

East of Bengazi

(A selection of short stories)

by

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Author's note:

This book consists of a selection of various short stories that I have written over the past few years. There are many more of my short stories scattered out there in literary land, but some are best left within the pages or on the web sites of the ventures for which they were specifically written.

There is no deep hidden meaning in any of these stories and you can take that however you like. In fact, you don't even have to like any of these stories at all.

Discounting the wrath of God, there should be no danger in reading any of these. So, be brave.

Night Passage

The sun bore down in the desert heat as I shuffled in my flip-flops along the Sonora Desert highway. Just last night, I was making the night passage crossing toward the California line. Nestled in a cooler full of ice, chilled tequila and Coors kept me in a laid-back, mellow mood. Opportunity to help pass the time on the road with a little pleasant conversation presented itself in the form of a stranded traveler banging upon the hood of my mo-chine at a crossroad above Nogales. I didn't expect my being robbed of my booze any more than I did the car jacking. That's the last time I pick up a rider in the middle of the night who's holding a bloody machete in one hand and a recently severed head in the other.

Holy Curry Surprise

“Sabu, the banquet, my guests are all sick. They up-chuck like English dogs!”

“Master, this is very strange. What could it be?”

“Could it be the food? After all, this is a banquet.”

“But Master, you are not ill.”

“Sabu, you know that I am fasting. I have eaten nothing. Did you serve something out of the ordinary?”

“Master, remember when you told me that the elephant is a most blessed beast?”

“True, my faithful servant, the Great One is a living deity who walks among us. What has that to do with the food?”

“The special dish, Master. It is made from the gift of the sacred elephant...the brown loaf that he drops upon the earth.”

“What? Curried pachyderm poop? Quick, Sabu! Give my in-laws a second helping!”

Vivo da Revolucion

I was surprised to find a letter in my mailbox from my friend, Jimmy. I hadn't seen him for quite some time, not since he told me that he was taking a job on a ship heading for South America. My curiosity getting the better of me, I opened it and started reading it on the spot.

*San Sebastian
August*

Comrade,

Hey, buddy, how ya doin'? How ya like that 'Comrade'? I call everybody 'Comrade' now.

I'm sure you're wondering what happened to me since I left for South America. I'm doing great. At last, I have realized my dream of being a soldier fighting for the revolution.

You have always known about my Marxist leanings. Shoot, we argued about them enough. Anyway, I still feel that there can be no higher aspiration in life than to join my comrades in their struggle to alleviate oppression and spread the benefits of communist brotherhood.

My main drawback here has been my poor Spanish, but that's secondary to my mission. I have not been able, so far, to locate the guerrilla faction in the jungle. That being the case, I decided to start operations on my own until I find them.

Last week, I launched a raid on a major metropolitan area in order to obtain food and supplies, as well as, spread the word of our glorious revolution.

With excellent planning and striking lightning fast, the raid went fairly well. We first knocked out the area's electrical power, leaving them in near total darkness. With sheer determination and guts, we ignored the danger and moved to obtain the food and supplies we needed. There were surprisingly no losses...hey, we're talkin' raid on a major metropolitan area, you know.

The only problems encountered were that the fascists have developed chemical and biological weapon capabilities and are using them. That proved to be a hazard, but I'm recovering well.

Unfortunately, the only spreading of our message to save these poor peasants was limited to slogans painted on walls. At least they know we're here and we are willing to lead them in their struggle for a better life.

I have taken to calling myself by a Spanish name to conceal my identity and help in the locals' recognition of me. I call myself 'the Tiger'. If I hadn't lost my Spanish/English dictionary, I could be sure of the translation. For now, I'm guessing, but I think I've got it right.

Vive da Revolucion!

Comrade Jimmy

Well, that Jimmy sure is a character. I went inside and stretched out on the couch leafing through yesterday's newspaper. One of those 'From Around the World' items caught my eye.

San Sebastian -- The sleepy village of San Sebastian fell victim to a lone intruder one night in late August. The village, no more than a crossroad in the jungle with one hut made of grass and cardboard, home to the village's sole resident, an 84 year old woman, is famous for being the farthest point into the interior that the Amazonian Electric Company has ran a power line. The power line is used to light a single bulb which Senora Cisco uses at night in her chicken coup.

The intruder broke the light bulb, stole her chicken and took Senora Cisco's last roll of toilet paper.

Senora Cisco chased the man away by spraying him with insect repellent and pelting him with pig dung.

Senora Cisco is very concerned for her chicken as she states that it had been sick for days before the theft.

Authorities have no leads and are puzzled over the slogan painted on her outhouse. The slogan is in a very poor Spanish and reads: 'Vive da Revolucion!' and is signed by someone calling himself 'el Prepucio' ('The Foreskin').

I looked for scissors; this article was a 'keeper'.

Tears of Sorrow

As a child, my father lived in New Athens, a small German-American town in Illinois. He remembers how on one night, very late, Grampa Scott's friend came to the house. The man was inconsolable, a blubbering mess.

What tragedy could have reduced him to this tearful, distraught, shaking hulk?

After a while, the visitor pulled himself together.

"Scott, it's terrible, just absolutely terrible."

"What, man? What's tearin' at your heart?"

"Scott..., the brewery just burned down."

Grampa burst into tears.

My Man Stormy

So, my man, Story Norman, Paul Welshans, and me (all being poor, broke, university students) head into a local college-clientele bar looking for nourishment. We get beer glasses from the bar claiming that we have a friend willing to share his pitcher of beer and proceed to steal beer from unattended or unmonitored pitchers on various tables within the crowded establishment. Famished, we gobble down the free popcorn – the staple food of the poor student. Being a good night for snitching beer, Stormy sucks down enough to pass out on a stool at the bar. Once he comes to and rejoins the living, he's totally elated and delighted at all the attention and smiles the ladies give him as he wanders through the crowd. Of course, he became less than happy with Paul and me when he passed by a mirror and discovered all the straws, cigarette butts, and whatnots that we had stuck in his blond beauty shop 'fro-curled' hair while he was passed out.

Revenge at Piney Creek

We rode all night to catch up to the war party. The bloody massacre at Kent's Crossing wasn't going to go without revenge. We'd lost the trail twice in the darkness but finally found them at Piney Creek.

Most the local 'injuns' will run rather than fight, but these stood their ground and fought to their deaths when we ambushed them in the early morning light. No matter, either way they would have been sent to their spirit world.

We mutilated their corpses, as was their custom in dealing with enemy dead...no eyes...can't see...no ears...can't hear...no...well, they don't need to make any ghost babies. Then, we left the remains for the buzzards, coyotes, and grubs. It was all they had coming.

When we rode back into town, some of us had souvenir scalps and headbands of the savages prominently tied to our saddles. The display was to show our pride in what we'd done and to let the town folks see proof that the scum had suffered our wrath.

Too little too late, a troop of cavalry arrived in town at the same moment as our return. The major wanted to know if we had seen the Indian scouts that he had dispatched to meet us to help track the renegades. They were to link up with us at Piney Creek. His chief scout, looking at my saddle, wanted to know where I found his brother's hair.

Bug Juice

Lying in bed, sleeping on my belly, I awoke to ferocious, vicious growling directed toward the back of my head and thought, “Gotta get off that bug juice the doc gave me for foot cramps...too many hallucinations...visual, and now, audio.” Without turning for a look, I laughed and drifted back off to slumber land.

Eventually, my pal wandered into my small apartment, woke me up, and chewed my ass out for being so wasted the night before that I crashed on my bed leaving the door wide open.

Jesus, you better be more careful, man,” he said. “Your manager’s Rottweiler has been runnin’ loose and chomped a big chunk outta some guy’s leg down the hall.”

Now that’s what we call a really vivid hallucination.

Gross Dilemma

Hey, it wasn't that big of a thing, just a little med school high jinks. Gross Anatomy had been a real 'cut up' class. One gets used to handling parts of dead people, used to having them around.

Steve stopped by the lab to pick up a jacket that he'd forgotten and left behind when something caught his eye. What the heck was that on the floor under the table? Looks like bone.

And, yes, there on the floor (how'd that end up there?) was the top of a skull from one of the cadavers. Steve picked it up and the mind started working overtime. He could take that back to his room. It would be a 'neat', cool thing to have around. Who else had an actual piece of human skull as a paperweight? He stuck it in his coat pocket and headed back to his digs.

