

# Character Flaws



Les  
Marcott

*AvianPress*

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# Monologues

## A Friend In LA

You see I've got this friend in LA who owes me a favor. I took a bullet for him one time. These guys he owed some money to were chasing him down an alley. Hell I was just tagging along, I didn't know what was going down. They started shooting, missed my friend but got me in the shoulder. Look at the scar...it's a beaut, ain't it. He said if there was anything that he could ever do...after all, I took a bullet for the guy didn't I...for me to just ask. Well guess what? This guy has an uncle in the movie business, a producer. I'm gonna run my screen play by him. I just know he'll love it. It's got everything Hollywood loves...car crashes, drugs, raw unbridled sex with a heavy emphasis on unbridled. And you baby are gonna be the femme fatale. All those years of acting classes are gonna pay off. I'm so excited, there's a million thoughts going through my head. But first baby we need to surround ourselves with all the accoutrements of major Hollywood players. Got to get us some clothes from Rodeo Drive or maybe the closest thrift store, shades, got to have the shades. Maybe a small dog and a cell phone. Cuz you ain't shit without a cell phone. But who says it has to work? Just carry one. And we've got to ditch our car baby. Who's gonna take us seriously if we're driving a 1990 Oldsmobile. Image is everything baby. EVERYTHING. Got to have us an entourage, some hangers on. My cousin Leon lives in LA. He's currently unemployed. We'll give him some beer and cigarette money to be a hanger on and a gopher. Speaking of money. How much do you have baby? Five dollars? (disbelief) Well that might be a problem.

## A Not So Jolly Santa

Hey kids, Santa's running a little late today. You might say he's been under the weather. He's had a...uh...a stomach virus. Yea that's it. Uh...well...no, that's not exactly true kids. I can't lie to you. Santa wants us to be truthful right? His stomach does hurt along with his head but it's because of something we adults call a hangover. Let your parents explain that to you. Because Santa hasn't been feeling good, please keep your requests brief. Very brief. Single requests only. Grab your candy cane, exit right and be on your way...to a very merry Christmas that is. You know Santa will try to do his best, but sometimes he's very forgetful. Sometimes he just forgets to show up at the mall when he's supposed to. But like I said, he'll be out in a few. Now don't ask him about Mrs. Claus kids. It will get him very mad. It seems that Mrs. Claus had a very amorous encounter with one of Santa's elves. He was a very bad elf. He no longer works at Saddle Creek Mall. He's officially listed by the police department as "missing". He's going to go where all bad elves go...HELL! Santa just might have to trade Mrs. Claus in for a younger more beautiful model. But you didn't hear it from me kids. Hey, while we're waiting you kids can have your picture taken with Santa's stand-in Clyde. Come on up here Clyde. Just pretend Clyde is Santa kids for photographic purposes only. I know he doesn't look like Santa. Just use your imagination. And please visit Clyde at the Willow Brook retirement home. He will absolutely love the company. Clyde, please stop drooling. And kids don't even think about going to the West Bend Mall. That Santa over there is just a big fat fake. He's a Santa wannabe. He ought to be locked up for impersonating the real santa. Report him to the police kids. Ok kids it looks like Santa's stumbling in now. Don't be disturbed by Santa's black eye. It seems

Santa was doing more than kissing mommy around the Christmas tree. Ha, ha (slaps cheek) Oh did I say that...I'm sorry kids, just a little adult Santa humor. Well, I'm outta here. Have a very merry Christmas!



## Billy Joe Wilson's Dog

Hey mister, folks around here don't take too kindly to strangers killing their dogs. And a good coon dog at that. And that dog you just run over is Billy Joe Wilson's dog. Hell he treated that dog better than his wife. Thought the world of that dog. Sure as hell did. Rode shotgun in his pickup and all. That dog would eat out of Billy Joe's cereal bowl in the mornings and sleep in his bed every night. His wife said, "it's either me or that dog." Billy Joe said, "bye bitch." And he wasn't saying bye to that dog either. But now you've done and did it. Struck a good coon dog down in his prime. It doesn't matter that it was an accident. Hell folks in these parts don't understand "accidents". For all they know it was a cold despicable cowardly act. You know the Crabtree brothers a few years back, beat this boy senseless because there was this rumor that he stole their prized pit bull. Turns out the dog crawled underneath a neighbor's house and died of natural causes. Now them boys are serving hard time in the state pen. People take their dogs and what happens to 'em seriously mister. Now maybe I've seen everything or maybe I didn't see anything. (winks) And I thought maybe for a moment I heard you say "Gonna run me over a coon dog, gonna run me over a coon dog." Or maybe I didn't. (winks) You know Benjamin Franklin is my favorite President. Hell was he President? Oh well maybe he wasn't, but you know what I'm getting at. If for some reason a couple of nice, crisp Franklins land in my hand, well I know nothin' 'bout this little episode. But if for some reason I'm left empty handed, well the authorities have a description of the suspect, they have the license plate number of the suspect's car and they have a witness or maybe they don't. (winks) And if you wind up in the county jail, Lord help you. The jail here can be a brutal place for a gentrified

fellow like yourself. I'm sure it's nothing like the country clubs you're used to whiling away your days at. Now Billy Joe's gonna be looking for that dog in a minute. If he finds out what happened and who's responsible...whew, I wouldn't want to hang around if I were you. Especially if he's been drinking...you hear that? (turns head and cups ear) It sounds like the whine of Billy Joe's pickup in the distance. Well lookey here. A couple of Franklins have landed in my hand. Mmm... hey for another \$100 I'll bury the dog. Mister, mister where you going?

## Chronic Patient

I realize it's your first day but unfortunately your first patient will be Lewis over there. Lewis is a celebrity in his own right. He makes several trips a week here. Sometimes up to three times a day. He curses, he spits, he shits his pants. Why? Because he can. He has a history of heart disease, high blood pressure, alcoholism, diabetes, and crack cocaine addiction. He has an unpaid hospital bill of half a million dollars. He's homeless unless you count this hospital as his home. He's been known to fondle the orderlies and pinch the nurses asses. He says he's a hopeless romantic. Yea. We treat him, even provide medication for him. But he refuses to take it, because that might make him better, that might reduce the number of trips that he makes here. That would be devastating to him. Because this is his life. He likes the circus atmosphere. He craves the attention and publicity. And believe it or not, some people actually like Lewis. There is even a website devoted to the trials and travails of Lewis. He's even been approached by some movie big shots seeking the rights to his life story. What a life, huh? So what can we do to stop this madness? Well...nothing. We can't refuse to treat him. We have tried to make his visits here as uncomfortable as possible but still he comes back. Some have even suggested that he's just waiting for us to make a mistake...mistreat him...prescribe the wrong medication so he can sue us for millions. There's more than one unscrupulous lawyer to take up his cause. But he would only do that if he were still allowed to be treated here. He knows a good thing when he sees it. Well Lewis is dying for attention over there. Good luck..

## Doom And Gloom

Steve, the way I see it, you're gonna have to do a total rewrite. I mean...look, the main character you're dealing with is an anti-hero. On page twenty, you have our guy delivering flowers. Heroes might deliver flowers, Steve. Anti-heroes deliver smirks. And what's up with a steady girlfriend anyway? Our guy sleeps with a different girl every night. He's not the hopeless romantic type. Hopeless yes, but not romantic. Also on page 65 you have this damsel in distress character being rescued from atop a fifty story building. Rescued! Just let her fall, Steve. Let her drop and go splat. Then let the madding crowd applaud her demise. Steve you are dealing with characters who are total fuck-ups. Everything in their lives is fucked up. Optimism clouds your vision and adversely affects your writing. Lay off the prozac for a while. I'm sure you'll return to your old form in no time. We need gloom and doom and all that goes with it. You can't offer people a ray of hope. They'll just latch on to it. Then where would we be, huh? Out of work, that's where we'll be. We're not some self help guru offering up our own special concoction of happiness. Leave that to others. This is not "Touched By An Angel" Steve! What you fail to understand is that some people take great joy, if I can use that word, wallowing in their own misery and in the misery of others. We write and produce episodes for these people. Well I gotta go. I'm producing a new reality based show about people who want to die in a car crash. Corpses and explosions. Now that's the way to go Steve. Think about it.

