

Gill Stanfield's Antpile

by Michael Grimberg

Gilligan Uriah Stanfield is a creature of the day. That's because he's a hog farmer. This is his life's calling and it even supersedes his role as drummer for a rock'n'roll band. It means that much to him. He tried playing some of his band's music to his beloved hogs one day and they started squealing like the barn was on fire. He should have known they would do that as they are so used to the sounds of regal trumpets and alpenhorns echoing through Swiss Valleys. Nothing is too good for his hogs.

It's morning and he completed feeding so he is going to check on his favourite hog, K.P. Now K.P. is giant boar weighing in at nearly 500 kilograms. Gill named K.P. after this nerd accountant weightlifter guy he once knew but now thinks that was a great disservice to the pig.

Leaning over the stall's wooden slats K.P.'s tower of pink flab brushes by Gill's loving hand. Gill is strongly considering renaming K.P. Maybe after one of his bands' songs or some Hollywood starlet. For a while Gill's thoughts drift and there's child-like sparkles in his eyes. What plans he has for this hog. This could be a grand prize pig at the county fair. It could sire a thousand sows and be the progenitor of a race of super swine. Then he is pulled back from his fantastic reverie by some movement in a pile of manure. Hmm... is that a tapeworm wriggling in the crap? For some reason Gill is reminded of the human K.P.'s tongue licking icing off of countless donuts.

That reminds Gill he's got to head out to the field to check on the progress of his feed crops. Barley, corn, turnips. It's the turnips he's most concerned about as he motors along the black furrows of some summer fallow in his climate controlled, air cushioned and spectroscopically balanced tractor cabin. He's listening to some Boyz 2 Men as he drives by some trees and a spring duck flies overhead. He's tapping his foot along way out of beat as his finger makes a quick migration into his left nostril. "Ah.. farmin'... there's no better life." He thinks as rounds a big clump of trees.

Gill stops his tractor so he can survey his turnip field. The air is still heavy with the dew of morning but it cannot counteract Gill's look of deep consternation. Even though it's early in the year Gill can see his turnips aren't doing too well. Their little leaves have been nibbled away by some miniature little pestilence. He gets down on his hands and knees to examine the darling little buds of purple and green.

"Ants!! Flippin' Bugar Ants!!"

That's what's going on. Ants are chewing up his gold star rated turnip seedlings so his beautiful, prize winning hogs are going to have to fatten up on old hay. Damn these little ants.

Gill stands up a little too fast and gets really dizzy. On top of that he gets some cold dirt in his MacLeod's bargain bin rubber boots. This terrible confusion of events causes Gill to momentarily lose his balance and he hits his head on the tractor tire. He torkels about dazed like a Kennedy on holidays but in few short minutes regains his composure. He isn't going to let a bunch of dumb ants wreck his turnip crop. He's going to find out where they live and let them have it.

He walks a ways along the field's grass border then over to another clump of trees. He takes a very unassured step from the safe turnip field into the nasty dried throng of last year's grass. Gill's not feeling the love or the warmth of the hog barn here. It's like a million little eyes want to devour his recently moisturised white flesh. He's not very sure of things right now. What if they bring him down and eat him alive like happens in those stories from Africa? What a horrible fate. But he is compelled to continue by the thought of his beloved swine showering him with affectionate grunts when he slops them with genuine turnip mush.

In the middle of the trees Gill sees the ants' mound. It's mighty big. It looks like that lost city in the Cambodian jungle. Maybe it's time for some agent orange. He goes back to the tractor, drives it up where the ants are and gets out armed with a jar of paint thinner and a box of matches. He tromps right up to the foot of the mound and dumps his jar of hell fire all over the pile then he lights some tufts of grass with a match. He throws the lit grass on the pile and it suddenly erupts in flame. Victory! There appears to be great mayhem in the ant world. Gill steps back from the flames but in so doing trips on a hidden tree stump. He goes down hard and is immediately beset with hundreds of stinging little beasts. He's getting it so bad some other varieties of insects get in on the action. Horsefly, bumble bee and some usually placid caterpillars. What did he do to deserve this? He thrashes about the grass and then jumps to his feet frantically brushing off the little pests. What a vicious little horde. And what's that? The antpile fire's out! Was it just wet from spring rain or are these some sort of wicked space ants that got dropped from a U.F.O.? He'd better get a sample of them to take to his district agriculturist. He scoops up a whole bunch of them into his jar before hobbling back to the tractor.

