

# Tales of the Gladiator

## Spirits of the gladiator

A new 30 min piece of gig theatre in which the long lost iconic Druids Heath Estate Pub 'The Gladiator' opens its doors again for one night only .

### **Cast**

**Kids playing football**

**Young Mark**

**Mark**

**The hostess /Magda**

**All other Characters are played by The Regulars .**

**The Strippers**

**The Bartender**

**Cheryl**

**Johnno Logan**

**Christy Logan**

**Drew Logan**

**Cow Boy Joe**

**The Promoter**

**The Gambler**

**The Strangers -Carole and Keith**

*Its getting on for Christmas 2024*

*Kids are playing slam against the wall outside the venue.*

**MONOLOGUE**

### **Mark as a child**

It was the summer holidays of 1969. I was playing football on the Manningford Hall car park with other boys as usual.

It was late morning when one of the lads noticed something going on over at The Gladiator Pub. He called us over. We saw this chariot and a pair of horses on the corner.

So we walked down the path to Manningford Hall and looked across the road. There was a small crowd of people on the corner of Pound Road and Bells Lane watching the event unfold.

Although The Gladiator had been open a few months this was the official opening of the pub and what a sight. There were people standing in the chariot and around the side I also noticed somebody holding the horses at the front to steady them.

It made a change for a few minutes to kicking a football on a carpark. Who needed TV. Strange that only a few weeks later a new comedy series "Up Pompeii" started on the telly. It always reminded me of the Roman Chariot and characters outside The Gladiator.

### **4**

#### **Mark**

That was me at 11. I first went in the Glady with my mates from Maypole school when I was 16 - 50 years ago!

**Hostess.** (*Comes to the door*) Long time no see MarkUs ..Come in Bab. The Gladdy is open again for one more night. One more time.

(One more time daft punk-(official video 2001 version)

*Mark goes in followed by the audience -inside*

*They are greeted by The Regulars who are sat at different tables - audience are invited by The Regulars to come over and join them - The audience are treated like part of the community - The Regulars chat to them like they know them ..*

**Mark** This was the Arena -the lounge for families and the free and easy nights at the weekend. Downstairs was the Dive for Private bookings. My Mom and dad had their silver wedding anniversary down there.

Also every Friday night was the famous Gladiator disco. And now and then ,Strippers ....

(Stripper music) Regulars sing along with it -encourage audience to do the same

(Strippers pop their heads through the doors to The Dive )

**Strippers** Eh there's a bunch of 11 year old lads trying to peer in the windows !

**Young Mark** (Running through the audience. I was one of them! You could never see nothing though.

**Strippers** Get away with ya! come back when you're 21!

**Mark** I came back when i was sixteen - last day of school.  
And I kept on coming for a long while .

**Bartender** What you having Mark ? The usual?

**Mark** Yes thanks. There's my pals – I sat next to them at infant school right through to secondary and I'm still sitting with them now ...

*(goes over to join them -this is Mark's spot and he narrates from there from now on )*

**Hostess/Magda** This was the place to be  
you had to be there  
The inn place  
Buzzing  
Jumping  
Alive

*Gladiator song "Everybody knows Everybody here "*

*As The Gladiator song ends*

**Hostess** There are many stories we could tell from many nights at The Gladdy. Tonight we are telling the Tale of the Logan Brothers .

**Johnno** (Carrying a speaker ). Watch your backs!

**Hostess** You're cutting this a bit fine ain't ya -Johnno -you Logan family never been the best time keepers -especially your dad when it's time for last orders ! ilhope you're not expecting a sound check -we've opened. You're on in ten .

**Christy** (with cahon) it won't take us a min to set up. Is our Dad in?

**Hostess** Any one seen Drew Logan tonight?

**Regulars** No etc .

**Hostess** I thought there was something missing !

**Cheryl** ( *Carrying mic stands* ) Where do you want these ?

**Johnno** Give them 'ere don't you go carrying that .

**Christy** ( *before His Brother can get to it Christy has taken them from Cheryl* )

**Cheryl** I was fine.

**Hostess** Two sets -yes. £20 quid

**Johnno** Don't pay us yet, not till we've done it - its bad luck

*Music on the juke box from the time Cockney Rebel Judy Teen*

*People get up and dance.*

*Darts played.*

*Snooker cues out - action continues over Marks speech*

**Mark**

I was 16, just finished school and got a job as an apprentice toolmaker so I'd got a bit of money in my pocket. First time I got drunk was here on 3 pints of Ansells Mild. Couldn't find my way home – I only live round the corner!

