

CHAPTER ONE

THE RETURN OF DUST BIN BOB

Blam! Blam! Blam!

“What the hell was that?” asked Bobby Dingle, owner and proprietor of Dingles of Newburgh Antique Shop, Soho, London.

It sounded like somebody desperately banging on a glass door with his bare palms. When Bobby went to investigate, he saw a crowd of young mods, at least twenty of them, mostly females, sprinting past the shop. They headed up the street.

The remnants of Bobby’s Liverpool accent shone through in moments like this. “Ang on. What’s all this then?”

Patti, Bobby’s pretty twenty-one-year-old assistant, looked over his shoulder.

“Looks like they’re chasing somebody.”

The crowd rounded the corner and disappeared.

“I wonder what’s going on?”

They resumed their task of closing up the shop.

Outside, Brian Jones was running for his life. He had his driver park his Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud a few blocks away. He got out and walked quickly through the streets, confident that he could make his destination before being recognized. The problem was that Brian Jones, founder of the Rolling Stones and one of the most recognizable rock icons of swinging London, could not possibly walk down the street without drawing a crowd.

He slowed to say hello to a couple of young dollies outside a trendy boutique. They giggled and followed him when he continued on his way. Then he passed a hair salon that virtually emptied out when they saw him, all the patrons and employees following Brian like the Pied Piper. Two of the hairstylists snipped their scissors as if to say, "I want a lock of his golden hair."

Brian walked faster. A pair of tall girls in miniskirts tried to block him, their long legs moving slightly akimbo as he deftly avoided contact by sidestepping. Their miniskirts rode up pink tights to youthful thighs as they both teetered on their high heels. They stumbled and grabbed at Brian.

Brian broke into a run. Two guys who had been pacing him were talking incessantly to him, but he didn't hear them. They began to run, too. Their chatter became more desperate as they realized Brian was escaping.

Brian picked up the pace. He managed to distance himself when the stumbling girls created a diversion and now he was half a block ahead and still running. By the time they realized

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he was getting away, they accelerated, too. It was like the opening scene of *A Hard Day's Night* as the fans pressed in on him, except these weren't smiling happy Beatles fans, these were frustrated, pissed-off Stones fans. They all had something to say to Brian.

Brian circled the block and was now approaching Dingles again. Gasping for breath, Brian banged on the glass door a second time. The crowd was closing in. Brian was trapped. He could hear the snipping scissors getting closer.

Brian looked over his shoulder at the onrushing mob. Some had already produced Stones album covers and were now waving them to be autographed.

Suddenly, the glass door opened inward, and a pair of friendly arms reached out and pulled him inside. The door clicked shut and the lock engaged. Bobby flipped the sign in the window from open to closed.

"Hey!" Brian said. "What are you doing?"

"It's okay, I think we just saved you from certain mayhem."

The mob ran past Dingles, unaware that Brian had escaped.

"I don't think they saw you."

"Thank God for that."

Brian straightened. "Dust Bin Bob?"

Bobby shook Brian's hand. "Nobody calls me that anymore except the Beatles."

"If it's good enough for the Beatles, it's good enough for the Stones."

Dingles of Newburgh attracted an interesting clientele. As an antique shop in the middle of the trendy Carnaby Street

neighborhood, it seemed out of place wedged between posh boutiques with kitschy names like I Was Lord Kitchener's Valet, Granny Takes a Trip, and Kleptomania.

Swinging London swirled around Dingles; girls in colorful miniskirts and neon leggings and guys dressed in the latest mod gear stopped and looked in the shop window at the myriad of curious items displayed.

Bobby Dingle started at the bottom, growing up poor on the hardscrabble streets of Liverpool with his friends, the young, unknown Beatles. He ran a stall for his father's secondhand shop at the flea market in Penny Lane. It was because of his love for American R&B records that the raw young Beatles sought him out as their friend. John renamed him Dust Bin Bob and the nickname stuck, although Bobby had come to dislike it. He was far from the dustbin now and was proud of his achievements. He'd come a very long way. Bobby Dingle was a successful businessman with profitable antique stores in London and Baltimore. What's more, he was the trusted friend of the Beatles.

The fact that the Fab Four shopped there assured Dingles of Newburgh a fair share of notoriety and a steady stream of scene makers. All four Beatles had been spotted at Dingles on different occasions. It often made the gossip column and did wonders for Bobby's business. He'd been staying open late, attracting club goers and students.

The store itself was an old chemist shop with two large front windows and a beautiful art deco glass display case. Bobby had done some renovations, but the old-time feel of the chemist shop shone through.

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The shadows of late afternoon slanted through the narrow street giving everything a golden hue.

Patti gasped. “That’s Brian Jones!” she said. “From the Rolling Stones!”

Brian flashed a bemused smile and strolled around the shop dressed in an eye-bending red-and-gold Edwardian outfit with elaborate ruffles and lace.

He was shorter than he appeared on TV; five foot seven or eight, Bobby reckoned. His hair was longer, too. It shimmered with precious highlights in the late afternoon sun. He’d heard that Brian was fastidious about his hair and washed it every day. His mutton-chop sideburns were slowly encroaching down the sides of his face, giving him an out-of-time look.

“Would you care for a cup of tea?” Dust Bin Bob offered. “We were just closing up.”

“That sounds wonderful.” Brian’s voice was soft, nearly effeminate, and he spoke perfect “Cheltenham School for Boys” English.

“Do you mind if I call you ‘Dust My Broom’ instead of ‘Dust Bin Bob’?”

“You mean like the Elmore James song?”

Brian grinned. His face lit up. “I knew I could trust you, Dustman.”

“Just because I know about Elmore James?”

Brian nodded slowly. “Exactly. There was a time when we were living in poverty with Mick and Keith at this horrible flat in Edith Grove and we judged *everybody* on their knowledge of