up gives a big yawn and look across at Basil who is looking very sad on such a lovely day.

“Basil, why are you looking so sad, today”, Asks **Monte**. “Oh I couldn’t sleep because I kept on remembering the old days at Le Mans in France. I never won a race there”. He says with sadness in his voice.

“We all lose a race sometimes”. Says **Monte**, wanting to make Basil feel better. But his comments didn’t seem to do so.

“It helps to talk, sometimes” says Austen helpfully. Wriggling his nose to stop him from sneezing as the sun cut across the window.

At which Basil laments, “I did so well at Brooklands in the speed trials and preparation races, yet every time I went to Le Mans, something went wrong with my mechanical bits”.

Mr Snooty who usually slept-in until the very last minute - because proper film stars do this - turns round and mutters loudly, “Why can’t you sleep like all civilised cars do. I don’t want to hear your dull old history lessons at this time in the morning”

Basil did not respond, which was unusual. But Austen glowers at Snooty sending him a clear message to be quiet. He starts his engine and revs it up to add effect. Mr Snooty shuts his eyes and pretends to go back to sleep because he is quite frightened of Austen when he is being noisy and aggressive. And after all it was too early in the morning to have a row, especially as it would be hours before his **BOSS-ship** turned the **big** key in the **big** lock.

But after a bit, when he thought no one was looking in his direction, he craftily half opens one eye to look and pry, thinking to himself - ***“I really do not want any more trouble from that nasty little Austen - I do not!”***.

But Austen misses this, as he is lost in his own thoughts about Brooklands and shivers at the memory. It was only when Miss Moggie asks Basil where

Brooklands is that he comes back from the daydream; although it seems more like a nightmare to him as he remembers.

Basil who now looks a bit happier, volunteers some information for Miss Moggie -

“The Brooklands Racing Circuit was home to British motor racing in the 1920’s and 1930’s. You can still see what is left of it, down in Surrey, just southwest of London. Quite near to Weybridge, actually”.

“It’s a museum now, just like ours”. Chips in SS, adding what he thinks is a piece of important information.

Austen shivers again and Miss Moggie enquires whether he is all right. “Yes - O..oh yes! Just a sad memory of Brooklands”, the orange racer replies.

“Was it not a nice place then” Miss Moggie goes on.

“No -not at all”, comments Basil with enthusiasm. “It was a very exciting place - but if you were not careful it could be a very dangerous circuit to drive round. You needed all your concentration to avoid getting into a bad - bad crash, particularly on the steep banking”

“Yes if you came off the banking too near the top of the slope, or you hit the ‘Brooklands Big Bump’, you would take off and fly like an aeroplane - right off the track and into the trees”, Austen says.

He shivers once more at the memory of doing just that and getting smashed to pieces in the process. He didn’t want to let on to Miss Moggie his thoughts about this terrible accident. And Basil, who also knew all about Austen’s bad smash, gives the little racer a knowing look, but keeps the secret to himself.

The Rooks are now cawing in the trees outside the POSH stable and most of the little cars are waking up and blinking their eyes in the bright sunlight.

His **BOSS-ship** who has been woken up by the bird’s ‘Dawn Chorus’ rolls over in his bed and looks at the alarm clock which shows 5 O’clock in the morning. And even though the sun is up, he still has two hours before he needs to get up. His wife who is wearing her curlers and ‘face pack’, yawns and says, “Please go back to sleep darling, it is too early to get up yet”.

Meanwhile **Monte** is trying to get Basil into a better mood by saying “Tell us more about your ‘Brookland’s Bash’ it sounds very interesting to me”. “Not to me”, chips in Mr Snooty. **Monte** glares at him and says, “It’s interesting to me because I was born long after it closed down - so just listen and learn”.

Basil, who is now very emotional, removes his monocle and wipes away a tear, before he replies to **Monte** . But to hide his feelings, he pretends to have some grit in his eye; this is because he knows proper English gentlemen don’t cry, even when they are very sad indeed. He has always been taught to keep a **‘stiff upper lip’**.