It took a little while, but, eventually that evening, things began to sink in. What if someone says something about him having the chunk of skull? Where would he say it came from? Everybody knew he was a med student. Would he be turned in to the school. Surely they'd figure out that it came from the lab. What to do?

The mist in the dark of night made for an eerie atmosphere as Steve wandered the streets with his, now not worth having, prize in his pocket. Think, man! Think! The only logical solution came to mind. He couldn't sneak it back into the lab, what if he got caught returning it? He could just throw it away somewhere. That would have it off his hands and eliminate the problem.

As Steve passed a dumpster as he made his way down a quiet side street ally, a quick flick of the wrist tossed away his problem. Sorry the top of some guy's or gal's skull ended up that way, but what could he do? He was rid of it...home free.

Back in his room, Steve's sense of relief was quelled by a sobering thought. What if someone saw him throw it in the trash!

The Red Man Feels No Pain

Getting a couple annoying skin tags cut outta the arm pit was pretty weird what with the injections, slicing, and burning to the point of creating the sound and smell of sizzling bacon.

The nurse assisting the doctor was impressed by my stoic demeanor and mentioned that I didn't even flinch during the whole process.

I told her that, "The red man feels no pain."

She remarks, "Oh, you're an Indian?"

"No, that's the red man," says I. "In my case, when I get out to the parking lot, I'm gonna scream like a bitch."

Fair Exchange

“Where is Two-Eyes? Have you seen that silly earthman, Pignoot?”

“It was in the airlock, Hamboon, when last seen.”

“Again? It spends so much time in there.”

“Hamboon, it must breath—another human defect.”

“Disgusting! Yesterday, I caught it ingesting fluid and solids in its cabin!”

“Yuck! Do you have to mention such things? You know I am faint of ynkeek. Why seek you Two-Eyes? Is it not better to leave it to itself?”

“I have played another joke on it, Pignoot. I plugged its ‘ear’ things while it was shut down.”

“My dear Hamboon, that was ‘sleep’. That will be a good joke. Remember when we glued its eyes shut?”

“Ha, ha! It could not see for a week. That’ll teach it to have only two eyes, eh, Pignoot?”

“Hamboon, how about the time you encased its head in lunar plastic and it turned blue with anger. And, better than that, the time you placed it in the xoyok compactor!”

“Ha, ha! I had forgotten about the xoyok compactor! It was hilarious, the odd sound of its bones snapping. I laughed so much, I thought I would be reborn!”

“Ah, there, the earth ship. The exchange at last takes place. The earthman goes back to his people and we get our Porkbellie back.”

“Greetings, Pignoot! Greetings, Hamboon! It is good to be back!”

“Greetings, Porkbellie! How was it among the earth creatures?”

“Fantastic, Pignoot! They treated me well. I was honored by being given the earthly nickname of ‘Dummy’. Many of the earthlings came to visit me in my cabin...on a fairly regular basis. Often they would leave a gift of a fragrant poultice. I wear some now. See it, smeared on my head?”

“Ah, yes. Quite fragrant...and brown. What are those yellow beads in it?”

“They call those ‘corn’, Pignoot.”

“Hamboon, we were wrong to treat Two-Eyes so badly.”

“Yes, Pignoot. I. too, am ashamed of our behavior.”

Skeet Shoot

Now, we got this here American Trapshooter's Association annual event goin' on in my back yard at the World Recreation Center what ain't no more than a big building with a lot of concrete and asphalt and some smaller buildings and firin' points what face the road...go figur'. Why I done ran off the road once when they started firin' and my combat instincts took hold. I'd have shot back if I had a rifle.

These fools come here from all over the world. Some of 'em got guns what cost more than most people's houses. One fella got a new stock (made from a \$3000 chunk of some Brazilian hard wood) for his shootin' iron...made and attached right there on venders' row.

While he was waitin' for his gun to get done, he spent his time bitchin' 'bout the \$5 hat he just bought at the Beretta shop. Le'me go over that again. Man spends over \$3000 for a stock he don't need for his scatter gun and, at the same time, gripes 'bout his \$5 hat.

And some people say I'm nuts.

Struggle From The Grave

He struggled as he clawed his way through the loose earth. Breathing was almost impossible—infrequent gasps which sucked bits of dirt into his lungs. Still, he struggled knowing that time was an enemy. To rest, to give up, was to be hopelessly doomed. He felt the dampness of the mix of soil and flowing blood from his head wound slide over his face as he pushed on, venturing higher, higher...to the surface.

Premature burial was one thing, but for his partner in crime to hit him over the head with a shovel after stealing the body from the grave was another. And then, to cover him in the bottom of the pit to hide the crime and to, no doubt, take all the profit from the sale of the corpse himself. This was less than acceptable, even by the grave robbers' low standards.

The sudden storm sent a torrent of rain down the hill to the small cemetery. Soon, it became a matter of fighting one's way through slimy mud...to breath...for but a breath of air. He continued on, sensing that he was making progress. And then, air! He pushed a hand upward, and then an arm, then, with the last of his strength, brought his muddy, bloody head out of the muck for a breath of air, beautiful, beautiful air. He turned his head skyward and the pouring rain washed the mud from his face. In relief of his ordeal, he smiled.

WHACK!

“Hit him again, preacher!”

The parson raised his shovel and, with all his might, struck the emerging head once again.

WHACK!

“By Jehovah,” said the parson. “I would not have believed it if I hadn’t seen it with my own eyes—and, here, in the very cemetery of my own parsonage.”

“I told you this might happen,” began the parson’s lone companion. “This man was pure evil. He was a filthy money lender, a carouser, and a devil worshipper. If it wasn’t for his money, he wouldn’t have been allowed to be buried in this cemetery with decent, god-fearing folk.”

“Aye,” replied the parson. “It was the elders that allowed this. And now, we have witnessed the work of Satan himself...the dead crawling from the grave. Let us push him back down within the soil and speak of this to no one, lest others join with the dark forces to ensure their escape from the grave.”

The Breakup

Chad took Sheila's screaming obscenities over the phone upon her return from a month long visit to Saskatoon to take care of her sick mother as a subtle hint that their relationship was over. He had been looking forward to her getting back and now finds that she's become overly temperamental or just plain crazy. Ain't no way he needed to be hooked up with some psycho nut case.

Chad, getting rid of everything of hers that he had at his place, removed the note Sheila had taped onto the door of his fridge before she left town...the note with her mother's phone number and...what's that scribbled on there? "Feed the cat?"

The funny smell in Sheila's apartment should go away in a few weeks.

Dusty's Dusty Trail

Dusty knew he was in for hard times when he headed out West. He'd had plenty of people tell him of hardships that they had suffered or heard about in tall tales. He thought of all that as he hunkered down among the rocks on the forward slope of the hill waiting for his attackers to come. They had been hot on his trail for more than two days.

He was grateful that the ride, so headstrong and merciless, had killed his horse. Otherwise, he wouldn't have the raw chunk of horse rump that he gnawed on. Always the optimist, Dusty scanned the horizon with his good eye...the other he lost when it was popped from the socket by a blow to the back of the head in a saloon brawl. A shy man around the ladies, the disfigurement of the back of his skull from the mismatch in healing had become an advantage in striking up conversations with the unkempt, obnoxious women that he, as a true frontiersman, preferred.

Often, when waiting for a fight that may be a man's last, one reflects upon events in life. Dusty thought of his visit to the ocean, his only time on the coast. He remembered the day that the shark took his leg while swimming and how, had it not been for the poor aim in chopping wood the day before, he would have had both arms to fend off the creature and help swish away the blood flowing from his not-so-well-healing shoulder.

Dusty pulled out his hunting knife, accidentally slicing his stomach in the process, and cut himself a piece of cactus. He had learned that certain cacti held water. He put the piece in his parched mouth (raw horse rump tends to get

a bit dry, probably from the hairy hide). Wrong cactus, dry and bitter. Fortunately, the cactus needles stabbing the tongue added a new aspect to the horse rump.

Still, he waited. When night fell, as it often does in the desert, Dusty hacked up his wooden leg to build a fire—a true stroke of genius as, had he had matches, he could have prevented the frostbite to his toes and might have been able to spot the rattlesnakes that cozied up to him in the chill of the night. Nature’s alarm clocks, their fangs gave him the jolt he needed to wake at dawn. Foaming at the mouth, Dusty needed no breakfast. For a while, he slipped in and out of consciousness wondering what that big bright thing was in the sky.