## Final Words

Unless God or man intervenes, I have an appointment with death at six pm tomorrow. The state will execute me with a lethal cocktail. I never liked cocktails...more of a beer man myself. Ha ha. Might as well laugh huh. My request for a last meal will be two eggs sunny side up, grits, pork sausage with lots and lots of Tabasco sauce. Yep, might as well prepare myself. I have a feeling it's gonna be hot where I'm going. And, oh...uh...a pot of coffee. Got to be alert for my execution, don't I? (sighs) ...yep. This broad from Lexington, she's gonna be my witness. She has this thing for death row inmates I guess. She was married to two of 'em. Every week she puts flowers on their graves. I guess she'll be doing the same for me. I guess if I were one of those head doctors, I'd have to come to the conclusion that maybe she can't handle long term relationships. She always puts lots of smiley faces in her letters she sends me. Yea I like that. She has a calming influence over me. My other witness was gonna be this TV preacher I'm fond of. Real smart, cuts right through all the b.s. that's out there in the "religious" world. And sometimes I know...I KNOW he's talking directly to me. I swear he calls out my name. The only problem is that he hasn't responded to any of my letters. And I put my hand on that TV set and I feel something man...I feel a presence. Guess he has bigger fish to fry. Now? Don't feel much of anything at all really. Just like the night they said I shot and robbed that convenience store clerk. Don't remember feeling anything...seeing anything. No memory of ever being there. But I was there. At least that's what they tell me. And I could blame drugs, I could blame booze, I could blame my extremely dysfunctional redneck white trash fucked up family, but I won't. I won't even blame my lawyer. The sumbitch kept nodding off at my

trial. The judge had to admonish...yea admonish...I think that's the right word...admonish him about his snoring. You know the hardest thing...(sighs)...the hardest thing is that after they strap me into that gurney, I'll have to look at that slain clerk's widow and daughter. I'll look in their eyes. They'll look into mine. But the thing is that I won't have anything to say. Saying you're sorry is a little lame after you've taken someone's life. I might as well spit in their faces as to say that. It's the same difference. So there will be no final words for me. Cuz when it gets down to it, final words are overrated. You get that? Yea put that in your paper...final words are overrated.

## Gorillaplex

You see Mr. Jeffries, as an animal psychologist, I've encountered this problem many times before with all sorts of animals. You see Carl is depressed. He's unhappy with his lot in life and the role that you've carved out for him. First thing right off the bat. You're in violation of a multitude of federal, state, and local ordinances by having a gorilla in your home. But I assure you, I won't rat you out. I'm sworn to confidentiality. Let's look at this objectively, Mr. Jeffries. You make Carl wear a designer smoking jacket and reading glasses. You put a glass of brandy in one hand and place the collected poems of T.S. Eliot in the other. He's expected to entertain your friends and family. I realize you think Carl is witty and urbane in that situation, but Mr. Jeffries he's a gorilla, a primate. I'm also sorry to say that Carl is showing signs of alcoholism. Here. I'm giving you this number to call. It's the number of a highly regarded twelve step program for alcoholic gorillas. Believe me, it is extremely successful. Another thing...uh...Carl has developed a strong attachment to Mrs. Jeffries. He sees her as a mother figure or possibly it's an Oedipus complex. Watch out! You never know when he might turn on you. This kind of thing happened last year in San Diego. A gorilla took out his frustrations on his owner. He beat him to death with a Louisville slugger. Then he ripped his heart out. It was all very hush hush. It never made the papers. Please remember this Mr. Jeffries. The only natural enemy of the gorilla is mankind. well, I see that our time is up. Thank you and I'll see you and Carl next week...(to receptionist) Linda, send in the gentleman with the xenophobic zebra.

## I Shot The Weatherman

I can't put my finger on the exact moment my life started unraveling, but unravel it did. Maybe it was my girlfriend leaving, not that her leaving was necessarily a bad thing. But you know a guy gets lonely. Maybe it was my inability to keep a job longer than three months. Maybe it was the constant harassment from bill collectors. Hell they wanted a house payment, car payment...money for this...money for that...money money money money...the root of all evil. The vet was even on my ass for not paying for my dog's surgery. Now the dog's dead, the only living thing that meant anything to me. And when he used to hump my girlfriend's leg... (smiles) the memories are priceless. Kodak moments indeed. All I had left was a cat and a TV set. The cat despised me and if the TV set had the ability to despise me it would. So in the midst of my misery, I watched the six o'clock news and discovered that the world was full of misery, my neighborhood full of it with murder, madness, and general mayhem. And there I was...drowning my misery in a bottle of whiskey. Then the weatherman came on...that sorry SOB. He's what made me snap. Yes sir, the gasoline was already there and he provided the match. He's what set me off. That goofy smile...that smirk...that smugness...what did he do you might ask? He had the audacity to tell me to have a nice day. He was speaking directly to me, right through that TV set. I know he was. It's gonna be a great day...BILLY. A picture perfect day...BILLY. 68 degrees...light breeze...sunshine...BILLY. I know he said my name. I know he did. Over and over and over. Now go ahead and have a nice day...BILLY. That's when I lost it. All the months of misery culminating in me taking my pistol, oh yea I forgot... another possession I'd still had left and going to the television studio and shooting the good humor



weatherman. I stormed into the studio and there he was goofy smile and all. " Have a nice day huh? Have a nice freaking day huh?, " I said. Look at me, it's Billy. Remember me? Huh? You told me to have a nice day. Your sarcasm...your smugness...well take this you cocksucker. I shot him twice. He hit the floor. I fled. I was captured. He survived. He was wearing a bullet proof vest. What weatherman wears a bullet proof vest? I found out there are other Billys out there with malice in their hearts. And now every night in the prison rec room, the other prisoners and the guards make sure I watch the six o'clock news. And there he is...that smug son of a bitch. Still mocking...still teasing me...have a great day BILLY. Have a nice day. They say I have twenty years to listen to that. When I get outta here...by the way I hear he's taking care of my cat.

## I'm From Dallas Texas

I'm from Dallas, Texas. They call it Big D. Everything is bigger here. Even the heartache. I'm not a cowboy. Don't wear a Stetson hat. Don't wear ostrich skin cowboy boots. Don't ride bulls. I don't ride horses. Although I had a pony when I was five years old. I fell off once and never had the desire to get back on one. I didn't grow up on a ranch. My dad wasn't in the oil bidness. He was a small time aluminum siding salesman and big time alcoholic. He's dead now. He died in an alcoholic stupor on the streets of Lower Greenville. My mom resides in a nursing home. Most days she doesn't recognize me. Sometimes she looks my way and calls me Bubba. My name is Jake. Don't know anyone named Bubba. Don't own a pickup truck. I have a 1977 Volvo station wagon. It's not a classic. I work at a convenience store in a rough neighborhood. My major goal everyday is to make it home without getting maimed, robbed, or killed. I have no connection to, no links to, no association with anybody however remotely involved with the Kennedy assassination. When I was a kid growing up, I hated the TV show "Dallas". I still do. I don't do the Texas two step. In fact I don't dance anymore at all. But me and Mary Anne used to hold each other tight and sway to the music emanating from my \$39 dollar ghetto blaster. She got run over by a bus. Not in Dallas, but in Topeka, Kansas. And on those rare occasions when the night is calm and still...no gunshots...no sounds of glass breaking...no domestic disturbances...no barking dogs...Mary Anne comes to me in dreams. She tells me everything will be ok and then I smile. I'm sorry...I'm rambling. What was your question?

## It's Good To Be King

I'm here to tell you that you can have it all friends. Houses, cars, yachts, exotic pets, dream vacations...you name it. It can be yours. (points to random individuals in audience) Just buy my book and tape series, "How To Be Filthy Rich" or for those of you in attendance who are really serious about money making opportunities, buy my new book, "How To Be Obscenely Rich". You will become emboldened...confident as the money at first trickles in and then when the floodgates open...watch out! You'll be able to walk into boss man's office and while the corpulent bastard is eating a jelly donut and sipping a latte, by the way a luxury your hard work has provided him, you'll say "Bossman, I've been wanting to say this for a long time. I quit. As of (looks at watch) right now. I will no longer allow you to be master and lord over those precious hours, minutes, seconds that comprise my life." You then snuff out your hand rolled Cuban cigar on his antique ornate roll top desk. At this point, you might have to call 911 because Bossman may be choking on his donut. But then, why even save his fat ass. You're out the door. And as you leave, laugh and curse those coworkers who doubted your ability to become obscenely rich. As you drive off in your brand spanking new rose pink Cadillac, make sure the trail of dust you leave behind covers those aforementioned coworkers. It's good to be king. Now step up and get your book. It's good to be king. Say it! (everyone in unison) It's good to be king! All major credit cards accepted. And remember folks, money doesn't talk, it swears.