The Gladdy was our Stop off on the way to town on a Saturday night. Meet up, have a couple of pints, look out for the bus through the window coming up the hill - the 48 it was in them days - the 50 used to only go to the Maypole.

We'd have arranged to meet the other lads on the ten past 8 -see it coming up the hill. Down the pints, share the pints, take the pints. Run down the steps, leave the pints in the bus shelter - get on the bus - go to town meet the other lads at half 8 at The Pen and Whistle, The Glue Pot, The Parasol or the Windsor. Then on to somewhere else

The Romulus on the Hagley Road was my favourite with its balcony looking down on all the girls. Waiting around to ask someone for the last slow dance.

*Music changes*

*I'm not in love 10cc*

**Hostess** Bit early for that - the night is yet young

*Music Changes to Tulane Steve Gibbons*

**Hostess** Pleased to say we won the darts league -again!

**Regulars** Cheer

**Hostess** And the snooker!

**Regulars** Cheer

**Hostess** And The Angling!

**Regulars** Cheer

**Hostess** And all the prize money is going to the foster care Charity

**Regulars** Cheer

**Regular 2** Put it behind the bar!

**Regular 1** I heard it kicked off in here last Saturday

**Regular 2** What happened?

**Regular 3** Some lad got a speaker over his head.

**Regular 2** Who was in, who saw it ?

**Regular 1** No one saw it we just heard about it.

**Regular 4** I was in nothing happened.

**Regular 3** You should have been here.

**Regular 4** I was

**Christy** ( *On Stage setting up talking-to Johnno* ) Do you think he'll come ?

**Johnno** He looked grey this afternoon -I don't think he's up for it - he's better staying in - he won't be able to not have a drink, he's best off at home in bed.

**Christy** I'm not talking about Dad I'm talking about this promoter fellah from Wolves.

**Johnno** The record deal fellah?

**Christy** Yeah him.

**Johnno** He said on the phone he had a couple more groups to see in Kings Norton but he would still try and fit us in.

**Christy** When did you ring him?

**Johnno** Yesterday night. When I went to the outdoor for me Dads fags

**Christy** You never said.

**Johnno** You never asked.

**Christy** Anything else? Did he say anything else?

**Johnno** Not a lot ...the pips went and I didn't have any more change  
(To hostess). Look out for a fella in a hat Magda - give us a  
shout if he comes in .

*(Enter Cowboy Joe with Stetson and full cowboy outfit)*

**Christy** *(to audience)*. That's not him that's ...

**Everyone and Regulars** Cowboy Joe!!!

**Joe** Alright!

**Mark** He was always in at the weekend . Cowboy Joe I loved him I did. He  
proper cracked me up.

**Hostess** *To Joe* - You're on after the band.

**Joe** Right you are.

*(Band does first number - Magic MAN -bit of banter with audience  
Towards the end the promoter comes in wearing a hat and stands by The  
bar- Christy comes over to Cheryl )*

**Cheryl** That was great .

*Christy puts his arm round her*

**Christy** What do you want to drink Chez.

**Cheryl** I'll just have Brtvic orange.



**Christy** Cheap date.

*She gives him a look*

**Christy** I was only messing with yer.

*He kisses her*

**Johnno** (*coming over and pointing out the promoter who tips his hat to Johnno*) He's here -did he see us ?

**Cheryl** He came in half way through .

**Johnno** Did he look like he. was enjoying it.

**Cheryl** Hard to tell.

**Johnno** Was he tapping his feet?

**Christy** What's this a game of I spy ? Who do you think she works for, the West Midlands serious crimes squad? Let's just go over and ask him what he thought . She's not a mind reader.

**Johnno** Ok (*Christy goes to go with* ). No you stay here .

*Johnno makes beeline for the promoter*

**Christy** Woof frigging Woof.

**Cheryl** Who's rattled your cage tonight?

**Christy** He treats me like a frigging dog sometimes. Heel Boy!

**Cheryl** Brotherly love.

*The records guy is talking to Johnno*

**Christy** What do you think he's saying?

**Cheryl** What am I a lipreader now . Who is it anyway what's the big deal?

**Christy** Johnnos trying to get us a record deal to go to London.

**Cheryl** What? Why?

**Christy** Has the word not reached Druids Heath yet? The streets are paved with gold.

**Cheryl** How long have you known about this Christy?

**Christy** He mentioned it about a couple of weeks ago. We'd talked about it a bit before I went away over the summer to help Uncle Pat in Kilkenny. Which would be a very good place for a honeymoon.