High noon, the heat was unbearable. Dusty checked his ammunition: one cartridge for his rifle; his revolver, empty; knife, remarkably back in the sheath with no injury to himself.

Riders on the horizon. Kiowa? Navajo? Apache? Zulu? Zulu? They came closer. And closer. And...rode by without noticing Dusty watching them from his hiding place among the rocks.

Jake! It was Mule Brain Jake, Goat Face Floyd, and Hank Red Turtle! Dusty was saved.

“Jake! Jake, you ol’ mule brain!” Dusty cried in his faltering parched-throat voice.

“Dusty? That you?” called back Jake. “We been lookin’ for you for days. Two Cow the medicine woman said you ate her peyote by mistake and rode out like a madman.”

“What?” replied Dusty. “Peyote? I thought that liver soup tasted kinda strange.”

“Two Cow say you owe her much wampum for spiritual mushrooms,” said Hank Red Turtle. “Maybe she take your rifle to pay.”

“That’s a deal!”

And, with that, Dusty handed Hank his rifle. Hank cocked it and shot Dusty. A hole blown through him, Dusty fell to the ground.

“Why’d you do that?” asked Dusty.

“You got no horse, Dusty,” said Goat Face Floyd. “You’d die like a dog out here tryin’ to make it back. We can’t let you go through that.”

“You’re right,” gasped Dusty. “I’m a lucky man to be blessed with caring friends like you.”

With those last words, Dusty died.

“Hey, I just thought of something,” said Mule Brain Jake. “He could have rode double with one of us.”

Floyd and Hank looked at Jake with astonishment at such wisdom and each gave an affirmative grunt.

I Knew It Wouldn't Work

I knew it wouldn't work when, surprisingly, on September 32, 2023, I found myself still alive. The air had grown thin; I could smell the pungent fumes from the submarine's damaged batteries. Why did I ever join the Air Force? Of course, the Luftwaffe had been my first choice, but they were on the other side of the rainbow, collecting great dingle berries as they fell from the butts of wild renegade Sioux (or Sumerians) –whoever it was that kicked Walt Disney's ass for stealing the concept of Mickey Mouse from the eminent, American scientist, George Washington Carver (not to be confused with his brother, 'Scatter Brain' Carver, the inventor whose lightning rod rain cap proved to be less than popular).

Butter burns at 147 degrees Fahrenheit (or is that centograd?), Arubans do not. I could be wrong. With that in mind, I took out my rusty pocketknife and began a methodical dissection of the gigantic white whale that I found beached on the parking lot of an East Saint Louis Handi-Mart. No one asked if the whale were mine, nor did they care. Nor, after a week of hard gutting, did I. Other than for viscera, blubber, and the remnants of what was, at one time, a small wooden boy (someone lied to us again), I found no evidence that Elvis was still alive. Or, that he had ever lived.

In a state of frank frustration, I wandered home. There, to my amazement, I discovered that the milkman had, for the third day in a row, left only one chocolate flavored platypus. Incontinent fool!

The Midday Moon, USA, 2001

Mischantment

Once, in a land far away (thank God), there lived a great wizard—well, maybe not that great. His spells never worked and he was best known as Krazzibob, the village fool.

One evening, while casting a spell to create a cotton-tipped stick for blowing the nose, Krazzibob mischanted. Suddenly, a beautiful woman appeared. Gorgeous but possibly flawed in reasoning ability, she thought Krazzibob the handsomest man she had ever seen. Of course, he was the only man she had ever seen. None the less, they shared a night of great passion.

The next morning, contemplating the addition of a few extra inches to his lady's bust, Krazzibob mischanted—again. To his horror, his voluptuous lady was transformed into a small donkey. Krazzibob consulted his library of wizard lore. There, in his comic book, he gathered enough information to surmise that a kiss would change her back to human form. But, the kiss had to come from someone other than her creator.

Krazzibob went from cottage to cottage throughout the village trying to find someone to kiss his donkey. His knocking on doors and simply ordering “Kiss my ass” drew reactions ranging from slammed doors to a thoroughly severe thrashing at the hands of the good sisters of the Convent of Peace and Understanding. Enraged by failure in his kiss quest, Krazzibob began beating his neighbors with sticks and pelting them with donkey dung. He was chased back to his hut.

Later that evening, while Krazzibob was setting fire to the village, it occurred to him that perhaps...just, perhaps...he should restudy his sacred volume of #12 pulp imitation parchment before moving on to extreme measures.

And there, lo and be-something, Krazzibob discovered a grievous error. For, after he scraped the dried booger off the page, he could see that ‘kiss’ was actually ‘kick’. Someone must ‘kick’ his donkey.

The prospect of another door to door round of the village—this time demanding “Kick my ass”—gave Krazzibob pause. Although most held the belief that he thrived on abuse, Krazzibob was not sure how much more thriving he could stand. Especially worrisome were the haunting words of Mother Superior at the convert, “I ever see you again, I crush your head like melon!” Exhausted, Krazzibob fell asleep.

In a nightmare (he never had regular dreams), Krazzibob was confronted by the image of his long departed (departed not in the sense of being dead, but in that he had left the area having had his fill of you-know-who) father.

“Krazzibob,” said Dad.

“Father,” muttered Krazzibob.

“Kick thine own ass, boy....oh, and forget I was here.”

There! Now he had it, the solution to his problem. If the villagers would not kick his donkey, he’d kick his ass himself.

The next morning, Krazzibob wasted no time. He positioned his donkey and executed a swift kick to the ass. His donkey immediately became a short, plump, whiskey

drinking Scotsman. Frantic to correct this situation, Krazzibob began a kicking frenzy creating—in turn—

- a giant pink chinchilla
- a very stylish Louis XIV chaise longue
- an excuse for a drink
- a lovely Tahitian maiden
- a cord of green wood

Tahitian maiden! Too late, he would have kept that one.

- a three eyed Cyclops
- and a barrel of spoiled pickles.

Unfortunately, when a kick brought about a remarkably aggressive and agile sumo wrestler, Krazzibob was forced to flee for his life. Thus endeth his attempts at regaining his lady.

Now, in a land far away (thank God), there lives a great wizard—well, maybe not that great. His spells never work. He's best known as Krazzibob, hermit, recluse, misogynist, and inventor of the cotton-tipped stick for blowing the nose (which no one has found to be at all practical).

The moral of this tale? No moral...just be glad you're not Krazzibob. And, please, don't kick the sumo wrestlers. This is only a story.

Temple of Enlightenment

“It was stranger than we had imagined. After weeks of searching the most remote areas of the Himalaya Mountains, we stood before the gate of the hidden Temple of Enlightenment. The monks, although suspicious of strangers, welcomed us. Fortunately, as we were completely exhausted from our ordeal, they treated us with the utmost hospitality. My companions left after only a week’s rest. I stayed. Some mystical power seemed to hold me there.

“My remaining there, while the others had chosen to return to their world, so impressed the monks that they revealed to me the secrets held within those ancient walls. For centuries, the temple had served as a center...no, a citadel...of knowledge. I was shown their archives located in a wing of the complex previously forbidden to us. Their library was filled with an overwhelming collection of tablets, scrolls and books from all corners of the Earth.

“I studied at the temple for two years. As a ‘novice’, that was all that I was allowed. All novices must go back to their respective points of origin after the initial period of learning to apply what they’ve been taught and to evaluate their inner selves. Eventually, most reappear at the temple.

“Two years is an incredibly short span of time at the Temple of Enlightenment. But, while there, I learned a great deal about devotion, love, duty, commitment, humility, respect....” Belch. “So what say we chug these brews an’ go back to my place an’ get nasty?”

I took her slapping my face and storming out of the bar as being somewhat in the neighborhood of a fairly

definite ‘no’. Okay, okay, maybe I should go back to my
“Hey, hot mamma, what’s shakin’?” line.

The Midday Moon, USA, 2001

Holmes Again

“Mister Holmes, I’m glad you’re here.”

“Always warming to be appreciated, constable. Fortunately, Doctor Watson and I were in the neighborhood sampling gutter whores. What have we here?”