## Kiss And Tell

Whoa...let me get this straight. You and Billy McCoy? That fat ass! (sits down and pounds forehead with fist) My emotions now run from outright fury to utter revulsion. But I have to put things in perspective. After all, you slept with him before we were married. But still what were you thinking baby? Did you feel sorry for him or something? I bet his bed was covered with pork rinds and beer cans. (shakes head) I feel like I need to take a shower. But since we're in a kiss and tell mood, let me lay one on you. Remember Ramona Willingsly? Yea that Ramona. The girl least likely to be asked out. The homeliest, gangliest, ugliest girl in high school. Well...we did the dirty deed. Honey, you're not having a seizure are you? I realize you're probably in shock. I mean I was in denial about it for years. here...drink this water. Ok breathe in, breathe out. Ok, better now. Sorry I shouldn't have sprung that revelation on you like that. But after hearing about you and Billy McCoy, well I had to come clean about me and Ramona. I mean she had no friends. Even the geeky girls wanted no part of her. You see I was one of the few people who actually talked to Ramona. She was so self conscious about her looks and her clumsy walk. Just a "hi Ramona" from me elicited a nervous giggle from her. One day I went to her house and returned a chain saw that my dad had borrowed from her dad. Well her parents were out of town...one thing led to another...well we did it and then we just talked into the wee hours of the morning. What? You don't believe me? I was a typical horny teenager back then. And I swear, we never slept together again. We only exchanged the occasional hello. She was really pretty cool. No one ever took the time to get to know her. But sometimes I think of her. I think about the loneliness and utter despair of those that don't fit in. And I

think about what Ramona said to me as I left her house that day. Thanks for holding me she said. Thanks for holding me. Whatever happened to her? I guess she went on to being lonely. And I well...went on to other girls...well not that many honey...you're still my favorite. Who knows, maybe Ramona hooked up with Billy McCoy. I hope she likes pork rinds.

## Lord Of The Rodeo

I don't know if you've heard the bad news, they've cancelled the rodeo. They say because of "security concerns". Yea, they're blaming it on Randolph's escape attempt at last year's rodeo. That's their reasoning anyway. But I think it's their way of punishing us poor bastards. Man, I live for that rodeo. Every ounce of my being yearns for it. Now what do I have to live for? Huh? Fuckin' tell me. I'm a lifer and anyway I have no family on the outside like you do. There's no one who gives a shit about me. At least with the rodeo, I had a reason to get up every morning and see life beyond these iron bars. I would go to the workout yard, keep myself in top physical condition. I would work with the prison livestock. Having the chance to participate in the rodeo gave me the motivation to maintain a clean disciplinary record. Now I'd just as soon slit somebody's fuckin' throat. So watch out! The thing about it...that steer, that wild bronc...doesn't give a damn if you're a rapist, a murderer, housewife, priest, or condemned prisoner. No he doesn't care what color you are...what your religion is...what you had for breakfast...who you slept with. You see we're all in the same boat. We're all the enemy to him. He hates us all. In that regard, the imprisoned and the free man are equal. But my day will come again. I gotta believe that man. I just have to. If not, I'll go crazy. Bronc riding, bull riding, steer wrestling, and if my hard work and dedication pay off...I'll find myself at the top of the heap. All Around Cowboy. Conqueror of man and beast. I'll tip my hat to the crowd. And at that moment...I'll be Lord of the Rodeo.

## On The Cutting Edge

You know last week, I made the decision to do it. I mean really do it this time. To do something that speaks to my "uniqueness". Something that differentiates me from the rest of the pack. I decided to get a tattoo. But what would it be? Chinese characters? Barbwire? Some Celtic symbol? The words love and hate etched on my knuckles? No. That had already been done by innumerable people. What I had in mind was a Daliesque concept of space and time tattooed on my bicep for all the free world to see. Thus, letting everyone know I'm a person who transcends space and time. But just as I was about to enter the tattoo parlor, this guy walks out with my tattoo! Shit, what are the chances of that happening? What I had conceived in my mind, this complete stranger already had on his arm. So I got depressed. But as I looked around me, hell it seemed like everyone was tattooed. And when you think about it, everyone is tattooed. Not only bikers and sailors, but upright, upstanding suburban school kids, little old ladies, doctors, lawyers, Indian chiefs. So I gave up on the idea of a tattoo. It was so passé, so old school. My thoughts briefly turned to body piercing. But what could be pierced that would set me apart? Everything that can be pierced has already been done. So I gave up on that too. So what could shock and amaze at the same time? Well I thought long and hard about it. I contemplated. I meditated. And bingo, it came to me. Amputation. See for yourself. Look. How many people have the balls to do this voluntarily? Huh? It really makes a statement. Oh c'mon. Please don't turn away. It's just part of my pinky. I didn't need it anyway, but what it says about me is that I'm willing to sacrifice part of myself. Through a friend of a friend of a friend, I found out about this guy way out in the hills. It seems he went to medical school for six

months. So he knew a thing or two about amputation. I don't recommend going to an amateur for this sort of thing. After he finished, he sewed me up. Bandaged me. There was no excessive bleeding. And the intense pain lessened after a bottle of Jack Daniels. The infection is lessening somewhat. And look...I have the part that was cut off preserved in this vial. I'm gonna wear it around my neck. And who knows, if amputation ever catches on...I might have to have more extremities whacked off to stay on the cutting edge. We'll see.



## One Weekend In Reno

I'm sorry, what's your name again? Oh yea it's Lou Ann. It's tattooed on my arm. Shit! How did that happen? Ok listen Lou Ann, you say we're married. Again how did that happen? I mean I barely remember you. It's like I'm in a fog. I mean I came to Reno for a weekend sales convention. You said I promised to take care of you? I don't recall any of that. I do remember having a few drinks at the bar with you. Wait a minute. I thought you were a blond. Was that a wig or something? Oh...my head is throbbing. Could you give me some aspirin please. Thanks. Listen Peggy Sue. Sorry, I mean Lou Ann. We can't be married or stay married. I have a girl back home. She cares for me. She loves me. She feeds my dogs. This would just devastate her. By the way, were we...you know...intimate? Uh...(punches his stomach) no, no, no, I'm sure you were just great. (reassures her) By the way, how was I? Well never mind. (gets up and looks around) Have you've seen my wallet? It seems to be missing. Well I'm sure it's here somewhere. (sits back down) Ok here's what we do. We go to the courthouse and have this quickie marriage annulled. I mean I was under the influence of alcohol or something. I didn't have a sound mind. I exercised poor judgment. I don't know you doll. Don't you understand that. I'm sure you're a very nice person and all. This will not work out. You can't even call whatever it is we have a relationship, much less a marriage. Hey, you're very beautiful in a barfly/twisted street person kinda way. Anyway, I'm boring. I sell vacuum cleaners. What's more boring than that, huh? Even jokes about vacuum cleaner salesmen aren't funny. Just lewd. Please don't cry. (reaches out to dry her tears) I'm sure you'll find someone. (picks up newspaper) Look, the circus is in town. You ought to check it out. I'm sure

some young man who eats fire, swallows swords, lays down on a bed of nails would be interested in you. Maybe some guy who has an extra appendage would love to go out with you, and maybe have your name tattooed on that appendage. After we go to the courthouse, you ought to run over there. Just forget about me Lou Ann. Forget I ever existed. However, if you ever need a vacuum cleaner... .

