

The Jokester, I Swear It

by Eric L. Marsh

Hey, Bill, we got an eight O'clock tee time, you in? Sure Walter, always, you know that; what's the transportation plan; we gonna meet up and take one car or just meet at the Club? If it were up to me I'd do the one car bit.

What do you mean if it was up to you Bill?

Well who is it up to and what's the problem anyhow?

The problem is one of the guys doesn't want to spend an hour locked up in the car with you.

Hey, WTF does that mean, and who is the S O B anyhow?

Just calm down Bill, take your car and meet us out there, it will be better that way.

Screw you Walter; now who is the S O B and what's his beef? Let him meet us out there, he must have a car.

Oh just forget I said anything and meet us out there. He can't drive is all.

Forget you said anything, are you nuts. Stick the frigging game up your butt, and that

S O B can do the same thing. I'm really pissed off now, what's the F---er's beef, I'll kill the bastard.

That my friend is the problem in a nut shell; you would kill him if you rode with us. He just had a major operation and you never stop with the jokes. He honestly loves you like we all do, but he laughs so hard at your jokes we are afraid his stitches would break and his guts would fall out, he'd bleed to death.

You shit head, why didn't you just say so in the first place before I got so pissed off.

Here Today and Tomorrow

by Eric L. Marsh

Lean back-- tilt your head -- breath hard --- breath -- suck in some air. You can do it, now breath for me. It was impossible, no air could be sucked in no matter what method was employed. Time was swiftly running out; all that was left is to relax and slip silently into the afterlife. But wait, isn't there supposed to be a flashing of my life before me in the last bit of life left to me before the last gasp and gurgle?

Slow motion? Wait a minute, isn't it supposed to be a hurried flashing? The pain, what about the pain, it's unbearable, isn't there a period of being pain free before it's over? My chest is exploding with pain. I don't understand any of this, am I so different, or has it all been a lifetime of being lied to, is there is no flashing of a life after all, and being pain free is another of the lies. But to have this darned slow motion of life passing before me and interrupted by the pain just isn't fair. It's rubbing salt into the wound, so to speak. What's a guy to do? I can just lay here and let it unfold and be satisfied that it will soon be over and done with, really I have no recourse do I? Damn, a knock on the door, another interruption? Get that mask away--ouch, damn it that hurt. Thump, thumping on my chest. Clear, who is that yelling out clear; hey, what a shock that was, am I being hit by lightning along with everything else? Beat -- beat, blood coursing through veins again, voices, telling somebody, 'I got a pulse, he's coming around.'

Jeezus, just when my flashback was getting interesting. Oh well, maybe next time, sighhhhhh.

Never A Dull Moment

by Eric L. Marsh

There could be somebody in there Sarge, Smitty was in the back yard looking up at the top porch. Thanks Eric, we'd be up the creek without the paddle if Smitty hadn't caught sight of that, it changes things you know. Have the rest of the men just stand by, I don't want anyone pulling a Rambo. Okay lieutenant here's the score. Initially only one person holding a hostage was reported in the house on the second floor; could be more in there now we honestly don't know for sure.

Got it Sarge, any telephone contact with the Perp?

Working on it now, so far nothing's getting through; I'll keep you posted okay?

Right Sarge.

Lieutenant, I want to talk to Smitty now, I'll get back with you soon.

Smitty, Eric briefed me on your sighting, got anything else on it?

Yea Sarge, just now two men with rifles stood on a porch directly across from where the Perp and hostage were believed to be. They're resting their rifles on the porch rail and sighting in on something it looks like. Cripes, Smitty, I have my snipers up on that porch, could be they were spotted. Before Sarge could make a call on the two way radio two shots rang out the two riflemen stood from the shock of being hit in their heads and came crashing down to the alley landing dead as doornails on top of a garbage can shed. Another shot rang out, the hostage taker stupidly ran onto the porch when he heard the shots, the rail didn't stop his lifeless body from joining the two dead men in the alley below.

It turned out the riflemen were former military marksmen turned bad and in the middle of a drug deal gone sour.

Case closed I guess.

Time to roll, Come on Eric, Smitty, another call in the next alley. Never a dull minute in this City is there Sarge?

Neither Rain Nor Sleet Or Snow, Not All The Mail Goes Through

by Eric L. Marsh

Mornin Jim, the mailman said as he touched the brim of his Postal service cap with an extended fore finger. It was a gesture of a military salute out of respect to the young man standing at the gate by a shiny new mail box on the fence post. Jim returned it in a true military form as a proud hand salute. It was as rendered as smartly as a seasoned trooper would have given.