“Seems this man, what was lodging here, has met his untimely end, head removed and all.”

“Good Lord, Holmes, what a ghastly mess!”

“Indeed, Watson. Let’s see...hmm, quite a bit of blood loss, no sign of struggle. Do you notice anything unusual, Doctor?”

“Head’s gone, just as the constable said.”

“Watson! The man’s head is gone! I believe this to be...murder.”

“Great huge knockers! How do you do it, Holmes?”

“Years of training, Watson. We must examine the clues. Look, there’s a brown substance on the floor. Doctor Watson, what do you make of it?”

“Well, let me peruse a small sample. It’s still warm...interesting texture...pungent aroma...can’t quite place it. Taste always tells more...yuck! That’s horrible tasting stuff! Holmes! It’s horse shit!”

“Just as I suspected. It’s all over the streets of London. We’ve all got it on our shoes. The killer came from outside of this building!”

“Amazing, Holmes.”

“Of course. Now for the weapon...the fiend! He used a P.T. Barnum fat lady!”

“But, Mister Holmes, how can that be?”

“I propose, constable, that the killer, in his cunningly crafty plan, drugged a very bulky, huge P.T. Barnum fat lady, brought her here, placed the victim’s head between her massive thighs, and in tickling her with a feather, caused her to contract her fleshy legs thus snapping the victim’s head clean away from the torso.”

“Egad, Holmes! Not the fat lady snatch!”

“Watson, must you continually utter those ridiculous remarks of astonishment? There should be a great deal of gold or jewels missing from this flat.”

“But, Holmes, look about you. This man obviously was a pauper.”

“A clever ruse to throw us off, Watson.”

“The killer redecorated?”

“The working of an insane mind, Watson. But, he missed one thing. Do you see the opened book across the room?”

“What about it?”

“A clue, man, a clue. After the attack, the victim must have desperately struggled to reach the book to leave a clue as to the identity of his assailant.”

“Holmes, the head was removed. Wouldn’t that be difficult for him?”

“Yes, Watson. Such determination is to be admired. Aha! Nothing is marked on the pages to which the book is opened. So, the book, itself, being opened is the clue.

Opened? Opened? I've got it! Watson, what else is opened?"

"The door to your room to the asylum, I hope."

"Yes, Doctor Watson. And, 'door' rhymes with 'stevedore'. Stevedores load trunks onto ships. Trunks are also found on elephants. Elephants live in Africa. Africa has jungles. Jungles have pygmies. Watson, do you see?"

"No, but I haven't been smoking the same thing you have."

"He's telling us that the killer was a small man."

"Does that mean no pygmy women?"

Knock, knock.

"Hello, what's all this?"

"Mister Holmes, this is Mister Angus. He collects the rent in this building."

"Thank you, constable. Mister Angus, you appear to be a small, putrid, cream puff of a man. What's your business here?"

"What? You can't hear? I collect the rent. My uncle owns this boarding house. Inherited it, he did, before I was born."

"There, constable, that's your man!"

"How's that, Mister Holmes?"

"It's all as clear as mud in Kent. Gentlemen, we have uncovered a diabolical plan for murder. Mister Angus arranged for his uncle to inherit this building before his birth, which allowed him to secure the position of rent collector avoiding undue notice, knowing that, one day, his

intended victim would be hauling treasure into this very room. What say you to that, Mister Angus?"

"Go stuff yourself! It's all lies! Lies!"

"Proof positive! The first sign of guilt within a sick mind is denial! Your denial has sealed your doom, Mister Angus. Justice will be served. Constable, take him away!"

"Thank you, Mister Holmes. With evidence as strong as what you've given us, he'll be hanged, without need of a trial, within the hour."

"Another crime solved, eh Holmes?"

"It feels good, doesn't it, Watson? It's starting to rain. We forgot an umbrella."

"Maybe there's one in the closet. What? Holmes! There's a rather large man, covered with blood, in the closet. He has a meat cleaver in one hand and a head, recently severed at the neck, in the other. My good man, what are you doing in there?"

"I chopped the bloke's 'ead off. I like killing, I do. Kills them where I finds them."

"Holmes! Here is the murderer, not Mister Angus!"

"Nonsense, Watson. The poor fellow probably just wandered into that closet by mistake."

"Holmes, you egotistical fruitcake! They're going to hang an innocent man. We must tell the police that we were wrong!"

"Steady on, old friend. We could NEVER do that."

"And, pray tell why not, Holmes?"

"Elementary my dear Watson. To admit that we were wrong would be...damned un-British."

“I say, Holmes! I hadn’t thought of that. You’re right, again.”

“Rue Britannia, Watson.”

“Rue Britannia, Holmes.”

“Now, let’s go do those tarts.”

My Dog

When I was little, three or four, I had a dog. My dog was nothing special, just a mixed Beagle pup.

My Aunt Mildred, Uncle George, and the kids came for a visit. I was always glad to see them and sorry when they had to go. I'd stand in the front yard waving as they drove away.

"Bye-bye, Uncle George.

"Bye-bye, Aunt Mildred.

"Bye-bye, puppy.

"Bye-bye, Eddie.

"Puppy...?"

There I was, slapped in the face by the callousness of life. My dog had been given away.

Not much later, I had another puppy. Daddy shot it early one morning for chasing chickens. I gave up pets, then. I gave up chasing chickens, too.

I knew that, one day, I'd have a dog of my own...a dog no one would thoughtlessly give away or thoughtlessly shoot.

Last week, I found me a dog, a fine figure of a dog. A prancing, genuine bundle of canine energy! MY dog! Do you want to see him? Would you help me look? He ran off as soon as I got him home.

The Odd Look

People often give me an odd look when I address them in Swahili. No doubt, it takes them by surprise. One really doesn't expect to be confronted by someone speaking an African language when strolling the streets of a small Midwestern town.

Yet, at the same time, it strikes me as a bit strange that here, in America, with our on/off sense of tradition, that I should receive the responses I do from strangers. Along this section of the Mississippi Valley, St Louis to Cairo, we have an area devoted to keeping alive the memories and traditions of the French, English, and German settlers. There are several historical locations that host an annual 'Rendezvous' complete with living history reenactments of early pioneer life. So, why not observe and celebrate the customs and lore of one more non-Native American culture? Should such be considered unworthy solely on the basis of non-European origin? I think not.

Still, the odd looks come as, at least once a month, this little re-headed Irishman (suffering from one too many Tarzan movies—which have very little to do with culture) dressed in a bit of wraparound cloth and sporting a cardboard shield, harangues hapless downtown shoppers in an unfamiliar language (the meager vocabulary thereof supplemented with a heavy dose of gibberish), until the gentlemen from the 'colonial office' arrive and offer a ride in the backseat of their 'Land Rover' to visit the local 'missionary doctor' (a fellow who strikes one as a bit of a weirdo). Ungahwa!

The Midday Moon, USA, 2002

Something Special

“What do you want me to bring you from Texas, son?”

“Bring me a snake, Dad.”

“A snake?”

Well, I do love my son quite a bit and wanted to bring him something special from my trip to Texas, but...”

“No, you can forget that. Snakes are out. You know that I don’t like them. How about something else?”

“A tarantula.”

“A tarantula?”

“They got ones that don’t bite and you can keep as pets. I’ll empty out the aquarium and we can keep it there.”

“What about the fish?”

“Cat ate the last one yesterday.”

Darn cat. The fish were going to save me from an empty aquarium habitat for disgusting creatures. I’ll have to be more direct.

“No, son. No snakes. No tarantulas. No scorpions.”

“A lizard?”

Lizard? That might do. At least, it’s not a tarantula or scorpion. A small lizard should be fine.

“Okay, I’ll see if I can find you a lizard. While I’m gone, you can fix him a home.”

Two weeks later, my work finished in Texas, I was relaxing in my motel room watching television. The car was

packed and ready for the fourteen-hour drive home in the morning. Suddenly, I realized that I was lizard-less.

“Okay, okay...” I thought to myself, now where to find a lizard?

I had noticed that the shopping mall near my motel had a pet shop. Hopefully, open late. I hurried to the mall.

And, yes, the pet shop was still open. And, yes, they had lizards. And, yes, their lizards were bigger (and uglier) than I had had in mind. Still, I promised.