## Pills

This pill puts me to sleep. This pill gets me up and moving. This pill controls my Vietnam flashbacks even though I'm much too young to ever have gone to Vietnam. Let's see...this pill is for my compulsive hand washing. This is uh...well I don't know. I'll have it analyzed and get back with you. This one, the red shiny one...oh mama! I'm not sure what it's for either but it looks pretty. Now these pills in this bottle...I'm not taking that shit no more man. Throw it away. The last time I took that shit, I felt like a cartoon character who fell off a cliff. Except real life ain't no cartoon. When you fall off that cliff, it really hurts. Luckily, I have these pills (grabs bottle) to ease the pain. I'm not sure how all these pills work together and sometimes they don't. I'll take too much of this, not enough of that or didn't take this pill at the right time or I accidentally took the wrong pill altogether. Then I gotta go and get my stomach pumped and start the process all over again. But without all of this medication, I don't think I could function. I wouldn't be able to get up and face the day. I wouldn't be able to think and talk coherently. And the doctors tell me to stay the course...keep taking this shit...all the while prescribing more and more pills. But they have it all sorted out, don't they? Don't doctors know best? (grimaces) Hold on...I'm having an anxiety attack (pops pill) Ok (takes deep breath) Where was I?

## Straight Out Of Sartre

You know today I went to the doctor's office, right? I go in, sit down and wait for my appointed time. And boy do I wait...and wait...and wait. Meanwhile, I look for something to read to pass the time. All I could find were two old issues of Arthritis Today and Good Housekeeping. You know, the stuff you would never read anywhere else. There's this guy next to me with a cell phone. He calls up in succession his boss, his girlfriend, his wife. He tells each of them about this weird rash that he has. So he won't be going back to work, he won't be meeting his girlfriend for a quickie, and he won't be meeting his wife for lunch. Wow, what a juggling act. And I'm still waiting while others come and go. I notice as each person leaves, they are carrying a small paper bag. Hmm...what was it filled with? The fix? The cure? The answer? The solution? Some magical elixir? The medication that would ameliorate their pain? What? WHAT is it? A man and wife leave with their two daughters. They are all carrying paper sacks. They all have a warm glow about them. I guess the family that medicates together, stays together. I want that paper bag, dammit! I want what they have and I want it now! And each time the nurse comes out, I just know that it's gonna be me this time. I'll get my paper bag. Yea. But I'm still waiting. I walk up to the desk. I explain to the receptionist how long I've been waiting. She doesn't seem to care. She tells me to be patient, that the doctor is running late. I ask for a lollypop. She tells me to sit back down. The office eventually empties out. It's just me and Rash Man. They call in Rash Man. Now it's just me. I watch TV. Sesame Street's on. I relearn the alphabet. Maybe this is a type of hell where you wait and wait and never receive remedy. Something straight out of Sartre.

Rash Man leaves with his paper bag. He tells me to take care. He says I'm gonna love it in there as he points to the inner sanctum of what I believe to be the examination room. Then just as they call my name, I decide to leave. I've had enough. No paper bag for me. But as one wise man once said, sometimes the cure is worse than the disease.

## Strip Club Cuisine

I have a proposal I wanna run by you. Ok? Brace yourself. You ready? Food reviews of strip clubs. Did you hear me? Food reviews of strip clubs. You see when I first started going to these clubs, it was all about the dancers. Just T & A you know. But the more I went, the more I was drawn to the food...more so than the girls. Salads, baked potatoes, steaks, hamburgers, shrimp, mouth watering breasts...chicken that is. Boy, did I put on the pounds. The owner realized that with all the competition out there, they had to offer food to get the business crowd and other admirers of the female form into their clubs. And when I lost my job, it became a means to an end. A lot of these places have free buffets. Who said there's no free lunch? Of course they kinda want you to buy drinks. But I just drank water until they started charging for it. Some clubs serve stuff you could get at your favorite fast food joint, but other clubs go out of their way and worry about plate presentation. Just close your eyes and picture this...sweet, creamy, gravy gently dripping off your chin while just a few feet away a beautiful dancer is writhing in ecstasy. All in all, great food and a great view. And you'll read all about it in my column. Just think of all the advertising my column will generate. These club owners will be stepping over each other to advertise. They don't wanna be left out. And let me guarantee you that everything will be above board. No backroom escapades with the dancers. No accepting bribes in exchange for a good review. After all, I have my integrity. So what do you say? Huh? C'mon.

## The Collectors

Yeah we work for Vinny. We are what you call uh...collectors. Vinny says you owe him money. A lot of money. A shit load of money. We're here to collect that money. Either you have it or you don't. If you have it, great. We'll be off and on our way. It's a sunny day, why not enjoy it. Hell, me and my associate Rudy here might just go the park and feed the pigeons. And you my friend can go back to eating your tuna sandwich or whatever the hell you're eating there. And Vinny? Vinny will be one happy son of a bitch. If you don't have it...well things could get a little complicated. Let me tell you this...we've been known to get a little aggressive. You see Rudy here put a guy in the hospital last week who said he "forgot" that he owed Vinny some money. You know what? He still doesn't remember owing Vinny any money because he's in a coma now. If he ever wakes up, we're gonna go remind him again. On one hand, research has shown that if you put a guy in a coma or just out and out kill him, the odds of getting your money are slim and none. On the other hand, maiming or killing a guy imparts a very valuable lesson to others who would renege on their obligations. Now we want the full amount. Don't think for one nanosecond that you can short us. One dude thought he would short us \$10, like we wouldn't fucking count it. The dude had some balls, I tell ya. I know \$10 doesn't seem like a lot of money, but it's just the idea that someone would try to get over on us. He owed Vinny ten grand. There was only \$9,990 bucks in the duffel bag. So what did we do? We made the guy break into his kid's piggy bank. That's what we did. Now we can't wait for Aunt Hazel or Uncle Billy Bob to come through for you. We can't wait for your blue moon to turn gold again. We don't give a rat's ass if your kid needs braces or your

grandma needs a new wheelchair. We're cold heartless bastards. On a kinder, gentler note we are both avid patrons of the arts. I'm on the board of the local art gallery and Rudy is involved with community theatre. Don't let his stone cold appearance fool ya. He's quite animated on stage. But back to the matter at hand. Deadlines are deadlines. If we let you slide then we have to let all the other poor bastards who owe Vinny money slide and then we'd be out of a job. Vinny would fire our sorry asses or worse, feed us to the fishes. Now if you don't have the money, I'm gonna have to use this (pulls out a hammer) Now ya have Vinny's money or don't ya? Then why didn't you say so. (pinches debtor's cheek and grabs sandwich) Mmm...this is good but could use some more mayo. Let's go Rudy. Let's feed us some pigeons.



## The Crazy Cat Lady

They call me the crazy cat lady. Every town has one, don't they? Well the only part of that label I disavow is the "crazy" part. I'm not crazy. I repeat. I'm not crazy. Crazy connotes needing mental help. If that's what you're here for, leave now and I hope my cats scratch you on the way out. Hope you get cat scratch fever. Ha ha. Nothing like a little cat humor huh? If you're here to chat, good. I'll put on some tea. It's nice to have some human interaction from time to time. Not that I need much. But still all the same. The last person I had some interaction with wanted to throw me out of his car. We were traveling at 70 mph. He said if I survived, he wanted to make me his wife. Well I jumped out of my own volition. I survived with a few bruises. I hear he's in prison now. And folks call me crazy. Yea my cats give me all the love I need. All 45 of 'em. Unconditional love. Look...there goes Sting. I name all my cats after rock stars and movie stars. It's easy to remember their names that way. The tabby cat there is Cher. The regal looking one on the sofa is Elvis. He's gotten fat and lazy in his later years. The Siamese cat over there in the corner is uh...uh...give me a second. Huh...my mind went blank. Hold on. I have these snap shots of all my cats (picks up photos from table) with their names written on the back. (Shuffles through photos) Oh here you are. Catherine Zeta. Sorry Catherine Zeta. Mommy won't forget you again. And...walking by us now are Ben and J. Lo. Whoa. Wait a minute. Those two cats aren't supposed to be together. They fight too much and over the most trivial matters. And all the other cats are off doing what cats do...scrapping, socializing, eating, defecating, chasing mice...whatever. Folks complain about the cats. Oh the horrors. They're a nuisance, they smell, they're this, they're that. But this would be the first place

those very same complainers would drop a stray or unwanted cat off. Let me tell ya. Oh I forgot the tea. (walks to kitchen) I don't believe I got your name. Hello. Hellooooo...(walks back to the front door) Well precious ones, it's just us again.