**Cheryl** So it's been on the cards for a bit and you didn't think about mentioning it to me ?

**Johnno** I didn't think anything would come of it Cheryl - and you weren't well -when I came back you were throwing up all the time remember ... if he does want us to go we'll have to just wait .... put the brakes on things for a bit

**Cheryl** I beg your pardon Christy Logan!

**Christy** The engagement party might have to wait.

**Cheryl** I'm not waiting any longer. I've waited long enough ....I don't want to go down the aisle with white hair and a frigging walking stick. I want us to get on with our lives -get a house of our own on the estate start gardening - planting my borders out. Flipping London! What about your Dad? He looked rotten when I took his tea round for him last night -he can't be left on his own. He's never got over your Mom going.

**Christy** Should have been a bit better with her when she was here then.

*(Cheryl is going to the bar)*

**Christy** Where you off to?

**Cheryl** To cancel the booking for the engagement party down in the Dive.

**Christy** Leave it Cheryl - me going to London wouldn't mean we can't still have the party where it all started -downstairs at the Gladdy disco.

*Dance to David Bowie . Gene Genie*

*Cheryl.* I don't want to go to London. What about my Mom? It would break her heart.

**Gambler** (To audience member) Mind me G and T I'm just nipping over to the bookies . I've got a hot tip. Mistetoe and Wine are running. It's a sign - Miseltoe -Druids! Wine - The pub!

**Hostess** Wine who drinks wine in here? I thought you were knocking it on the head.

**Gambler** I got strong feelings about this one.

**Hostess** So will your old man when he finds out you've spent the rent.

(Gambler leaves her drink and goes).

**Hostess** And now we have back by popular demand, all the way from over the road. It's s the Gladdy's own Rooting, Tooting, Cowboy Joe!

*Regulars all cheer*

*Cowboy song mimes To Mule Train Frankie Laine \*\*\*\*\*Cap gun firing at the ceiling .*

*Doors fling open in come the strangers. Keith and Carole*

*Everything stops - Silence -*

*Carole and Keth terrified put their hands up .*

**Together** Don't Shoot !

**Cow Boy Joe** It's ok it only fires blanks ...

**Gambler** (*coming back in*) Yes like your dad.

**Joe** If that's the case where did I come from then?

**Regular** Yes that's what we all want to frigging know .  
Mars?

*Squaring up a bit - a moment of slight tension*

**Hostess.** Any more trouble you're barred  
I've told you before treat this place like you would your own home  
{*The regular and Cowboy Joe sit back down* }

**Keith** Come on Carole. Let's try somewhere else .

**Carole** (*obviously worn out*) Can I just sit down for a moment Keith?

**Hostess** Do you want a drink love?

**Carole** I don't suppose I could have a cup tea could I?

**Hostess** Course you can and what about you love ?

**Keith** A pint of the Ansell's mild. I've heard it's very good.

**Regulars** Where you from?

**Both** Down South.

**Regulars** That explains the funny accent .

**Keith** I beg your pardon?

**Carole** We've broken down.  
Been walking for ages.

**Regular** Never get a garage open on a Saturday night this close to  
Christmas.

**Keith** Plus the Mrs is pregnant.

**Hostess** Pregnant Mrs -nowhere to sleep at Christmas, her names not Mary is it ?

**Carole/Keith** No its Carole.

**Hostess** Well happy Christmas Carole.

**Gambler** What was the vehicle? A gee gee?

**Keith** Sorry?

**Gambler** A four-legged friend.

**Keith** Sorry ...

**Gambler** A donkey - was it a frigging donkey?

**Hostess.** Talking of which how did you do with the bet?

*Rips paper up throws it in the air.*

**Hostess** I told you -the bookies always wins.

**(to Carole and Keith )** You can stay here tonight there's accommodation for the landlords upstairs and we've got a spare room. Mechanic Mike can sort your car out. He's not in tonight but he'll be in tomorrow lunchtime. He lives in one of the blocks. He's a billy whizz with anything mechanical is Mike.