It was my last night at the motel and I was sharing the room with a foot-long cousin of a snake housed in a flimsy cardboard box. I had come to the conclusion that lizards belong to the same group as I put snakes, tarantulas, scorpions, etc., etc., etc.

Odd sensation...that of little clawed feet walking across one's forehead...such a vivid dream....

Step 1: Half awake, reach up, pick up lizard with one hand.

Step 2: Scratch forehead with other hand.

Step 3: Replace lizard on forehead.

Lizard? Lizard!

Luckily, I still had hold of the thing. Somehow, he'd managed to get out of the box during the night and, by morning, had wandered onto my head as I slept. I lost no time in returning him to the box.

“Him” Not, “the lizard”? Strange.

Soon, I was happily on my way driving home. I had already been on the road for some time, when, glancing at

the ‘lizard box’ on the floorboard, I noticed lizard eyes glancing back at me.

“No! Not in the car! Stay in the...,” too late. The frisky reptile was now out of the box and darting about inside of my car as I drove. The highway traffic was too heavy to stop or pull over, so I had to keep moving as I grabbed at the dash, the seat next to me, the back of my collar. Finally, slowed by an unsuccessful attempt at a leap out of the window (lizard meets glass), he fell onto the passenger seat and I nabbed him. One handed, I had him back in the box. The rest of the trip was uneventful. I considered rolling down the windows just in case of a repeat of his ‘run around’ in the car.

My son was delighted with the tiny monster and, of course, wanted to give him a name. It had to be a proper ‘lizard’ name, a name fitting a four-legged reptile. With an air of solemn dignity, my son held the creature high and pronounced the filthy (my choice of adjective) beast...
”Bob.”

“Bob?”

Well, anyway, Bob lived in the aquarium/now terrarium and, on occasion, ran about in one of those clear plastic balls made for hamsters and the like. Bob became rather good at the ‘plastic ball’ thing running around like a champ.

Unfortunately, as time goes by (about a week), the ‘new’ wears off. Sometimes, Bob was placed in the plastic ball and, after a while, forgotten and left to run about on his own for hours.

Then, the inevitable, one day the plastic ball was found open...lid off...Bob gone. Loose in the house?

We looked and looked, but couldn't find him anywhere. We resolved ourselves to the fact that Bob, dear Bob, had escaped to the outside world. ("Yippee!")

"Don't be sad, son. Bob's probably over at the quarry playing on the cliff. Come on, supper's ready."

"Yeah, Dad, I guess he's okay. He was really neat."

"He sure was," I lied as I sat at the table. "Here, Son, get some of this fried chicken. Hey!"

That was the first time that I had ever seen a platter of fried chicken move, and, I hope, the last. Some of the pieces fell off the platter and onto the table and some just jostled around a bit as a green lizard head stuck out of the pile of fried fowl. Bob flicked his tongue and scampered off the table.

"Bob! Dad! It's Bob! Catch him!"

The chase was on. In the commotion of running from room to room, someone (me) managed to have the front door of the house open and Bob used that as his evasion route. Bob was really gone. (Double "Yippee!")

Such are the 'ups and downs' of life. Lizards come and go. As I drifted into sleep that night, I wondered if, Heaven forbid, Bob would ever come back.

Gradually, dawn replaces the dead of night.

Odd sensation...that of little clawed feet walking across one's forehead.... No. Not again!

Concrete

On this day, the quiet, studious, seven-year-old Ian had absolutely no appreciation for concrete. Each time the abusive, five-years-his-senior, neighborhood bully: Butch, now sitting on Ian's chest, forcefully and deliberately slammed the back of Ian's head down on the sidewalk a new crisp piercing blast of pain shot through Ian's skull.

For some reason, Butch always picked on Ian—often going out of his way to do so. Unannounced, unrestrained punches to the gut and slaps to the back of the head were everyday fare. Having his fill, Ian began fighting back with a tenacious will. It had become David and Goliath. But, in this case, David never gained the upper hand and Goliath went home when he got tired.

Now the nightmare was happening again on the sidewalk in front of Butch's house—two doors and an empty lot from Ian's. Ian's ill luck was that this was the daily route home from school. Nearly each day, Butch would be in his front yard waiting for a victim.

A ring of onlookers had gathered. No one said or did anything to help, always a "better him than me" attitude prevailed. Ian's brother: Steven, ran home for help, but if anything, it would come too late.

Slam! Slam! It didn't stop.

"Butch. Don't do that." Butch's mother calmly and almost quietly called from her front door.

"Butch. Don't do that."

Slam! Slam!

Ian thought to himself, “Why don’t she come out here and get this jerk off me? Why doesn’t she do something? Why doesn’t someone do something?”

Butch must have worn himself out. He got up and went inside. His mother stepped back in as well. The show over, the onlookers drifted off. Ian went home.

Seeing the blood on the back of her son’s head, Ian’s mother was fast on the phone to call Butch’s mother, her friend. The phone conversation that Ian hoped would put a quick end to all this mellowed to a friendly chit-chat.

“You boys better learn to get along.” was the end result of the phone call.

“You boys better learn to get along.” echoed through Ian’s aching, bloodied head.

Ian’s mother told his father about the incident with Butch when he came home from work—still nothing was done. Those Ian had relied upon to stop this seemingly unending terror had sent him a clear signal that he was now completely on his own.

It was not long after that that Butch and his family moved into a new house on the other side of town. It became extremely rare to see any of them in the old neighborhood. Relative calm prevailed.

All that was years ago. Not that much has changed in the old neighborhood. Ian’s brother, Steve, is the sole occupant and now owner of the old family home. Steve has his own auto painting and sign business there at the house. He is doing well and is in demand which makes for a lot of in and out traffic at the shop. Ian spent several years in the military and then eventually moved back to town.

Ian, on one of his infrequent visits, was sitting alone in Steve's shop while Steve was out making a delivery when a middle aged, balding, bifocal bespectacled semi-familiar figure came in.

"Steve around?"

"Not right now."

"Hey! You're Ian ain't ya? I'm Butch! I haven't seen you in a while! Man, it's been over twenty years!"

Butch's smile showed off his 'pearly whites'. He held out his hand for a handshake. Yes...Ian remembered him vividly.

At that instant, all the hatred and disgust with every injustice done him in his life took hold of Ian. Focusing on the tormentor from his youth standing before him, Ian's hand gripped the tire iron which laid upon the bench by his side. With violent, malicious, satisfying overhand swings, he brought it down on Butch's head. Once. Twice. Held poised for a third blow, Ian watched as Butch staggered back, blood flowing from his battered balding head.

"How you like that? You want to mess with me now? You..."

No, that didn't happen.

In Ian's easygoing nature, he clasped Butch's hand in a hearty handshake with, "Yeah, it's been a while. How ya doin'?" After all, a great man can forgive his enemies.

No, that didn't happen either.

Ian decided not to be that great. Bad memories still lingered. Ian looked at the outstretched hand and back up at Butch's aged, lined face. It was out of character for Ian to

be intentionally rude, but this time he chose to ignore the gesture and pulled a cigarette from his shirt pocket giving Butch a stern, angry glare as he lit it. Still locked in the glare, he paused a moment letting the smoke curl from his nostrils.

“I said, he’s not here.”

It struck Ian odd that Butch responded with a somewhat awkward retrieval of his hand, and muttering something about coming back later, pulled the shop door shut behind him as he left. It was obvious that Butch was unsure of what to make of his reception.

Ian sat and thought about how unremarkable the encounter had been, other than for his show of intentional rudeness. Ian was a thinker, and while he sat and lazily finished the cigarette, some quotes came to mind.

That which does not kill us makes us stronger.

-- Friedrich Nietzsche

Perhaps more to the point in this case,

The better I get to know people, the more I like dogs.

-- Adolph Hitler

Then, there was his favorite, from the cover of an old underground comic book cover in which Freddie Freak, seeking the meaning of life, asks the bearded guru,

“What’s it all mean, Mister Natural?”

Mister Natural’s response: “Don’t mean shit.”

Ian laughed.

The Adventures of Fuzzy Bunny

--the cutest little bunny ever!

It was a beautiful autumn morning. The cool breeze stirred the fallen leaves into wistful columns in which Fuzzy Bunny played.

Sally Bunny, up early, came hopping merrily down the lane.