A few hours and many farm chores later Gill wanders up to the house where his loving wife has prepared lunch for him. His wife eyes him suspiciously as he sits down. He's covered with ant bites. She asks him what happened and he says he had a rough morning. She rolls her eyes and looks at him like she might a kid that's done something bad. Although she doesn't question him anymore he does feel enough pressure to act evasively.

He holds his head down and slurps his soup as though he were occupied by some new feed formulation for his herd. But he's not. In him is sparked some dreadful counter rumination. He thinks his wife has been visiting the barns when he's not around. Often he's found the door closed in slightly different way than the way he had left it. Is Gill's wife more in love with the hogs than him? What if she's been wallowing with them? No wonder her brown eyes twinkle like that. Gill's getting a bit flustered.

Nothing comes between him and his hogs.

Since he's bit riled up Gill decides he better go into town to work off some of the steam. He stops off at the district agriculturalist's to show off his jar of wicked mutant space ants who are still quite alive in the bath of paint thinner fumes. He's not around though so Gill heads over to the local Co-op to buy some hydraulic fluid. He says hello to a few farmers then heads off to the town's gym for a work out.

This place is almost as much his element as the hog barn. He's lifted weights for years and is pretty good shape. Gill presses many a barbell and even pauses for some mighty grimaces in the mirror. Gill is pumped up and feeling mighty good when his mid afternoon happiness is interrupted by the Tamperman. He's this super effeminate pink leg warmer wearing aerobics instructor guy who is currently bending over in front of Gill in a most provocative manner. Then the Tamperman has the audacity to walk by and criticise Gill's form on a set of barbell curls with his fashion Nazi lisp.

Gill doesn't take crap like that so just about when he's about to challenge the Tamperman to a sheep dressing contest he is shocked by the arrival of the real live, human K.P. He is an amazing specimen of manhood. He struts out of the change room adorned in the pinnacle of work out attire. 80's style spandex biking shorts, a baggy World Gym sweat shirt and tightly bound around his waist is a pink flab fighter that's about four sizes too small. K.P. completely ignores his one time friend Gill and snuggles up to the Tamperman who turns out to be his training partner. Gill just can't believe it. He turns away to do another intense set of barbell curls with his noodily arms. Half way through K.P.'s hippopotamus sized behind cuts in between him and the mirror.

Gill sharply asks, "Do you mind?" to which K.P. replies, "What? Did you say something?"

Gill drops his barbell due to K.P.'s infantile display. "Do you know who I am?"

"Yeah... you're a geek."

Gill's getting a bit upset now.

"No, I'm Gilligan Uriah Stanfield."

"Huh?"

"Don't you remember we used to be friends before you turned into a total weirdo?"

"Me, weird?" As he cinches the flab fighter a notch tighter.

"Yeah."

"Yeah, well look at you." K.P. eyes all the marks all over Gill. "What are those? Ant bites?"

K.P. looks about the room in utter disbelief while a ways over the Tamperman is amused by K.P.'s rudeness. Gill stares across at K.P.'s heavily stretched belly button and then walks off to the far side of the gym. Later on Gill is completely nauseated with K.P. and the Tamperman turning their work out into a Richard Simmons dance routine across the gym. He bites his tongue and goes through the motions looking very distraught. K.P. didn't used to be a bad guy. What happened?

For an hour he avoids them and then heads upstairs for a shower. He'll be glad when this day is over. After he's towelled off he walks through the sauna and steam bath area where he sees K.P. dosed off in one of those personal steamer boxes with a plate of jelly ding dongs in front of his face.

For the second time today Gill is overcome with a malicious intent. He slips an oh so handy broom handle through the steamer door handles. Then Gill runs over to his gym bag where he just so happens to still have that jar full of vicious stinging ants. He tip toes back over to K.P. where he dumps half the jar onto the jelly ding dongs and the rest down the extra water slot. Minutes later as he passes the Tamperman going up the stairs an absolute tirade of screaming erupts as K.P. awakens to the double horror of ants pinching his lard and devouring his sugary snack. They can clearly hear him banging on the steamer doors like a madman. With a glint in his eye Gill says to the Tamperman, "We weren't that good a friends."