



THE EIGHT MINER

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Her real name wasn't Snow White of course.

I mean, who'd deliberately call their kid such a dopey name. Oops. That's going to cause another argument when he sees I've used his nickname. He hasn't enjoyed being portrayed as the idiot in the group. Poor Eric even has a degree in geological sciences but the producers thought his naïve nature made him someone the audiences would love because he was... well, a little dopey. Especially around women.

But I'm jumping ahead of myself. If my story is going to make any sense, I need to tell it properly. Everyone thinks they know what happened because they watched the TV series and saw all the fall-out on social media afterwards. What they don't realise, I was the same at the start, is the whole thing is rigged. All of it. Every harsh word, every argument, all the tears. Rigged. One big set-up from start to finish.

So, back to where I started. Her name isn't Snow White. It's Candice.

Snow White is her stage name. Her manager chose it for her because it suggested she was pure and innocent, like new snow. Hah! Let me tell you, there was nothing pure and innocent about that woman. Apart from being the biggest diva you will ever meet, she swore like a soldier, drank like a construction worker and... well, I'll leave you to decide what my third comparison was going to be. The lawyers have made me take it out.

That brings me to why I've chosen to write this exposé. That's what it is, apparently. I'm exposing the lies and unmasking the people who project all this manufactured rubbish for us to watch. I realise some people are going to say all this is sour grapes. The guys I used to call my friends have already used that term, plus a lot worse. The producers didn't want to use me so I'm bitter supposedly. Angry that I never got to make lots of money and achieve fame. What they don't seem to understand is this: if you have to prostitute yourself to be given fame and fortune, then I don't want it. Clear enough for you?

With that context, let's get into the story because I know that's what you all want. To get the gossip, to have me bad-mouth everyone so we can light up social media once again. You sad, pathetic no-hoping mouth breathers!

I've decided to start by explaining why the producers of 'Snow White and the Miners' decided on using only seven of us, when there were originally eight guys who worked together.

Mining is dangerous work. We'd worked our mine to the point where we'd exhausted its mineral deposits and going deeper and deeper was our only option. It was why we happily accepted the proposal from the TV company to make the "documentary" – yeah, that was what they called it. We needed the money.

The thing about TV that we discovered within a day of signing the contract was this: you have to be good looking. I didn't qualify. The reason was my scar. The legacy of a falling pit prop that smacked my face and knocked me out. The other guys had to haul me back to the surface and get medical help. I was in hospital for a month while they sewed my face back together. It left me blind in one eye, it has a milky appearance now which the Executive Producer, Mike, said wouldn't look good on screen. The angry red line down my face, the puckering that happens when I smile, made me look like something out of a horror film. He didn't pull his punches about it. I did. I wanted to punch his lights out but the others stopped me. We couldn't afford him suing us for assault.

I was allowed to hang around behind the cameras, so long as I behaved myself, at no point was I to make even a brief appearance in front of them. I'd scare children.

It meant watching the seven men I'd worked with, through our adult lives, turn into something I hardly recognised. They were given a month to go to a gym and work out so they could 'buff' their bodies. That was the word Mike used. Buff. As though they were polishing them with a duster.

We are miners. It's hard work, it builds muscle. Nonetheless, certain parts of their



bodies needed to be more toned. Each guy had a personal trainer who worked to improve the parts of their body which needed improving. I vividly remember watching Clive on a rowing machine, sweat dripping off him, as he was told it was the only way to get the kind of six pack he needed.

That was around the time the production team started calling him Grumpy. He got very bad tempered, not just the regime but how they fell about laughing every time he had a tantrum. That was going to come back to bite them, big time.

Their photo shoot was hilarious. Mike wanted them posing in different settings and positions for the promotion of the programme. These were pictures that would get posted onto billboards as well as on social media, the production website and in magazines. A bunch of miners, more at home wearing sweaty vests and filthy trousers, now with spray tans and dressed in revealing swimwear. That was when Norman discovered the first of his allergies, to a chemical in the spray tan. The poor guy could hardly catch his breath as one sneeze exploded after another. They had to wash the stuff off him in the end, which meant using another chemical that not only triggered his second allergy but left him so red he looked like he was suffering from sunstroke. Look at those pictures closely now. All you'll see of Norman is his head, poking out from behind Clive's scowl.