## The Look, The Feel Of Cotton

The words of that ad reverberate through my mind. The look, the feel...of cotton. A hot dusty wind transports me back through time. Back to the cradle of civilization, back 3,000 years before the birth of Christ, back to the time of the ancient Egyptians, growing and wearing cotton nurtured by the fertile Nile. Ah...the look, the feel of cotton. I keep getting blown along just like the precious pollen of the cotton flower. I find myself in 1700's America. Amid fields and fields of white ripe for harvest. I can hear the sweet, sad song of redemption as the slaves toil and travail in those same fields. If they had only known how much would have to be sacrificed, how much blood would have to be shed for the look and the feel of cotton. Then in 1793 Mr. Eli Whitney patented the first cotton gin. It could separate fiber from the seed fifty times faster than by hand. I don't know whether to curse you or thank you Mr. Whitney. And so the plantations just got bigger and bigger. And oh how the South kept prospering and prospering. The crop is known as "King Cotton". Long live the King. Then came the war. That bloody war that changed everything. You can tell me the war was over a million different things, but I know now it was all for the look and the feel of cotton. Through it all that hot dusty wind kept blowing me along...through the shacks of desolation along the Mississippi delta...through dust bowl Oklahoma...through the high plains of Texas...until I'm face to face with my great grandfather who's broken and bent as he sharecrops the land. Face to face with my grandfather who through blood, sweat, and tears was able to put together his own cotton farm passed on to my father who raised us kids to respect the look and the feel of cotton. The wind stops blowing now. Was it all a dream or not? I don't know. All I know is this...it's high noon. Cold stark reality sets in.

They are auctioning off all my equipment, my farm, the old homestead. I gave it my best shot. I gave it my all. They say there are 3.5 million Americans who depend on cotton for at least part of their livelihood. Today there's one less. Ah...the look, the feel of cotton. The fabric of my life.

## The Misunderstood Poet

Look at this. Look at this! Another nut case letter from some guy in Portales, New Mexico. He claims he "gets" my poetry. His life revolves around my poems. I'm speaking directly to him. Why don't these freaking people just take their medication? Don't they realize I'm just a nice guy who lives in a modest bungalow with a white picket fence with my two dogs, two small children, and a wife whom I've been happily married to for twelve years. I mow the grass on Saturdays. We go out for ice cream. I'm a nature poet for pete's sake. You know...wind, sun, earth. But somehow I attract all the wrong people, Sid. People on the margins of society. The fringe of the fringe. Check this letter out. (reads) Dude, your poem about the eyes of cats chilled me to the bone. I can't pass a cat now without grabbing it and staring deep into it's eyes and seeing the coming Apocalypse. (stops reading) "The Eyes Of Cats" is a poem about my three year old playfully trying to open the eyes of our sleeping feline pet. Check out this e-mail. (reads) Your poem "Voice Of The Old Oak" seems to be the voice of my dearly departed Uncle Lenny. They are one and the same. I'm glad Lenny speaks to and comforts you like he does me. His voice also emanates from containers of cottage cheese. Sid, the poem is simply about the beauty and majesty of the 100 year old oak in the middle of our town square. I was at a poetry gathering last week when right in the middle of my reading, this lunatic gets up and says, "You da man!, keep speaking the truth about the fascism of multinational corporations." He then proceeded to throw punches at the other poets. I think the poem I was reading had something to do with love and maple syrup. Now because of this incident, I'm excluded from next year's gathering and security procedures will be implemented. Bouncers at a

gathering of nature poets. Why am I so misunderstood  
Sid? Tell me.

## The Secret To Great Chili

He lives in a dilapidated trailer park by the airport. He's very eccentric. But don't let that fool you. For all his eccentricity, he has training and knowledge in the fields of nuclear science, quantum physics, macroeconomics, martial arts, Egyptology, psychology, Greek mythology, and theology. This is where you come in, because you are somewhat conversant and knowledgeable in all of these fields. You must go and seek him out. Remember you are ostensibly there to seek his advice on behalf of your wealthy clients as to where they should invest their money. When you arrive, you'll be met at the door by his personal assistant Tito. You will give Tito this briefcase full of money. The money buys us access. That's all it does. The rest is up to you. If you do not offend Tito in anyway, he will grant you an appointment with "The Revelator". Just remember Tito is easily offended. Don't say anything about the lightning bolt shaped scar on his forehead or the fact that he has a predilection to wearing ladies negligees. Don't piss off the gatekeeper. He holds the keys to the kingdom. When the time is nigh, Tito will escort you to another trailer. Be patient, you might have to wait eight minutes, you might have to wait eight hours. But it will be worth it. When "The Revelator" appears, and by the way he has a strong resemblance to the Colonel Kurtz character in Apocalypse Now, he will reveal to you many things. But what no one has gotten the answer to is this...the secret to great chili. Dammit! His chili is world renowned. He has won countless chili cookoffs, here and abroad. I must have it! I must have it! I must...(wipes sweat from brow) Sorry, I get really worked up over this. You might be fortunate enough to actually eat a bowl of chili (closes eyes and moans) It is an orgasmic experience. You must keep him engaged in conversation. Win his

trust. Get him to open up. Whatever it takes. Talk about time and space, the duality of man...and when the time is right...steer the conversation toward cooking, and his great culinary skills. Then like an expert marksman, zero in on the target...chili. You might have only one opportunity at this, so tread gingerly. If he suspects in any way that you are after his chili recipe, you will be escorted to another trailer...the torture trailer. There you will be beaten to a pulp by a couple of henchmen. But be patient. The beatings won't last long. The ringing in your ears will go away after a couple of months. If you are successful, you will be paid handsomely for this mission. So go my friend and get me the secret...to great chili.



## Tortured

Good morning. I see you're awakening. You're probably feeling some intense pain right now. You probably feel like you're missing something, don't you? Like maybe a limb? (cheerfully) That's right...your right arm has been completely severed...taken off at the shoulder. You probably don't remember any of that. After all, you passed out. But the bad thing about it...you passed out before telling us what we need to know. Hey but don't worry, it was removed by a skilled surgeon who works for us. Now the good news is this...you cooperate with us, tell us everything that you know...and I mean EVERYTHING...then we can get our guy to reattach it. The limb is on ice right now just waiting to be reunited with the rest of your body. See...look. But it can only stay on ice for so long before it causes permanent damage. Freezer burn. Ha ha. Now although it can be reattached...you won't have full use and mobility like you did before. But I'm sure having an arm even with limited mobility is better than having no arm at all. You'll have to be the ultimate decision maker on that. Fate is in your hands. Excuse me. I meant to say "hand". Now you may decide not to cooperate and that's fine but be forewarned. Would you like to be without an arm and a leg? Yea you heard me right. You'll not only lose your arm, but a leg too. And we won't even think twice about reattaching that. You see nothing seems to have worked with you. Not solitary confinement, not water torture, not flogging, not beating, not blasting you with Ozzy Osbourne music...who knew you were a fan, not the usual torture techniques one has at their disposal. Let me say this...you were a real trooper. For someone to have their arm severed like that without anesthetic...man you got balls. Or at least you do now...but you did pass out. You did lose a lot of blood.

So tell me friend, what will it be? Lives hang in the  
balance and so do your limbs.

## Where The Glass Breaks

There's a shit load of broken glass in my hood. Busted liquor bottles fall on the broken pavement, cascade along the cracked sidewalks. Broken down houses with broken windows. The good houses have plywood where the windows once were. The best houses have burglar bars. You'd think maybe a natural disaster has happened but no, it's all man made. The land of broken promises...broken hearts...broken down cars that hiss and pop and smoke, gasping to make it that last few feet up to a driveway where there's no one there to greet you. The wail of the ambulances and police cars break my train of thought. Kids pass me by on broken bikes duct taped and wired together. These same kids have a one in twenty chance of making it to adulthood. If only the street lights could give off a glow, but they're broken too. Only darkness. Old men with broken teeth loiter around the liquor store abandoned...without love. They sort through all the discarded pick six and scratch off lotto tickets, hoping that maybe...just maybe. Stray dogs rummage through overturned trash cans. I walk by a church that's been vandalized, spray painted, spat upon but still standing. There's a little old lady who prays there every night. Prays for the world. Prays for the hood. Prays for sinners like me. Prays for sweet redemption. And that...and that...is enough to keep me going at least one more day as I make my way through the broken glass.