“Well Young Feller if you really would like me to tell you, then I will. But no questions about Le Mans please - none at all !!”. “I promise” says **Monte** . “And me” calls Austen. Mr Snooty groans and Miss Moggie purrs.

Romeo Al listens quietly because he knows a great deal about Le Mans from his relatives who had raced there; as does Benni Bugatti and Manfred Merc, who both smile to themselves juggling with their happy memories of success.

“You see I raced at Brooklands many times”, says Basil , “And I had some success, but very many disappointments - still I suppose these were some of my happiest and proudest years”

“Tell me more about the track” purrs Miss Moggie encouragingly.

Basil smiles at her and says, “Brooklands was first opened in 1907 and was altered in shape many times before it closed in 1939. It was ‘Kidney Shaped’ when I first knew it in the late 1920’s. That was when the engineers were experimenting with my engine to make me go faster”.

“Yes, I remember you were the first of the **‘Four and a Half Litre’** cars to be fitted with a ‘Blower’”, Austen goes on, enthusiastically.

“What is a ‘Blower’ used for”, asks an innocent Miss Moggie.

“You are too young to know about such things”, shouts Mr Snooty, rather nastily.

Austen gives him a hard look and revs his engine. Mr Snooty knows better than to argue with Austen when he is in this mood and so he closes his eyes again.

SS who knows all about these mechanical things says a little pompously, “A blower is a type of air compressor that forces air into the engine where it mixes with petrol in the cylinders. Then an electric spark from the ignition causes a big explosion that makes the engine turn”

“But my engine works like that”, says Miss Moggie.

“No it doesn’t”, sneers Mr Snooty, “Yours **sucks** air into the cylinders through a carburettor - **but a supercharger!!** That’s its proper name, **pushes** the petrol and air mixture into the engine and that is different”. He adds loftily.

“Know-all, know-all”, choruses everyone else; sniggering behind his back.

“Ignore him Miss Moggie”, **Monte** whispers as he winks at her and continues by saying - “He is just showing off again”.

Austen, who is now very angry indeed, turns up his supercharger and tares off round the POSH stable Shouting “OK! film star, I will show everyone what a ‘Blower’ does” and charges the unfortunate Mr Snooty.

Mr Snooty is taken completely by surprise by the little racers turn of speed and try as he might, he is unable to escape from Austen, who by now has him cornered by the **BIG** door. He cowers, frightened out of his wits as Austen bounces up and down; his body shaking under the power of his small, but very powerful engine.

“Please don’t bump him again, Austen”, wails Miss Moggie. “You will only scratch you lovely orange paint”.

“He is not worth it”, adds **Monte**, shaking his head sadly. He hopes this will please Miss Moggie because he knows how easily she gets upset with Mr Snooty.

Laughing out loud, SS says, “There you are Snooty, old boy, you can see what a ‘Blower’ does, even a little engine like Austen’s. “Yes it’s just 750 cc’s”, says Austen, puffing out his chest.

Mr Snooty sneaks away, while Austen is distracted by SS.

Basil, who is more cheerful by now, nods and says, "That is why I had a supercharger fitted to my engine - to make me go faster than the other 4.5 litre cars who were my racing cousins".

"Cor..r", says Austen, "That makes your engine six times as big as mine", continues the little racer; admiration evident in his voice.

"Yes but it means that in most races I started from 'Scratch', when little racing cars like you and Maurice G over there, usually got a lap or two start over us big Gents", Basil puffs. But then he smiles as he looks over his shoulder to where the other little racers are standing together in their special place in the POSH stable. 'Brooklands' the little Riley smiles back.

"Why did you start at different times like that", asks Miss Moggie, looking a little puzzled.

SS, airing his knowledge once again, explains by saying, "Brooklands - the race track that is - had a handicap system because in the first races they held there, the big cars always won. But later on, they made the big cars start later in the race, some times by as much as an hour. That way the little cars had a sporting chance of winning".