**Keith** Well if you're sure. I'll have another pint.

*Goes to bar*

**Cheryl** *(Coming over with tea for Carole who she sits next to )*  
Cup of tea was it? *Two sugars?*

**Carole** One and a half please. Go on make it three I need the energy !

**Cheryl** Is it your first.

**Carole** Well we lost one very early on so fingers crossed we're ok now it's past 12 weeks.

**Cheryl** You're not showing much.

**Carole** All the women in my family carry small. Is it *your* first?

**Cheryl** How can you tell?

**Carole** It's in your face .

**Cheryl** I haven't told my fiance yet.

**Carole** I won't say anything

**Cheryl** Thanks.

**Carole** Mums the word!

**Cheryl** Yes!

*(they chink the tea cup and orange juice)*

**Carole** Nice atmosphere in here we'd heard such bad things from people about the area and the pub but it's nice -warm – friendly.

*(burst of laughter from a table of regulars)*

I like straightforward people you know where you are with them.

**Cheryl** Yeah they are a good bunch.

**Carole** I think this place would make a really good community hub - with a Creche - something for the older kids to do. You know - a place for older people to meet - have community lunches that kind of thing, feel part of something.

**Cheryl** I guess it's not that far off that now .

**Carole.** It's a great location.

**Cheryl** Lovely and green isn't it with all the trees. When my mom and dad came here from the back to backs in Balsall Heath they thought they'd hit the jackpot - gardens, green fields ...incredible sunsets.

**Carole** Well if it ever comes up for sale let me know. It's an amazing view - and so close to the motorway

*she goes over off to sit with Keith .*

**Johnno** (joining Cheryl ) No one's seen our dad. How was he when you last saw him?

**Cheryl** Not great. I think the new pills the Doctor's got him on are not suiting him. He keeps saying he can see your Nan and Aunty Cath.

**Cheryl** What did he say - the fellah from the records company?  
I don't want you to go.

**Johnno** I can't stay here. What come to the engagement party?  
Downstairs in the Dive where it all started

*juke box moment Blondie heart of Glass They Dance together - Christy watches them.*

**Hostess** Pleased now to introduce on stage more local talent its L X

**Hostess** thank you to Alex And Ellie ..... next on in five mins we've got a second set from The Logans brothers, with their brand new song Born Survivors !

*The Brothers go back on stage -and start setting stuff up for their second set*

**Carole** Are they any good?

**Cheryl** It's my fiancé and his brother.

**Carole** Your fiancée is the one with the waistcoat on I saw you talking with him earlier .

**Cheryl** No that's his bother Johnno - it's Christy I'm engaged to.

**Carole** Oh right .....he's got a kind face.

**Cheryl** Yes he's a good man is Christy Logan. We've been together since we were teenagers . First love and all that ..

*Blah Blah do their new number –“Born Survivors “ it really gets the audience singing along. The promoter is watching from the bar -he's tapping his feet  
Soon as they've finished Johnno goes straight over to the Promoter*

*Sea food people come in with trays of novelty shrimps and cockles -take them round the audience plus flowers for the lady – copies of the Argus pink paper, music 1 in 10 UB40*

*John returns to Christy and Cheryl*

**Christy** So what did he say?

**Johnno** He just wants me.

**Christy** What?

**Johnno** He reckons he can see me going solo.

**Cheryl** Johnno...

**Christy** I'm as creative as you  
You're not the only one you know with ambition and ideas.

**Johnno** Its' Best for you Christy to stay here.  
You got Cheryl and... my dad - community matters.

**Christy** Not to you it doesn't. There's only one thing that matters to Johnno Logan and that's Johnno Logan .

*Promoter comes over to Johnno*

**Promoter** Are you coming or what? We're cutting it fine - the last train to Euston from New St is at 10 past. (*looks at the tension between the three*)



The meeting is first thing in the morning in Soho square. And that's in London! Then they are off to Paris ....offers like this don't hang around. Is there a phone ill ring for a taxi.

*Goes to pay phone on the bar.*

*The two brothers stand and look at each other.*

*Drew Logan staggers in - he is not in a good state.*

**Drew Logan** Morning Campers

**Both brothers** Dad!

**Regulars** Its Drew Logan .

Alright Drew !

**Drew** Friends, Romans, countrymen.  
When I was walking up through the Dell the blocks started talking to me .

Hang on tight Drew Logan for the winds of change are coming  
Batten down the hatches.  
Secure the lift doors.  
The cracks are showing.  
Build it meanly it won't last  
Deep, sleep, deep  
Dream, deep, sleep.

I Saw the future  
What's it like?