## While You Slept

While you slept, I didn't. I got up for some strange reason and drank the eight glasses of water all the experts say you have to drink. Have you ever drank eight glasses of water in a row? It's not easy. I then brushed my teeth with the toothpaste four out of five dentists recommend. I trimmed my nose hair and because of all the water intake I just had to urinate. All this...while you peacefully slept. I then proceeded to eat the moldy cheese found in our refrigerator. It wasn't so bad really. You must try it sometime. I went to the study to do some genealogy research. I found out that my great great grandfather and my great great grandmother were first cousins. Hence, my fear of inbreeding. I urinated again. I went back to the bedroom. You kept talking in your sleep. You kept mentioning the name Claude and what a nice pistol he has. I took notes. We must really talk about this sometimes. I then went back to the study and sorted through the pile of junk mail on the desk. You have won...you have won...you have won...and if I could have fallen asleep I could have dreamed about all that stuff we won. I then urinated again. I decided to take the dog for a walk. After walking a couple of blocks, he broke free and ran like hell toward the nursing home. Maybe some elderly resident will take him in and give him the love and understanding he so richly deserves. I hated that dog...I stopped by the neighborhood bar. I had a beer. Well maybe more than one. I shot the bull with the guys. And honey if some lady named Rita calls, I swear I didn't touch her. I was a little woozy but decided to walk home. Bad move...Bad move. And of course you know I just had to go again. Another bad move. Especially when it's behind a parked car on the street. Especially when it's a cop car. I was picked up for public intoxication and public

urination. Kay pleeeze. Are you there? Pick up pleeze. Get me outta here! There's some bad dude back in the cell who wants to make me his bitch. Kay!

# Plays

## Competitive Eating

### *The Characters*

Jerome: 20-30's, corpulent, obese. Main goal in life is to win competitive eating contests.

Rupert 20-30's, slender. Jerome's best friend.

### *The Scene*

Roach infested, filthy, inner-city apartment.

Rupert: (enters apartment): Yo man, you eating again?

Jerome: (sitting on couch watching TV): I eat a lot when I'm depressed and pissed off.

Rupert: (sits on couch): You eat a lot when you're not depressed and pissed off. Jerome maybe you should start worrying about your health. You know...be more health conscious.

Jerome: Fuck health conscious man. I wanna die with a double meat cheeseburger in my mouth. No...scratch that...two double meat cheeseburgers.

Rupert: Just don't choke. I don't know the Heimlich maneuver. Well anyway, what are you pissed off about?

Jerome: It's these skinny Japanese dudes from Tokyo or wherever who should be home eating their sushi, but instead they wanna invade my turf. My TURF. My...KINGDOM! They think they're big badass mother fuckers. Well bring it on! I...mean I've eaten drumsticks bigger than these assholes.

Rupert: Yea Jerome, I remember the time we went to the chicken buffet down on Oak Street. The manager saw you coming and tried to lock the doors. And when that didn't work, they tried to give you \$20 to go somewhere else.

Jerome: Well you know I'm a restaurant manager's worst nightmare. When my six foot five, 480 pound frame comes wobbling in, they start to cry like a baby. Now they escort me to my own room and they keep the plates a comin'.

Rupert: Yea they pile it high for the big fat guy.

Jerome: For me it's not about the 'Guinness Book of World Records'. Although I do hold the record for the number of sticks of butter eaten. Nope for me it's all bidness. Big bidness. I wanna be the cover boy for 'Competitive Eating' magazine. I want those big endorsement deals with Micky D's, BK, KFC, Wendy's...

Rupert: (interrupts): You're starting to sound a little delusional Jerome: Those fast food places use skinny healthy folk like me in their ads. Having a fatass like you for their spokesman would ruin their business. It's people like you who are suing these fast food chains for making them fat.

Jerome: Traitors. Traitors.



Rupert: They're enablers Jerome: They enable you to get fat. You can't deny that.

Jerome: Well they might supply the gun, but it's me who's pulling the trigger baby. And when it comes to food you know I don't mind pulling that trigger.

Rupert: Well anyway...

Jerome: Yep anyway...there's this hot dog eating contest next week in Chicago. But you know for some reason, hot dog eating isn't my specialty. It's my weak event. And that's what these Japanese dudes are killing me on...hot dogs. Let's face it, if it's sticks of butter, fried chicken, corn on the cob or off, apple pie...bull frogs, then I'm your go-to guy. So I gotta practice Rupert. I need you to be my trainer.

Rupert: Trainer? What am I supposed to do as your trainer?

Jerome: You gotta keep me motivated. Show me some love.

Rupert: Now I'm the enabler. Enabling you to get fatter and fatter. (slaps roach off his arm) Damn roaches. Why don't you ever clean up this pig sty?

Jerome: Hey watch it. They're just looking for food.

Rupert: It's a wonder they can find any with you around.

Jerome: Look. Grand prize is a thousand bucks and a BBQ pit. If I win, well...I'll give you the BBQ pit. (Rupert shakes his head in disbelief.) Well Rupert, let's start practicing. Go to the store and get us about six packs of

dogs and buns...uh...and...five gallons of chocolate chip ice cream.

Rupert: (Incredulous): You got any money, Jerome?

Jerome: As my personal trainer, you're in charge of picking up the tab. Look at it as an... investment.

*The End*

## Sorta, Sadly, Like A Dramady

### *The Characters*

Charlie - Once famous but now down on his luck stand up comic.

Sid - Charlie's vigilant and loyal manager who still has faith in Charlie's comic abilities.

Josie - Waitress at Belly Full Of Laughs.

Club Owner

Bartender

### *Scene One*

Backstage at a comedy club, Belly Full Of Laughs. Small room. Two chairs.

(Charlie sits in chair pointing gun at ceiling, then slowly brings it towards his head. He is interrupted by a knock on door.)

Sid: Charlie, you ok in there? (Charlie puts gun in coat.)

Charlie: (sighs): C'mon in Sid. (Sid walks in and approaches Charlie, then sits down.) Sid, what's wrong with me? I mean what's happened? I'm not funny

anymore. My timing's off. I'm being heckled relentlessly. And the venues. Sid, if they get much smaller, I'll be performing at South Florida nursing home rec rooms...

Sid: Well some of those old coots can be brutal. You might get assaulted with a walker or a cane.

Charlie: Maybe it's the drinking, I dunno. But I only drink when I'm not funny. Well hell, I guess that's most of the time now. This is a definite decline from which there will be no reversal.

Sid: C'mon Charley, it's all just a momentary setback. All performers go through this funk. You know that. That's life Charlie. I've been with you through thick and thin. Hey it's a little thin now but it'll be thick again. I'm working on a movie deal...

Charlie: Movie deal? (disbelieving) Sid, we're sitting in a fucking broom closet and you're talking movie deals. When did I stop being funny Sid? Huh? Was it in the wild 80's, the roaring 90's? Was it when Julie left me? Was it when Angie left me? Was it when you found me in a ditch outside Albuquerque? Drunk and stoned out of my mind, nearly frozen to death?

Sid: No, you were pretty funny then actually. (Both laugh.) I don't remember Albuquerque. I must have been drunk then. I do remember Billings. You were caught in that ten foot snow drift. You weren't drunk or stoned, just lost. (Pats Charley on back.) C'mon get yourself together. You gotta go out there in another hour.

Charlie: I can't go out Sid. I just can't do this anymore. It's not just timing. Hey (points toward stage) they know my material better than I do.

It's boring. I don't have a creative bone left in my body.  
Oh to be young and profane again.

Sid: You're a comic Charlie. What else you gonna do?  
Start up a lawn care business?

Charlie: Well you never know. Hey can you get me a  
sandwich and a drink?

Sid: The only drink you're gonna get is coffee my friend.  
I'll go see what I can do about that sandwich.

### *Scene Two*

(Same as before, a few minutes later. Knock on door.)

Charlie: Come in.