How are you this morning Sir?, Jim respectfully asked.

All's well on maple street Jim; street sweepers' been up and down, looks nice now, the roses are in bloom and best of all I saw Mrs. O'Hara placing a couple of right out of the hot oven apple pies she is so famous for. They sure are sweet smelling, when I get to that side of the street I'm going to weasel me a big old piece of one if'n I can. They will be cooled of some by then I reckon.

Yes Sir, I reckon so too. Git yerself on over there afore I'm on that side and gobble them all up. I don't have any mail fer ya agin today, so git going now, maybe tammara, could come any day now Ya know. Yes sir, thank you. Young Jim snapped another sharp salute and made his way across the street to Mrs. O'Hara's porch. The postman returned it and told him to git along. His thoughts went to young Jim. Jimmy boy anit a gonna be gittin any mail out of this bag marked U S Army. He's a gonna be a settin right here on Maple Street if'n I have my way. I aint a gonna be delivren any more of them danged ole draft board notices. Bad nuff I had to deliver three "we regret to inform you" letters in the past year on Maple street. Mrs. O'Hara lost her son, and she aint a gonna be losing his ole buddy Jimmy if'n I can help it. Dang stupid war anyhow. He shuffled off along his route secure in knowing the notices that weren't delivered went to ashes. Hoping jimmy and Mrs. O'Hara were sipping tea and munchin down that sweet smelling pie.

Going Shopping

by Eric L. Marsh

Thelma waited all through the fishing season for her husband Tom and their son Tom Junior. When he was growing up in grade school he was addressed as Tom Junior; he grew to hate it, so when he was called Little Tom by his dad one day he asked to be called it from then on. When fishing became profitable a new boat was purchased. The old boat that was so well known and respected by their fellow fishermen by the name, Big Tom, that was on a plaque attached to the old wooden stern was traded in. The new boat was equipped with the latest in technological fishing gear, a GPS -depth sounder and fish locator and a new ship to shore radio. It made Big Tom smile knowing Little Tom now had the very best money could buy and he'd be far safer at sea than he had ever been.

Thelma was half beside herself with fret worrying about the old boat making it through the one last trip. She wouldn't rest easy until the boat was docked and the last fish unloaded by the crew and the old boat hauled off to the boat yard. Her thoughts were interrupted by the clanging of the harbor masters bell letting the town people know the fleet had been sighted on the horizon approaching the outer harbor. She ran to the docks to greet her family along with the other wives and loved ones. It was great news radioed in from the fleets lead boat, all hands on all boats were safe and accounted for and the catch was plentiful. The best unexpected news of all for Thelma came as they left the dock and went to the new boat sales office, she was given the pleasurable task of breaking a Champaign bottle across the bow of the newly named craft, the plaque affixed to the stern in gilded gold proclaimed to all, this boat was being captained by Little Tom. Big Tom had made his last fishing trip as captain.

Kevin's Favorite Muffins

by Eric L. Marsh

Kevin, Come on Kev, you only got twenty minutes before the bus gets here. Kevin tugged the blanket higher up around his neck and shoulders. He called out to the downstairs kitchen. 'Give me just five more minutes Mom, please.'

Al right Kev, take your five minutes, I'll pop the muffins back in the oven to keep warm, you can have them tomorrow if you get down here in time. No need to do that, your sister said she wanted more this morning, so she'll eat yours too. Yikes, Kevin shouted out as he jumped out of bed onto the floor to make enough noise to let them know he was up out of bed. He called down to them, Mom, Sis, I'm up, don't put the muffins back in the oven, Helen you leave my muffins alone. Okay son, I'll just warm them up, but you better hurry up now. She winked and smiled at Helen and talked to herself as she laid out the butter and his favorite jam. It always worked when the mornings were cold and Kevin was reluctant to get out of bed. Helen said, Mom, you Kevin would kill me if he knew I hate them kind of muffins in the morning. Well Helen, he'll never find out from me, now finish up your bacon and eggs.

Kevin's dad had been killed by D E A agents when he shot at them as they raided his marijuana plot in the forest. She never forgave them, not even when she was awarded the wrongful death suit million dollar settlement. After the children were off to school she would have to harvest from her own plot in the attic in order to lace Kevin's favorite muffins for tomorrow's breakfast.

Dreams

by Eric L. Marsh

Well honey this is it; take your last look at the shack, we're out of here.

