

## Fiction Contest

**"It was Scott's 43rd birthday which called for a celebration. The Cape Evans hut was festooned with sledge flags and the table was spread with enticing food and drink. Ted Wilson leaned over to Scott and whispered in his ear..."**

"Now Scott, keep this under your cap. I've got something for you but you'll have to wait till later. But .... once you've seen it, burn it. I don't want this getting out. Not to anyone. It must be our secret"

Scott looked puzzled so Ted tried to explain.

"Alright, here's a bit of a funny story. I'll tell you now while it's quiet"

Ted poured them both a glass of sherry and moved his chair a little nearer to the head of the table where Scott was now completely intrigued with what Ted was about to tell him.

"Remember when we were in Port Chalmers last November? We were loading up the ponies, poor beasts, and then all the dogs and supplies onto the ship. It was a hell of a racket if you recall.

"The rain had stopped and it was quite warm so I went off for some peace and quiet. I walked up the Purakanui Road to the hill above the harbour. I had my pencils and sketchbook with me in case I saw anything of interest.

"At the top, I found a sunny glade quite hidden from view and a very convenient tree stump to sit on. Whilst getting myself settled I spotted an enormous web covered in dew. Right in the middle was an Orbweb spider. I immediately thought of Birdie. Remember he has arachnophobia?"

Scott nodded knowingly as Ted continued.

"With great satisfaction" he grinned "I evilly decided to make a drawing of it for his birthday in July.

“So there I am sketching away when suddenly two young ladies appeared. I was startled at first thinking I was quite alone but they were healthy looking girls in high spirits and seemed harmless enough. They peered over my shoulder to see what I was doing”

‘Why are you drawing a wee beastie?’ one of them asked in a broad Scottish tinged accent. ‘Are you an artist?’

“I felt a bit silly calling myself an artist. I should have been out on the promontory painting the view instead of a spider, so I replied that I was a naturalist.”

‘Ha! So are we’, they trilled.

“And with that they both laughed raucously, ran into the trees and then appeared again as naked as Botticelli’s Venus!

“Scott, I didn’t know where to look and felt my cheeks go red. This only made them laugh more. They insisted that I ‘make a picture of them’ then got into all sorts of cheeky poses that I think even Kathleen would disapprove of.

“So I sketched the young imps several times over. They put their shifts back on, checked my work, asked me to sign it and took a couple of drawings each. Of course, I didn’t dare use my own name but the devil got into me and I signed as Cherry Garrard. God forgive me if he ever finds out.

“The girls thought this was a very funny name and ran off giggling back down the hill. When I had fully recovered, I packed up my pencils and left. I’d lost the urge to sketch more.

“So the one drawing left is yours, just for tonight. Next time I get asked what I do, I shall say I’m an Antarctic Explorer and stay out of trouble!

“Happy Birthday Old Chap and Cheers!”