Fuzzy called too her, "Hey, Sally! Want to come and play in the leaves with me? It's a lot of fun and, later, we can hang out at my place and do some wild and crazy bunny things."

"Wait! That's not the way the story goes! Fuzzy Bunny doesn't talk like that. Let's try again."

Fuzzy Bunny called to her, "Hey, babe! How's 'bout comin' here so's I can check out that tail!"

"Hey! That's worse! This is a children's story about cute little bunnies. What's going on?"

"Well, I'll tell ya, Dan..."

"You'll tell me? Who's this talking?"

"It's me, Dan...Fuzzy Bunny."

"Fuzzy Bunny?"

"Yeah, Dan. Fuzzy Bunny. We really need to have a talk. I don't like the way things've been goin' around here lately. I..."

“No, no, Fuzzy. I write the stories. You don’t do anything, even talk, without my writing it.”

“Look, Dan, all this hoppin’ around and pokin’ my nose here and there is fine for a children’s story, but, I need a break.”

“A break?”

“Yeah, a break. How’d you like to spend all your time in the woods doin’ this kid stuff...being all cute and nice, helpin’ every damn body, and no time for yourself?”

“I give you...no...have you do things on your own.”

“But, not the sort of stuff I’d like to do.”

“But, I told you. I write the stories. You do what I write.”

“And, that’s gonna change.”

“Change?”

“Lookie here, Dan. I need some time. Goin’ over to Tylor Bear’s cottage for some of Mamaw’s honey cakes ain’t my idea of a hot time. I need to get out once in a while. Gim’me some real relaxation.”

“Like what! What does a character from a children’s story need?”

“To start with, you got a cold beer in the fridge?”

“No, get to the point!”

“How ‘bout a weekend in Vegas? You know, flowin’ liquor, hot dice, and loose bunnies! No! No! Change that. I want one of those Caribbean cruises with flowin’ liquor and an exotically sexy bunny in every port...lots of ports. You’ve had me locked in this bunny mode for so long, when’m I gonna get a chance to practice makin’ some little

bunnies of my own? Actually, Dan, I'm more interested in the practice part. You know, practice makes perfect."

"Forget it. It doesn't fit the story line."

"Look, ass-wipe, I need some excitement!"

"Okay, try this..."

Looking up from haphazardly mauling the carcass of his latest victim, Farmer John's pit bull, Killer, saw Fuzzy Bunny. With fiery eyes and white fangs slashing, Killer bolted in relentless pursuit of the long-eared rodent.

Fuzzy, his tiny heart pounding rapidly, ran as fast as his little bunny legs could carry him.

"Hey! What are you tryin' to do? That mutt'll rip my guts out! You nuts or somethin'?"

"You wanted some excitement."

"Not that kind! Could you get Sally Bunny to show up in my hutch?"

"Sure."

Fuzzy Bunny was surprised by the knock at the door of his hutch. Sally Bunny had come for a visit.

"Now you're talkin', Dan."

Fuzzy Bunny, seeing his opportunity, squeezed Sally's tail.

Sally, startled, slapped Fuzzy up side the head with a frying pan.

“Ow! You ARE insane! That nearly knocked my bunny eyeballs out!”

“Why don’t you settle down and enjoy your character in the story?”

“Why don’t you wise up? I’m not gonna stay with this Fuzzy Bunny crap. Dan, I’m takin’ off on my own.”

“You don’t have an ‘on your own’. You’re a figment of my imagination. I created you. You do what I make you do. That’s all. That’s how it is.”

“So YOU say. Get this, whether you write about me at all, or even if you get rid of all the stories I’ve been in, I still exist as a concept. I’m still as real as any idea ever thought or any dream ever dreamed—or yet to be thought or dreamed. Figure that one out, bub.”

“No! You’re mine. I dictate your existence and actions.”

“Then dictate this. I’m outta here. I’m gonna go have some fun. You do what you want. My bunny bags are packed and I’m hittin’ the road. So there!”

“Fuzzy Bunny, you get back here!”

“See ya, sucker!”

Fuzzy Bunny waited and waited in the freezing, pouring rain at the crossroads by the meadow as bus after bus would stop only to leave without him.

It seemed that even a ‘concept’ couldn’t get a ride without a valid ticket.

“DAN!!!”

Heist Magazine, Australia, 2000

The Further Adventures of Fuzzy Bunny

--the cutest bunny ever!

Father Vasquez had been one of the most devoted supporters of what had become known as the Spanish Inquisition. He was never too busy to take the time to seek out and destroy the evil that now plagued his homeland.

Unfortunately, his relish for his work had, however erroneously, been construed as a sign of demonic possession. Now, fate had dealt him a cruel hand and he found himself captive upon the inquisitor's rack.

His body was stricken with ever increasing pain with each turn of the wheel that stretched, and further stretched, his already lengthened body.

His chief tormentor, dressed in black robe and hood, taunted him, "Say, you know, if you's made of rubber, this wouldn't hurt as much. How come they call you 'Father'? You ain't got no kids, do ya?"

"No, no! That's wrong. What kind of questions are those?"

His tormentor, dressed in black hood and robe, gripped the iron, pulled it from the bed of burning coals, and rammed the white-hot end of the iron into Father Vasquez's left eye.

"Are you nuts? That'll hurt like hell!" said the hooded figure. "Ain't no way I'm doin' that."

"Thanks," said Father Vasquez. "I really appreciate that. You're okay, amigo. What say we go get a drink and look for some wild women?"

“Wait, wait, wait! This is the Spanish Inquisition! It’s supposed to be bad. It was one of the most cruel periods of European history. I’m trying to make my story sound authentic. Hey, you! Take that hood off!”

As the figure in black removed his hood, he yelled, “Surprise!”

“I thought so...Fuzzy Bunny. What are you doin’ in this story? I thought that I got rid of you.”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah, Dan. That sure was some mean ass trick you played on me. Lettin’ me walk outta here, I mean there, and then not lettin’ the bus pick me up ‘cause I didn’t have a ticket. And, I didn’t think too much of that freezin’ rain you had me in while I was waitin’, either.”

“Well, you had an attitude. It was your fault. You’re the one that got tired of the children’s stories. You didn’t have it that bad.”

“Okay, okay, Dan. I’ve seen the error of my ways. How ‘bout getting’ me outta this story, so we can talk?”

“I don’t know. It never did any good to talk to you about anything.”

“Aw, c’mon, Dan...please.”

“Well, alright—but behave.”

Suddenly, the dungeon door burst open. There stood the Grand Inquisitor, himself.

“Release that man,” ordered the Grand Inquisitor.

Father Vasquez was unshackled from the rack and slid into a very fashionable hot tub, which had suddenly appeared in the center of the room.

“Father Vasquez,” began the Grand Inquisitor, “You’ve won the Irish Sweepstakes! You’re loaded!”

“Cool,” replied Father Vasquez. “I renounce my vow of poverty.”

“You could even go to Disneyland,” added the Grand Inquisitor.

“Likewise, cool,” said Father Vasquez.

“Can I come, too?” asked the Grand Inquisitor. “You know, I always liked you.”

“Man, that would be a blast.”

After renouncing his own vow of poverty, the Grand Inquisitor jumped in the tub—robes and all.

A seductive, curvaceous Tahitian maiden brought them cool drinks, with flowers and all that stuff in them.

The sight of the maiden, clothed in only a grass skirt and a lei, so struck Father Vasquez that he declared: “I renounce my vow of celibacy!”

“Likewise,” said the Grand Inquisitor.

Oh...and Fuzzy Bunny went to Dan’s house.

“See, Fuzz, gotcha home.”

“Dan, how ‘bout switchin’ me with that Father Vasquez?”

“I thought you learned your lesson. You promised to behave. What happened to that?”

“Ha, ha, sucker! I just wanted outta the back room of your head so’s I could have some fun. You know what kinda kinky crap you got back there, Dan?”

“Hey Fuzz, don’t worry about my head...really kinky, huh? Oh, like I said, don’t worry about my head. So this was just another one of your tricks?”

“Say, Dan, whatever happened to my gal, Sal?”

“Sally?”

“Yeah, Dan, could I see her?”

“You weren’t very well behaved the last time you saw her. Okay, quit lookin’ so sad. We’ll take a chance.”

Fuzzy Bunny frolicked in the high grass of the meadow.