Red. Blood red.  
When we were promised green  
These fields are ours for walking, living, loving.  
To live our full lives.

*(seeing Carole and Keith)*

Who are these lot?

Developers!?

**Keith** We're Having to stay over. Our car has broken down - we can't get it fixed till the morning. Mike's doing it .

**Carole** Everyone's been very kind.

**Drew** *Everyone's been very kind .....*What did you expect ? Course they have. These people are the salt of the earth. What time is it ?

**Regulars** 10 to 10

**Cow Boy Joe** Cowboy Time

*(All do the lone Ranger )*

**Drew** Ten to Ten ! In the morning ! You dirty boozers.

*(to his sons )* I told you a thousand times lads day time drinking is a one way ticket to Disaster Town. Do not pick up 200 quid, do not pass Go. No son of mine is going to end upon the scrap heap. Don't you know who we are? We are The Logans - beloved of the Big One - father of the Roe Deer - wearer of the snow white mistletoe and the golden foxglove. Speakers of the truth and light. Green grow the rushes oh.

Christy. All right Dad?

**Drew** Never better son. I've just seen your Nan and your aunty Cath going into the chip shop for Savaloy's .

**Johnno** Dad.

**Regular 2** I'll take him home lads -

**Drew** Oh no you won't I've only just come in. I'm having a pint first .  
Wench bring me my mead!

*(goes to bar with regular - The Promoter is stood by the bar - he looks at his watch )*

**Christy** Well he's waiting ...

**Johnno** It's better for everyone I'm not around.

**Christy** Yes..... But it's not because you're the better song writer.  
It's because it would be hard to watch another man bring up your child.

*(Johnno and Cheryl look at each other)*

**Christy** It's in your faces.`

**Cheryl** Christy.

**Christy** I've always known.

**Cheryl** It doesn't mean I don't love you.

**Christy** I know that Cheryl. There's more than one way to love.

**Promoter** (coming over to Johnno) Johnno! Are you coming? The taxi's here.

**Christy** So you liked the song?

**Promoter** Yes but it's the lyrics that are special - like a John Lennon working class hero vibe.

**Christy** I wrote them.

**Promoter** Did he?

*A moment between the brothers -it should be hard to know who's telling the truth*

**Johnno** (to promoter ). Yes, yes he did.

**Promote.** ...That taxi meters running.  
(He goes and waits by the door )

**Johhno** (to Cheryl ) Ok?

**Cheryl** Ok

**Cheryl** (to Christy ) OK?

**Christy** Ok (To Drew ). Ok dad?

**Drew** Never better son.

*Christy And Johnno face each other*

*Batten Down The Hatches -song*

**Christy** Look after her -look after me dad.

**Johnno** I will.

**Mark** Christy ended up in Berlin and worked a lot with David Bowie and Lou Reed. He married a cousin of Bob Marley.

Cheryl and Johnno ended up in Hollywood - the one round the corner not the one in California . They've got a lovely family around them. All their kids did good. One daughter's an opera singer, just been on Desert island discs. Not bad for two brothers from Druids Heath eh?

*Christy Leaves*

**Bar tender** Last orders please.

*(John and Cheryl start to put Drews coat on for him )*

**Johnno**            Come on Dad let's go home and have some cheese on toast

**Drew**                And Savaloys

**Johnno + Cheryl**    And Savaloys

**Johnno**            A celebration supper .

**Cheryl**            You're gonna be a grandad !

*(People get ready to leave -drink up etc )*

**Mark**            After a while there were those that wouldn't go in anymore as the cracks started to show all over the estate not just the pub. I stopped going in myself. Different landlords -Different times  
When Len and Verna left they had a lock in and the pub was drunk dry - even the advocat! When we came out it was dawn. Spectacular sunrises round here. We still went to work. Our mom and dad are gone now. I've just bought their house, the middle one. The one my mum picked out when they moved here from the back to backs in Selly Oak. With its two gardens front and back. Drew Logan lived to see his first grandchild. He was right about Keith and Carole they were developers ...playing the long game.

**Hostess**    *The Gladiator pub song*

In those days it bounced .  
It was warm it was welcoming.  
A place for families and neighbours to meet up  
Company and quiet contemplation .  
A place where things got sorted ...

**Mark.**            Was it a vision or a waking dream ? Would I have it back if I could .....Naah it was what it was when it was .....Some heroes a few villains .

**Hostess** Time ladies and gentlemen please . Hurry up now or John's chippie will be shut!

End of play