Josie: Hi, your manager asked me to bring you this. (sets a  
sandwich and a glass of milk on table.)

Charlie: Damn that Sid. A glass of milk? (Shakes head)

Josie: Yeah he warned me about you.

Charlie: Did he now?

Josie: Yea he said you were a real ladies man, but I guess  
he was joking. Ha ha.

Charlie: You're hilarious. Why don't you and Sid get up  
on stage tonight. I'm sure you two will be a real hoot.

Josie: Actually he said you were very funny. And I'm  
counting on that. The funnier you are, the more the  
audience laughs. The more relaxed they become.

The more drinks they buy. The more tips I make. It's quite simple really. So funnyman, don't let me down.

Charlie: Well that's all I need. Another person counting on me for their livelihood. What's your name sweetie?

Josie: Josie.

Charlie: Well Josie, you'll learn in this life not to count on people. Cuz people will always let you down. And if they don't, well give 'em time. You see I could walk away right now, go to a bar down the street. Now that would be funny wouldn't it? Yea a tragic comedy.

Josie: C'mon dude, you're depressing me. You're supposed to make me laugh. Oh forget about me. Just make them laugh. (Points toward stage.)

Charlie: What makes you laugh hon? Is it slapstick? Watch this. (does a pratfall)

Josie: (laughs): Whoa are you ok?

Charlie: (holding ribs): Uh...I'm getting too old for this. Laughing at someone else's pain is always funny huh? So tell me Josie, what about you?

Josie: What about me?

Charlie: Married? Kids? Dogs? Cats? Emus? Starving actress? Alpacas?

Josie: Divorced. Two kids. No. No. No. Alpacas? None that I remember. But I do have a parakeet that knows a few four letter words.

Charlie: Mmm...nice. I'm sure it's hard supporting two kids on what you bring in, huh?

Josie: What are you trying to say? That I can't support my kids?

Charlie: No...no...no...I'm sure you're doing the best you can do but...

Josie: (Interrupts): Well the best I can do is good enough thank you. I don't need to ask anybody for anything. Maybe you should stick to being funny instead of pondering my financial situation. Like I said, if you're funny tonight, it will be a win-win situation for both of us. Well if you'll excuse me, I need to get back to work. (Walks to the door.)

Charlie: Josie...please. Don't leave. Forgive me. I meant no harm. Just trying to have a conversation with a pretty and smart lady. Ok? Every now and then I just need to bond with someone.

Josie: Lucky me. (laughs)

Charlie: C'mon, lets have a drink and bond. Huh? What'd you say? Pleeze...pleeze...(gets on knees)

Josie (purrs): You're so adorable when you beg. How can I say no.

Charlie: You can't.

Josie: So ok lets go to the bar.

Charlie: Sure but not this one.

Josie: Not this one? Is there a problem with our liquor?

Charlie: No, no, of course not. Liquor is liquor.

Josie: Then what's the freakin' problem?

Charlie: It's my manager. He hates to see me drinking before a show. Hell he hates to see me drinking after a show. He tries to be my babysitter. He thinks I lose my edge if I'm drinking. Actually he thinks I go over the edge if I'm drinking. Is there another bar close by?

Josie: Well there's O'Malley's a block away.

Charlie: Cool, let's go there.

Josie: Ok, only for one drink, remember. Then back we come.

Charlie: Sure. Sure. We need to leave out the backdoor. Can't be seen by Sid.

Josie: Now you make me think we're doing something illegal.

Charlie: That's why it's all the more fun.

Josie: Ok. I'll tell the boss I'll be right back. Then we're off.

### *Scene Three*

O'Malley's Bar

(Charlie and Josie sitting at bar. Josie lights up a cigarette.)

Charlie: You know smoking can kill ya.



Josie: Well so can drinking.

Charlie: Your liver or your lungs then. I really like you Josie.

Josie: And you're starting to grow on me even though I just met you.

Charlie: I feel like I've known you for all my life. I feel comfortable with you.

Josie: That's reassuring. Are we bonding yet?

Charlie: Well we're drinking buddies anyway. You know this is a nice quaint Irish bar. I feel at home here. You know I'm Irish. (Starts singing) Oh Danny Boy the beer, the beer is calling...

Josie: Nice. Better stick to comedy.

Charlie: That was comedy.

Josie: Uh oh. It's gonna be a rough night. (laughs)

Charlie: And since we're in a nice Irish bar, how about a shot of some nice Irish whiskey?

Josie: Sure, remember one drink.

Charlie: Ok mom. Bartender, a couple of drinks here please. Your best Irish whiskey. (Reaches in coat pocket looking for money. Feels gun instead. Stops, hesitates.)

Josie: What's wrong? Don't tell me you're out of money? No. No. Here is my wallet. Ok lets toast to lots of laughs

for me and lots of tips for you. (Glasses clink, they drink up.)

Charlie: That was good. Bartender, a couple of more drinks over here.

Josie: Whoa cowboy. We agreed to one drink remember. You have to go on soon.

Charlie: Oh c'mon. You're starting to sound like Sid.

Josie: I'm beginning to think Sid's a smart guy.

Charlie: I mean...look...we still have thirty minutes. Please. I promise I won't pick on you when I do my routine.

Josie: I can't believe this. (sighs) Ok one more drink and that's it funny man.

Charlie: Thanks doll. Hit us up again bartender. (Bartender pours drinks.) Bottoms up. (An old Irish song plays in the background.) I love that song. It's about unrequited love. (Starts singing.) Well I'm drunk today and rarely sober...

Josie: Have you ever had your heart broken Charlie? And if you have, do you just laugh it off?

Charlie: Girl, my heart's been broken so much, that one could only break the bigger pieces up into smaller pieces.

Josie: Yeah, I know what you mean. Well time's a wasting, let's get going Charlie. You've had your two drinks. Let's go.

Charlie: Let me wallow in my misery just a little while longer.

Josie: So this has been a miserable experience? Drinking with me?

Charlie: Of course not. Just joking.

Josie: Well it's not funny.

Charlie: Just one more drink please.

Josie: I'm not believing this shit. Charlie, you have to go on in fifteen minutes. I have to get back to work. Remember?

Charlie: One more drink's not gonna hurt anything.

Josie: You know what? I understand you now. You're an alcoholic. And you're using me. No wonder your manager watches you like a hawk. Well he's gonna be disappointed now.

Charlie: Fuck him and fuck you too. I really liked you but maybe you should go. I'll be there...just run along.

Josie: Well bye asshole. (Exits bar)

Charlie (Waves to bartender): Make it a double. (Reaches back into pocket, clutches gun.)

#### *Scene Four*

(“Belly Full Of Laughs.” Club owner confronts Sid about Charlie's disappearance.)

Owner: Where is your guy? He should have been on stage fifteen minutes ago.

Sid: He'll be here I promise. I'm sure he went out for a walk to clear his mind.

Owner: A walk? The crowd is getting restless. I'll give him another fifteen minutes. (calls out) Josie! Have you seen that son of a bitch comedian?

Josie: Haven't seen him. Maybe he's getting drunk or something.

Sid: What? (Storms out of club looking for Charlie.)

Owner: Something told me not to book this guy. Just another washed up alcoholic comic. They're a dime a dozen Josie. A dime a dozen. (Josie breaks down and starts crying. She makes an exit.) What's going on? C'mon. I need you here please. (shakes head) It's all shot to hell. This place is supposed to make people laugh. It's only bringing me misery.

### *Scene Five*

(Same as before. A few minutes later.)

(Charlie enters "Belly Full Of Laughs". Crowd is small, Charlie is visibly drunk as he walks toward the stage.)

Owner (to Charlie): Well it's about fucking time. (Charlie pushes him back, reaches stage and pulls out gun from coat pocket.)

Charlie (to audience): You are being held hostage. You will listen to my unique brand of comedy and enjoy it.

You will laugh. You will applaud. (Crowd laughs not realizing the gravity of the situation.) Is that what a guy has to do to get a laugh around here? Carry a gun?

Heckler (offstage): Oh go to hell, you washed up has been. (Charlie fires gun in the direction of the heckler, everyone ducks underneath tables.)

Sid (re-enters club): Charlie, what the hell...(Rushes toward stage. Charlie then points gun to his own head. Sid tackles Charlie and gun goes off in the ensuing melee. Sid grabs the gun away from Charlie.)