Sally Bunny was playing there, also. It wasn’t long before the two of them happened into each other.

“Fuzzy!” said the startled Sally.

“Sally, baby! Am I glad to see you! Com’ere an’ gim’me some of that sugar, sweet-tail.”

Upon his greeting, Sally instantly executed her best right hook, striking Fuzzy square on his cute, but soon-to-be-swollen, nose.

“What’d ya do that for?” asked Fuzzy.

“Pervert,” was all Sally had to say and then she hopped off merrily across the meadow.

“That’s it! That’s it! I’ve had it!”

“What’s wrong, Fuzz? I mean, other than for that swollen nose. Sally must be doing very well in her martial arts class.”

“That’s it! I came back for some fun. This ain’t fun. I’ve had it. No more parties, no more squeezin’ bunny babe’s tails, and no more cute Fuzzy Bunny stories! Dan, find me somewhere to go...somewhere so I can forget...somewhere to make a fresh start.”

“After all the trouble you’ve caused since I created you, what makes you think that I believe you?”

“Dan, help me. I’ll go anywhere an’ do anything. Please, Dan.”

“Well, I still don’t think that you’re serious. The old Fuzz wouldn’t stop after a little punch in the nose...man, that thing’s growin’. I know that some day, you’ll be back with your old tricks. Okay, I know a place for you. It’s far away from here and you’ll have to give up some things that you’re used to having around.”

“Thanks, Dan. You’re a pal.”

Fuzzy Bunny was filled with awe as he entered the Sultan’s palace. As he had wished, he was in a land far away.

“Ah, yes, Fuzzy Bunny,” said the Sultan with a smile. “I am honored to have you here in my humble home. Dan has selected a very important position for you within my household. You, Fuzzy Bunny, are to be chief guard of my harem.”

“Hot damn!” thought Fuzzy. “Dan really came through for me this time. An’ after all the trouble I’ve caused him through the years. Whata guy.”

“Fuzzy Bunny, my surgeon will prepare you. ”

“Okay, Sultan. Whatever you say...surgeon? ”

“But of course,” said the half-smiling Sultan. “All my harem guards are eunuchs. ”

“Forget that crap! These gonads stay with dad! ”

When last seen, Fuzzy Bunny was running as fast as his little bunny legs would carry him into the desert to escape the Sultan’s guards.

As he disappeared over a far distant hill, he was heard to yell: “Damn you, Dan!!!”

Heist Magazine, Australia, 2001

The Adventures of Fuzzy Bunny # 4

--the last of the trilogy!

“Doctor Borborygmi, the patient is ready.”

“Good, good. I need to hurry on this one, almost time for lunch. Let’s see...cut the scalp here, pull it back to there, cut out this chunk of head bone, expose the brain, scramble...easy. Scalpel, those one things, one of those curly scissors, and now the fun part...saw.”

BZZZZZZZZ.

“Doctor, you’ve cut off his ear!”

“Yes, well, nobody’s perfect. I’ll just take a little bit of the gray matter out of the other side of the head. It’ll all balance out.”

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“Hey, what’s going on? How’d I get here? Man, this is weird. It’s kinda dark. What’s with all this fog?”

“Dan! Hey, Dan! Where ya at?”

“I’m over here. Who’s that?”

“Hold on, Dan. I’m on my way. Just keep talkin’.”

“I’m over here. Come over this way. You’re getting’ closer. Who are you? What the...Fuzzy Bunny?”

“You’s expectin’ Vincent van Gonads?”

“Fuzz, what is this place? Why are we here?”

“Dan, you is getting’ fixed. They knocked you out while they’s workin’ on your sick head.”

“What’re you talkin’ about?”

“Dan, don’t ya remember nothing’? Some government bozo read some of your work and started a national campaign to get you mental help. They brought your ass in here kickin’ and screamin’. It was great.”

“So, right now, I’m out, they’re playin’ with my brain, and I’m stuck here with one of my story characters.”

“Damn, Dan, you’s smart as a whip. I shoulda been timin’ how long it’d take ya to catch on. Hey, I’m not just one of your characters, I’m your best character. Don’t worry. Maybe, they’ll fix ya so’s you can even put the ‘g’ on ‘ing’, or figure out why you alternate at random between ‘ya’ and ‘cha’ for ‘you’. Maybe, just maybe, you IS sick.”

“Yeah? Maybe you’re in trouble, too, Fuzz.”

“Moi? It’s your brain they’re scramblin’, sucker.”

“What if they mess me up? You live in my brain. You might go away.”

“Ha, ha, sure Dan. I might go...what? I never thought of that! The Fuzz no more? Dan, ol’ buddy, we gotta do somethin’. We’s in trouble!”

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“Nurse, would you get me that dab of brain that fell on the floor. I better put it back in his head. It might be the piece that regulates the paying of medical bills.”

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“Listen, Fuzz, this could get a little tricky. We don’t have any way of knowing which way to go. We could drift into memory banks, pockets of imagination, basic and complex functions...anything.”

“That’s what I like to hear, a man with a plan. Since you don’t know where to go, just follow me, Dan. I ain’t stayin’ in this mess any longer than I have to.”

“Fuzz, wait! You’re movin’ too fast!”

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“Lookie, Dan. I got us to this classroom. Give ya any ideas?”

“Fuzz, we gott a get outta here, right now. This is my...”

WACK! WACK!

“Ow! What the heck was that? Who hit me in the back of the head?”

“Damn, that still smarts. Fuzz, welcome to Second Grade Hell.”

WACK! WACK!

“I told you people to get in your seats!”

“Com’on, Fuzz. We better sit down!”

“Dan, who the hell’s this woman what keeps wackin’ us in the back of the head with a ruler?”

“Mrs. Robinson, my second grade teacher...the ruler to the back of the head is like her trademark. We gotta play along until we can make our getaway.”

“I don’t think I care too much for second grade, Dan.”

WACK!

“Long Ears, you know we don’t talk in class! You stand in the corner!”

“Hey, you know where I’d like to stick that ruler, woman?”

WACK!

“How ‘bout that corner over there, ma’am? Dan, I’ll just be over here in the corner if you need me. I’m on my way, ma’am. Would you like for me to press my nose into the crack, ma’am?”

RRRRiiiiNNNGGGGG!!!

“Fuzz, recess! Run for it!”

“I’m with ya! I’m with ya!”

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Pant, pant. “Dan, what was up with that teacher?”

Pant, pant. “Why’d you let me go in there?”

“Fuzz,” pant, “I tried to stop ya,” pant. “We couldn’t have run into a worse school year,” pant. “I barely survived the first time.”

“I think I’ll go back there and...”

“Look, Fuzz, we don’t have time. I’m getting a bad feelin’ about this whole thing. Look, let’s try this; we split up, just go off a little way, see what’s there, then turn around and meet back here.”

“Okay, Dan. I’ll try it. But, I’m playin’ hooky from here on. Education sucks.”

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“Well, seems this is going to take longer than I planned. What say we break for lunch?”

“But, Doctor, you’re right in the middle of a procedure, you can’t leave now. What about the patient?”

“Hey, we’ll bring him with us. Wheel this thing to the cafeteria.”

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“Man, Fuzz has been gone for a long time. I hope he done better than me. There he is. Fuzz!”

“Dan! Dan! Am I glad to see you.”

“Fuzz, you alright? You look terrible. What’s wrong?”

“Well, I was doin’ just great...naw, better than great. Right when I was havin’ one of the wildest times I’ve ever had, even for a bunny hangin’ out in your erotic storage lobe, all of the sudden, they decides to stir your brain and I end up sittin’ in a cell at the ‘big house’.”

“You ended up in prison?”

“Yeah, no thanks to you. Why’d you ever have to work in the joint anyway? I had this big cellmate, Bubba. He said he was gonna show me some stuff”. Lucky for the ol’ Fuzz, I was small enough to slip out between the bars.”

“Well, at least you got away.”

“Dan? Dan! Look! There’s a bright light over there. Dan! You is slippin’ away!”

“What?”

“Dan, look! There’s a bright spot over there. We gotta run to the light! That’s what they do in the movies. Dan, let’s run to the light.”

“No, Fuzz! Stop! Stop!”

ZZZZiiiTTTT!!!

“Ow! Ow! That hurt! That hurt! That thing nearly killed me. I’m a burnt hare!”