For heaven's sake Clyde, what the hell ails you I'll never figure out.

Ha-ha, you still think I'm ailing all the time, need I remind you of all the things my so called sick dreams have actually happened?

No, damn it, you don't have to remind AGAIN! Coincidence-- coincidence-- coincidence. I've told you as many times as you remind me of your happenings, that it's just a stupid coincidence.

Well honey, let me remind you again of the five homes and two lives that were lost that are on your head. Just a coincidence?

Please stop; there was nothing we could have done to save them.

Oh no Honey, you could have called 9-1-1, but you were too embarrassed, remember, you didn't want to be thought the fool telling them your idiot husband had a dream the dam on rock hill would burst at noon time.

There was no way you could have known that, coincidence, not a real dream. I told you even in a dream we would have been called crazy and you know it. I am not going to go through my life feeling guilty because of your crazy dreams. The deaths were not my fault. Besides you idiot, you didn't wake up until after noon and tell me. So what is your latest whacko dream that will affect me?

Oh, you really don't want to know believe me. Now let's go, you drive the car, I'll follow along in the U-haul truck.

Be careful going down the mountain road, watch for mud slides.

Mud slides, mud slides, another crazy dream of yours?

Matter of fact Honey, it was, just last night, two dreams in one, I also dreamt we would not be arguing anymore. Of course, he was right, of course; she was buried in the rare mud slide on that stretch of highway, and the arguments stopped cold. Coincidence?

Lessons Learned

by Eric L. Marsh

Walking from the car in the super market parking lot I poked my wife gently in the ribs with my elbow. Now what; she loudly said. I told her look over at the very obese woman and the retarded man she was with. What of it my wife asked, there but for the grace of whatever, go you and I she finished up with. Of course she was correct, and as much as I often delight in getting into silly and stupid arguments with her just to amuse myself, I knew for certain this would not be a good time for my stupid mouth to flap on. So I kept my lips zipped and walked over to the corral where carts are kept and attempted to engage the duo in conversation whilst I got a shopping cart. The obese woman was the man's trainer and the man was her client, she told me as I engaged her in idle chatter. I never knew there were titles attached so it was a learning experience. When I made the move to extract a cart from the row the man was pulling out of the corral he went out of his mind and threw a childish tantrum finishing up with screaming at me and throwing his upper body across the carts trapping my hands on a handle. It was painful too. I couldn't get away, my wife was beside herself, calling me a fool and more. I tried to smooth talk the man, and ignore my wife so I could get loose from the cart and relieve my pain and get away. It worked, in a few minutes I had the man smiling and his trainer assisting him off the carts. I made a swift apology and hastily beat a retreat with my wife in tow off into the super market. As we made our way from the corral, I had my comeuppance when I overheard the trainer as we were pointed at tell the man, 'There but for the grace of god you and I.'

Fright and Flight

by Eric L. Marsh

All aboard, east bound train leaving in ten minutes. Last call for passengers. The gate was slid open, passengers hurried past, carrying strapped bags and wheeled luggage pulled along behind. They juggled with luggage and tickets trying to locate the car that matched the number on the ticket. It was rough and tumble for some as they discovered they were in the wrong car and had to decide whether to get back onto the platform or go through the cars and hassle those trying to take their seats and store their luggage. Most backtracked causing those on the steps to back down and become agitated. Young families with baby strollers pushed through the terminal gates, all feeling a sense of relief that they were able to escape the predicted doom forecast for the West coast. Mother nature was rearing her ugly head up and down the coast and moving inland. Only the brave and foolish opted to stay behind, disadvantaged people were carried off in National Guard vehicles and chartered busses and planes. The undersea erupting volcanoes and tsunami's caused by massive earthquakes all happening simultaneously and with no warning created the largest mass evacuation ever undertaken in America. There was no guarantee that the destruction would be stopped by the mountain ranges separating the country, but little choice was left to a rational thinking human being. After all it was on the Internet, they had videos of it taking place out in the pacific and headed to the West coast. although the sun was shining brightly and the temps were in the high sixty all along the coast the flight took place.

Now, up to now not a one of these disasters had ever occurred caused by happenings in the Pacific rim. Or is ever likely to occur. Escape for the masses would be impossible to begin with, they would be met on the other side of the mountains by mobs of just plain citizens bent of keeping them away out of fear of a takeover of what little foodstuffs would be left after feeding millions more mouths. Now dear reader, only you can write the final chapter to this tale, or is it likely to happen one day after all?

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