"It sounds complicated to me" says Miss Moggie.

Monte again wanting to impress her, adds, "It is not really too difficult Miss Moggie, it is a method that has been used many times in rallies and other track racing events where there is no formula"

"What is a formula" she whispers to **Monte**, confidentially, because she doesn't want to show herself up.

Mr Snooty rolls forward silently, trying to snoop, but **Monte** noticing this, lowers his voice further and whispers back, "In formula racing all the cars have to be built to a similar design so that they all start off with much the same chance of winning".

“I see, like ‘Formula One’ on television” she whispers back. **Monte** nods and Mr Snooty rolls even further forward.

“Look at the love birds. Just look at them, whispering to each other”, sniggers the offensive Mr Snooty. His behaviour showing how peeved he really is and miffed because he can’t eavesdrop on their secret conversation.

He jumps up and down, but the others ignore him, including Austen surprisingly enough. And **Monte** nuzzles closer to Miss Moggie giggling and whispering some more.

“Come on you two, I thought you wanted to know about Brooklands”. Says Basil tersely. “If you want to canoodle, you can do that on the lawn when his **BOSS-ship** wakes up and takes us out into the sunshine. So there you are young Feller - be good, and listen”.

Monte looks embarrassed as he moves away from Miss Moggie and she lowers her eyes. Austen glares steadily at Mr Snooty when he sniffs loudly.

Basil clears his throat and says;

“After they fitted my supercharger at the factory in London we drove down to Brooklands to do some speed tests”. “In those days we had a special garage and workshop at the track, so that my engine could be re-tuned after I returned from each spin on the track”, he proudly continues.

“Did you go very fast”, questions Miss Moggie again.

“Not at first”, Basil replied kindly; but when we had warmed the engine up a bit, the blower came in and I did a ‘Flying Lap’ at 65 miles per hour”.

“That’s not very fast”, smirks Mr Snooty, “I can do that in second gear”.

“Very clever, film star” says SS caustically, but adds; “In those days nobody had driven that fast before and one hundred miles per hour, was just a dream”.

With a smile on his face, Austen loftily says “You owe your speed to pioneers like Basil and me, because without our daring and courage you wouldn’t have got off the drawing board - so there”. SS stifles a laugh and others snigger around the Posh stable.

Mr Snooty does not see the joke and goes on by saying, “ You think you are very clever Mr SS, but you were just a rich mans toy in those days”.

“No he was not”, says Basil with feeling. “He did very well in special events like ‘Hill Climbing’ and rallies. “And **Monte** reminds everyone. SS won the ***Concours de Confort*** at Monte Carlo in 1938”,

“And that is more than you have ever done” says Maurice G, leaping to the defence of SS. “And what is more no one seems to recall you winning an ‘Oscar’ for your film” adds **Monte**, rubbing salt into Mr Snooty’s wounds.

There are more titters from around the Posh stable, and Mr Snooty slinks off to sulk behind Romeo Al, who instead of sympathising, reads him a little lecture on trying to make friends with the little cars. This does not go down at all well with Mr Snooty, who continues to sulk.

Meanwhile, the others are listening to Basil who is recounting the details of his speed trials.

But Miss Moggy interrupts him - “Tell us about a proper race” she pleads; encouraged by **Monte** who says, “Yes, please tell us about the 500 mile race in 1930, when you raced in the rain”.

“That might not be a good idea, as it will make Basil sad again” says Austen. “Why should that be Austen?” asks Miss Moggy. Who answers her by saying “One of my cousins won it and Basil came second, even though Basil chased him to the line”.

“ I don’t mind, Austen” replies Basil, “It was a real scrap right to the end and I nearly won, even with the handicap”.

“I would love to hear this story, if it doesn’t make you too sad Basil”, purrs Miss Moggy. “Too Sa..aad, Too Sa..ad” mocks Mr Snooty from the protection of the shadows at the back of the Posh Stable.