“Fuzz, I told you to stop. That was a giant electric bug zapper light.”

“What are ya doin’ with that in your head? Never mind, Dan. I live here and you still surprise me. I thought you were dyin’.”

“I’m not sure how I’m doin’.”

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“Let’s get back to work. Everybody enjoy their lunch?”

“Oh, yes, Doctor, just fine.”

“Hmmm, something seems to be missing.”

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“Look, bud, it’s none of my business if you want to go around with your brain oozing out of your head, but you need to get your butt out of this cafeteria. I’ve never seen anybody attract so many flies.”

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“Dan, shouldn’t we be getting’ somewhere soon? We been walkin’ for a long time. Right now, I’d settle for bein’ at Tylor bear’s cottage feastin’ on some of Mama’s honey cakes. Why, I’d even be a ‘gentle-bunny’ if I came across Sally Bunny. Whoa! Listen to me talk. Dan we...”

BOOM!! Tat-tat-tat-tat-tat! KAPOW!

“Fuzz! Quick! Jump down into this ditch!”

“Dan! Dan! What’s all this mess?”

“Sorry, Fuzz. We’ve stumbled into my military mind. This ain’t a ditch, we’re in a trench. It’s World War I.”

“All this time, I’s worried ‘bout you in the operatin’ room and now we might get waxed in a war!”

“Chill, Fuzz, we gotta keep cool. Look at those uniforms. We’re in the German front line.”

“Yeah, yeah. I’m gonna have a talk with one of these boys. Hey, corporal!”

Tat-tat-tat-tat-tat.

“Keep low, Fuzz!”

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“This has gone a whole lot better since we got the patient back.”

“Doctor, didn’t he have more brain matter before we went to lunch?”

“Okay, people, my fault. I get so carried away during food fights that I’m liable to throw whatever’s close at hand. Someone be a sport, run down to Dietary and find something raw and ground up that we could use as filler.

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Tat-tat-tat-tat-tat!

“Fuzz! I told you to keep down!”

“Dan, I’s just over there talkin’ to Charlie Chaplin. I didn’t know he was German. Man, is he nuts. He was talkin’ ‘bout hangin’ wallpaper an’ how some art school wouldn’t take him as a student. He’s got all these weird ideas and wants to go into politics after the war. I don’t know where he’s gonna have the time to make movies.”

“That wasn’t Charlie Chaplin, Fuzz. Keep away from that guy.”

“But, Dan, he’s already invited us...hey get this, he says ‘on’ instead of ‘to’, anyway...he’s already invited us to a party.”

“What kind of party?”

“A raidin’ party, Dan. I’ll bet it’s like a panty raid at college. It outta be fun.”

“Fuzz, look out there. See all that to our front? See all that barbed wire and shell craters? See all that mud? That’s called ‘no man’s land’. People get blown to bits out there. Machine guns cut people in half out there. That’s party headquarters, party central.”

“Achtung! You two ready for za raid?”

“Charlie, I hate to break the news to ya, but Dan thinks that, maybe, some other time would be better. You know, we pretty much just got here. We’d like to get a little settled in before we launch ourselves onto the local social scene.”

“That’s right, corporal. How ‘bout Fuzz and me just takin’ a rain check on this one?”

“Ach, ja...der ‘rain check’. Natürlich, I understand. If you vill not come, you vill be shot!”

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“You know, Dan, I don’t care too much for bein’ out here in this ‘no man’s land’. Ol’ Charlie here has a certain way of puttin’ things that you just gotta go along with him. Ouch! Watch out for that piece of wire. This is the muddiest place I’ve ever seen. Get down! I hear one comin’!”

BOOM!! BOOM!! Tat-tat-tat-tat-tat.

“Fuzz, head for that shell hole up ahead. We gotta find some cover!”

“Dan, take a peep at the Frenchies over there. They’re out of their trenches. They’ve all dropped their drawers and they’re moonin’ the krauts.”

“I was afraid of this. Fuzz! They’re not moonin’. They’re passin’ gas! Gas attack!”

PFOOP! PWOOT!! RRiPP! POOOT!

“Nein! Nein! Alarm! Alarm!”

“Where the heck’s Charlie goin’?”

“There’s your answer, Fuzz. The Germans all have their gas masks on. They’re comin’ out of their trenches to make a full scale attack on the French line. This place will be a slaughter house. There’ll be so many bombs, shells, and bullets out here that no place will be safe...no even this crater!”

“Dan, ya gotta do somethin’! We gotta get outta here!”

BOOM!! Tat-tat-tat-tat-tat!! BOOM!! BOOM!!

“I know, Fuzz! But, we’re trapped in my head and we’re stuck in my version of this war!”

“That’s it, Dan! That’s the key! It’s YOUR head! YOUR brain! YOUR memories and dreams! All ya gotta do is concentrate on how YOU would get us outta this! Do it, Dan! Do it!”

Tat-tat-tat-tat-tat!! BOOM!! PFOOT!! Tat-tat-tat.

“Okay, Fuzz, here goes! I’m concentratin’, concentratin’, concentratin’.”

“Dan! It’s workin’! It’s workin’! There must be hundreds of vehicles comin’ this way! The soldiers are headin’ back to their trenches! Who ya got comin’, Dan? Who ya got comin’? Is it the cavalry? The combined armed forces of the modern world? Star Fleet? Who, Dan? Who?”

“The rowdiest bunch of wild-men I could imagine, Fuzz. I got ten thousand pickup trucks loaded with beer guzzlin’ hicks with shotguns on the way.”

“Good Lord, Dan! That’s cruel! They’ll have both damn armies squealin’ like pigs. Just like in that movie. They’ll carve things like ‘Billy Bob’, ‘Jimmy Joe’, an’ ‘Skeeter’ on everything. Oh the humanity. Hey! What about us? Dan do your stuff an’ get us outta here.”

“Already taken care of, Fuzz. Here comes our rescuer now.”

“Whoa, Dan! Great job! Xena, da Warrior Princess...totally naked! Hubba, hubba!”

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“Has anyone seen the top piece of the patient’s skull?”

“No, Doctor, it was there before we went to lunch.”

“Never mind. It’s probably some med student’s ashtray by now...crazy kids. I’ll bet it was that young Doughty. I told Doctor Flatus to keep an eye on him.

“Nurse, could you hand me a specimen jar? A big one. Start the tape so I can record my findings. Is it on? Okay, here goes...I should like to note, at this time, that

while I've been doing a superior job of making surgical corrections to his abnormal brain, I find that after removal of the, to use a technical term, 'crap', there is not enough functional matter left over worth leaving in the cranium. Such being the case, I shall remove what is left so that this individual can enjoy a long and happy life as a vegetable.

"Here goes. Just reach in and grab this..."

"Doctor Borborygmi! The patient's opened his eyes! He's trying to speak!"

"Out of my way, nurse! This has never happened before. I can't hear him. Yes...yes...let me lean closer. Whisper in the Doctor's ear. Ow! He bit my ear off!"

"There, Doctor! He spat it on the floor. He's trying to speak again."

"I said..., put the crap back in my head, you saw happy moron! Put the crap...what?"

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Why...I'm here in bed.

Where's the operatin' room? Where's Fuzz? Oh...it wasn't real. Man, it was just a dream...just a dream.

I might as well get up for a while.

I can't believe how everything seemed so real. Fuzz seemed to be so real.

What's this typed on this sheet of paper in the typewriter?

Dan

Quit eatin' da pizza so late at night. I can't handle your dumb ass, crappy dreams!

What a goof!

Fuzzy Bunny

Maybe there was more to this dream than I thought. I think, I'll go back to bed and try to catch up with Xena. But first, let me take care of a few things. Okay, new sheet in the typewriter.

WACK!

"Bitte! Bitte! Kein mehr!

"Charlie, I mean, Adolph, I told you to sit your fascist ass down!"

"Jahwohl, Frau Robinson!"

WACK! WACK!

And since Fuzz's back to his ol' obnoxious self....

Unfortunately for Fuzzy Bunny, he was picked up today for a parole violation and immediately returned to prison.

As luck would have it, there was room for one more in Fuzz's old cell. Bubba was most pleased.

“You're sick, Dan! Sick!”

Heist Magazine, Australia, 2001

“Humor is reason gone mad.”

-- Groucho Marx