Sid (brushes himself off): Hey everyone. All of this is just a little misunderstanding. Right Charlie?

Charlie (visibly shaken and stunned): Yep...that's right. Sid you're gonna set the record straight. You're gonna tell the world how funny I really was, aren't you?

Sid (whispers): Just shut up Charlie. Shut the hell up.

Owner (rushes toward Josie who lies on floor) You've killed her. You've killed my waitress.

*The End*

# *Short Stories*

## Philippine Bus

In the beginning, the earth was without form and void. A thought occurred. Man appeared. A bead of sweat formed. A drop of blood fell. There was heaven, there was hell. Soon thereafter, a bus pulled up and one quiet, unassuming passenger boards and he tries to figure it all out.

"Well doc, I keep having this recurring dream/nightmare...whatever. I dream I'm on this dilapidated old bus somewhere in the Philippines. I don't know where in the Philippines, but I know I'm there on some lost jungle highway going nowhere really. I don't know where or when I boarded or how many hours or days I've been a passenger. Don't know what my final destination will be. I'm not sitting in the front. I'm not sitting in the back, just somewhere in the middle by the window.

The bus is crowded. The heat is sweltering...people with rags wiping the sweat off their faces. Music is blasting from a tape player. It's the Eagles singing 'Hotel California' and they never sounded so bad.

The bus stops, more people stumbling on. It's extremely crowded now. Every available seat taken. People are standing because there's just no more room. Nobody gets off, just more and more people getting on.

We're off. Little children run after us. They're hollow eyed, broken hearted, with empty stomachs, calling out 'One peso sir, one peso'. But nothing will be offered today or perhaps any other day. Shamefaced and forlorn, we leave them behind in a trail of dust.

There's a woman sitting next to me speaking in Tagalog and laughing maniacally. She's a fortune teller it seems. She says something bad is going to happen. Very bad. A sense of impending doom fills the bus. She says there's a faith healer near...if we could just reach him. But where the hell are we? The fortune teller sobs. She collapses under the weight of her sorrow.

The bus stops. Still more and more people getting on. The Eagles are now singing 'Peaceful, Easy, Feeling'. But I'm not feeling peaceful or easy, just sick...sick as the dogs lying along the side of the road. The road to hell it seems we're traveling.

We're off once again. Now I've got this dry, hacking cough. And so does everyone else. And we're all gnashing our teeth. The heat...exhaust fumes envelop me through the open windows. The guy in front of me is picking at his gaping sores on his arms. The old woman behind me is blind. She's a lucky one. At least she can't see the horror but I know she can sense it.

The ghost of Jimmie Hendrix is singing now. 'All Along The Watchtower' plays over the interminable coughing. There's a roadblock up ahead it seems. The men there...are they friend or foe? Nothing's completely clear in this dream. We crash the roadblock. Blood splatters the bus and makes it's way through the windows. It turns out it was only a group of men selling bananas. The coughing



muffles what little screaming we can muster from our blackened lungs.

The fortune teller awakens to discover that the guy with the open sores has fallen on top of her. She's able to extract herself from leprosy man. She then tries to fight her way off the bus. It's hopeless. The door closes.

I look toward the front of the bus, but can't get a clear view. I catch a glimpse of the driver as he looks into the rear view mirror. I see a skull wearing a straw hat.

Now Three Dog Night's playing 'On The Road To Shambala'. I inexplicably catch myself alternately singing and coughing along with the tune. The heat is stifling. Our bodies rank. The odor pungent.

We pass a church. I can see the stations of the cross. I see Jesus on the wooden cross. But in the blink of an eye, the church is gone.

Darkness descends on the jungle. "Cough... cough... cough..." The road meanders through the coconut trees. But there are no coconuts. I look at my hands and arms. They're covered with sores filled with pus. Infected beyond belief. Then it hits me...I realize you're not a doctor and this is not a dream. "Cough... cough... cough..."

The bus rolls onward.

## **This Is How It Will Be**

An old white haired stately gentleman dressed in a white linen suit, carrying an elaborate walking cane strided into the bar. The bar grew strangely quiet. Eerily quiet. The regulars knew that bad things always happened when the old gent came in. Fortunately, he didn't come by that often. But tonight some poor sap was in for a rude awakening.

He made his way to a table where some strapping young buck sat cavorting with the local whore. "Listen old man, I'm kinda in the middle of something here or will be shortly...if you know what I mean", the young man said as he winked and grinned. The whore immediately escaped the young man's grasp. Her laughter dying out like the hot Mexican sun.

A drunk up front fell off his barstool, then crawled on his hands and knees until he made it safely outside. The whore soon followed him. This was quite a feat considering the drunk was missing both his feet and several fingers.

Well now, it looks like you could use some company", the old man said as he stroked his neatly trimmed goatee. The ceiling fan whirred up above. "Well not really..." the young man's voice trailed off. "Just drink your beer son. You have time for a little story don't you?", the old man said looking like a cross between Burl Ives and Colonel Sanders. "Sure you do," he said. "You gonna tell me a story about the big bad wolf old man?" The young man grew fearful by the silence of the remaining patrons.

"This is how it will be my friend. Believe me. I know. I've seen it time and time again. Only the names change. A young man like yourself finds himself sitting in some

seedy bar flirting with some pretty senorita. Hand on her breast. Sweet caress. Enjoying his last drink. And it will be his last drink. As he gets up to leave, he leaves a tip for the bartender. 'Gracias senor,' says the bartender. The young man waves goodbye. The final goodbye. He notices a stranger following him. He noticed the stranger earlier, several drinks earlier. The young man thought maybe the stranger was glaring at him, but he couldn't tell for sure because he was wearing dark glasses. Dark, dark glasses. But anyway, the young man turns around and heads for the rear exit. The stranger with the dark glasses is right behind him. And then it hits him...literally hits him. The butt of a 9 mm to the back of the head. He's crossed someone's path. Stepped on someone's toes. He owes a debt. He's been a snitch. He stole someone's stash. Maybe he's done none of those things, only perceived to have done so. "But perception is everything. EVERYTHING," the old man slammed his cane on the table for added emphasis. The young man listened intently. He wiped the sweat away from his brow.

The old man continued with his story. "The stray dogs that hang out in the back alley yelp. They are frightened. They've seen it all before too. They can sense the impending doom. They can feel it in their bones. And now you do too. The young man nervously swallowed what was remaining of his beer.

The old stately gentleman went on. "The dogs run away, but he won't be as fortunate. The stranger is joined by two others. One driver and one other to escort the victim to his final destination. And maybe their names are Pablo, Flaco, and Gordo. But then again, it doesn't matter. And if he's lucky, he'll be whisked away in a fine German luxury automobile. But luck has probably abandoned him at this point, so he'll find himself in the back of a beat up old Chevy, where if he bleeds on the seat covers, it won't matter. He thinks that maybe one of the guys is wearing a

badge. A member of law enforcement perhaps. The line between the good guy and the bad guy is really blurred at this point, just like his vision. The car crosses a bridge. The bridge that spans the temporal to the eternal. His last request is to ask if he can retrieve his wallet. Inside there is a photo of his wife and little girl. He wants to look at them one last time. But last requests will be greeted with laughter and derision. Pablo throws the wallet out of the window and into the river. The river that keeps all secrets. And what seems to be an interminable trip...the dust, the blood, the pain...ends. Just as his life will end. It has been determined that he will be shot execution style outside an abandoned garbage dump. The only question left to answer is the disposal of his body. Will it be buried in a shallow grave or will it be left out in the open for the vultures to devour? Either way a message will be sent. That's what it's all about anyway huh?", the old man asked. "All in order to send a message. Well my friend, this is how it will be," the old man said as he finished up his story.

"Well old timer, nice story and all. I bet you're a real hoot around the campfire, but I'd better be going." The young man quickly rose to his feet and headed for the back door.

"Ahh...I see Pablo now," said the stately one.

## About the Author



**Les Marcott** is a songwriter, musician, performer and writer. His touch and feel stem from his Texas roots and his perception encompasses a broad array of people, their relationships, and their emotional cookery... often spiced with wit and a tasty sense of irony.