“Shu..ush” cautions Romeo Al, but it is too late as Austen has shot off with his supercharger roaring to give Mr Snooty a lesson in manners.

“No Austen, please no!!”, pleads Miss Moggie, whilst Basil just cautions Austen to “Keep the silly man quiet”. Austen obeys and Mr Snooty quakes in his boots.

“Please go on Basil” says **Monte**.

“OK!” Basil replies. “But no more interruptions – None at all – or there will be real trouble for some of you”. They all lower their eyes except Mr Snooty, who glares at Austen and continues to sulk.

“I had been dropped from the works racing team by then because I kept breaking down. But I after that I raced for a posh Lady who had bought our ‘supercharged’ racing team from the works”, adds Basil. “And my cousins and me raced for the ‘Ostin Works team”, adds Austen with pride.

“Did you like racing in the rain Basil?” Miss Moggy enquires. “I didn’t have to,” says Basil “Because Austen and his cousins went off at 10.30 am in the morning, as they were so small – I just sheltered under a tarpaulin and waited and waited. “Then Brooklands here, and some others called Sunbeam set off about half an hour later”, he went on.

“Weren’t you bored sitting under the tarpaulin waiting all that time while the others were getting wet feet”, **Monte** asks. “Not really”, Basil replies – “Got a bit of a sleep actually young feller - we didn’t get going till after dinner”

“Boring! – Boring!” calls Mr snooty from the back as he hides behind Romeo Al. But he need not have cowered because Austen was just about to tell his part of the tale.

“We got into trouble early on”, complained Brooklands. “We were trying to catch Austen and his team, who were going at 75 miles an hour. But we couldn’t keep up.”

“I know, it was real cool,” says Austen, “Till I broke my piston and had to retire from the race”. “Poor you”, purrs Miss Moggy, “Did you cry?”

“I tried not to, but I have to be truthful and say yes I did; behind the Pits, when nobody was about”

“Sissy!! – Sissy”, calls Mr Snooty and promptly gets a roar from Austen as he sets off to bump Mr Snooty’s nose.

Meanwhile, Brooklands’ explains that he also retired back to the pits as Basil rushed past him at 120 miles an hour trying to catch up with Austens’ cousin Earl. “He was a long way ahead and going at 83 miles an hour”, adds Basil.

“ I bet you had to drive faster and faster to get near to Earl, didn’t you Basil”, **Monte** cries in excitement. “Sure did young feller, but if you have everything worked out well you can usually catch up” says Basil.

“Did you manage to catch up then?” enquires Miss Moggy in a purring voice.

“No. Got a problem with my spark plugs and had to have ‘em changed”.

“And did that spoil your race?” she asks. “Cost me first place I’m afraid young lady”, says Basil. “I just couldn’t catch up after the delay in the pits”.

Mr Snooty was rubbing his nose, which was very red after Austens actions, but he was thinking to himself “*Silly old fool, that Basil*” but didn’t dare say anything as Austen was watching him.

“You could hear the roar of our ‘blowers’ as we charged around behind one another – me at 123 miles an hour and Earl at 87 miles an hour”, puffed Basil excitedly. Reliving the excitement of the chase as he remembers steadily catching up.

“Did Earl win in the end”, squealed an excited Miss Moggy.

“Afraid he did” says Basil; “But if I had had just a few more laps in hand, I could have caught him though. Just **seven minutes** between us at the end”.

Everybody cheered except Mr Snooty, who was still rubbing his nose.

Suddenly the Big clock on the Big tower is striking **ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR, FIVE, SIX** and then **SEVEN** and his **BOSS**-ship is turning the **Big** key in the **Big** lock.

Everyone is FROZEN to the spot.

But suddenly there is panic as everyone races about trying to get back into place as quietly as possible.

When his **BOSS**-ship looks in, he seems surprised to see Mr Snooty out of place and carrying a very big dent on his chinny, chin, chin.

He first scratches his head and then shakes it, murmuring to himself
“I wonder how that happened? Most strange!! – Most strange!!”