And their humiliation didn't end there. Mike wanted to portray the idea that mining evoked a form of brotherhood, a close and intimate bond between men. It was Mike's boyfriend who first commented on how the seven guys' poses portrayed a certain homo-eroticism. The way they were pressed against each other, hands positioned in places no man would allow them to linger, the expressions Mike wanted on their faces all said the same thing. Any woman living with these seven men wouldn't need to worry about her safety. Of course, the guys didn't see those pictures until it was too late. That was the point when they started to question the wisdom of what they'd signed up to do.

Their home was, for the month-long duration of the programme, to be a large studio filled with modern furniture with cameras positioned in every nook and cranny. That included the wet room where everyone showered. Mike convinced the guys that steam would ensure their private parts wouldn't be seen. And that was true for the most part. Until that occasion when someone opened the wet room door so the steam dissipated and gave everyone a chance to admire Gerry's body. It's everywhere on the internet now, for a while it was used as a meme with the message, "Don't wash it too hard!"



It was the incident that got Gerry nicknamed Bashful.

The renaming thing was supposed to generate a bond between the guys and the audience. Mike said people would struggle to remember the guys' names. He didn't have a high opinion of the audience's intelligence. You could tell by the way he never referred to them as 'the audience', he called them cretins, morons, imbeciles along with other words which lawyers won't allow me to use here.

For Simon it wasn't a problem. He's always been an affable chap, nothing ever bothered him much so nicknaming him Happy was appropriate. I've explained how Sneezzy, Grumpy, Dopey and Bashful got their names. Abraham was called Sleepy because of the rigorous shooting schedule the boys had to ensure, poor Abe could be found catching forty winks all over the studio. And, for the record, it was Clive who drew the bra over Abe's chest in indelible felt pen. They were all drunk at the time and the prank was Clive's way of getting his revenge for waking up with Candice's underwear scattered around him.

Finally, we can't overlook Gavin. Lawyers, once again, have stepped in to stop me from including the reasons for him gaining the nickname of Doc. All I am allowed to say is that he was unlucky to be caught in that position with the nurse who carried out first aid in the studio. There are other ways to have your temperature taken, Gavin.

Which brings us neatly to the star of the show. Snow White herself.

She'd started her career as a model, we all know that. She tried her hand at a singing career until the embarrassing slot on that live charity fundraising event. It's on YouTube if you haven't seen it. Fast forward to 1.26 minutes when the dog starts howling, it's hilarious. No one knows how the animal got into the studio, the stage manager swears it wasn't his, but Candice's attempts to shut the mutt up while still smiling at the camera is TV gold.

Appearing in a reality TV show with a bunch of hunky men must have sounded like easy money to her. I can't believe she'd been stupid enough to agree to being the target for their romantic attraction. Actually, I can believe that. She is vain enough and must have thought it was a fantasy come true to have men fighting over her.

So when that didn't happen, Mike and his team panicked. They instigated a bunch of dubious 'pranks' to liven up a TV show that was dying in front of our eyes. You know what happened next. Each incident broke the internet. Police were forced to intervene when Clive (yeah, Grumpy) tried to drown poor Erik (Dopey) because of his failure to 'win' their

food for the next day, after forty-eight hours of starvation. Watching two men with no energy trying to punch one another was humiliating. Throughout it all, Candice stood imperiously and watched the sorry pantomime.

The show was brought to its conclusion as Candice left the studio with all seven guys walking behind her, arm in arm with one another. It looked like an act of brotherly solidarity. It wasn't. It was written into the fine print in their contracts to appear that way. Once the director called 'Cut!' they all stormed off in different directions.

They abandoned the mine, I'm the only one who works it now. I haven't seen any of them for months. Simon, though everyone still calls him Happy, now has a chat show on an obscure TV channel. Erik now teaches geology in a college somewhere. Clive appeared drunk on a quiz show a while back and offended so many people he was banned from everywhere you can name.

Candice has risen, like the phoenix from its ashes, to appear on other reality shows and is supposed to make an appearance on some dancing show later this year.

The worst thing? It's the reason why I'm writing this article. Mike and his production team scored the highest ratings of any TV show in the last twelve months. It even beat the royal wedding and the cup final. Sponsors have fallen over themselves in the rush to have their product linked to the next series, Rapunzel and the Soldiers. The audience have proven themselves to be as stupid as Mike maintained. They loved watching the human drama unfold. It never occurred to them that it brought consequences. That the drama would ruin people's lives.

Seven good men suffered because of the need for sensationalistic TV. Men I considered to be my friends. You can see now why I'm relieved to have been the eighth miner.