



ATOMIC ARTIST

and Other Groovy Tales

The Collected Writings
of Floyd Jones

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About the Author

Floyd Jones was born in Marion, Ohio in 1969. He graduated from Glassboro State College in 1991 with a degree in Communications. (The college later renamed itself “Rowan University” in an effort to distance itself from him.)

He worked briefly for the TV show *Candid Camera*, and has written, produced and directed numerous short movies, including *The Decapitator* (1995), *A Gilmore & Duke Valentine’s Day* (2001) and *A Date With Jesus* (2003), as well as the feature-length *Bum Man — Hero of the Homeless* (2007).

He currently resides in Philadelphia with his wife, Yuki, and their son, Ryan.

Atomic Artist

Although there have been many mystery-shrouded occurrences over the years (the Amelia Earhart disappearance, the Iran-Contra scandal, etc.), I believe I can say that without a doubt the greatest untold story of the 20th century would have to be that of my old friend Albert E. Oppenheimer.

When I first met Al, I was a freshman at the University of Pittsburgh — the year was 1968. I was sitting in the student cafeteria, having lunch with a girl who had known Al from high school, when he walked up behind me and patted me on the back. “Hi Lisa,” he said to my companion, and then looked down at me. “Hey, that’s a groovy tie you got on there, man.”

I didn’t know quite how to respond to that, since I wasn’t wearing a tie at the time. After an awkward moment of silence, Al said goodbye and walked away. Although I’ve never known for sure, I think he was tripping on LSD when we met.

Of course, back then the whole drug scene was very popular, especially among artist-types. Being an Art major, it was very important for Al to create the impression that he was a drugged-out wild man for his artwork

to be taken seriously. Unfortunately for him, his artwork wasn't being taken seriously at that time anyway, and for good reason. His paintings were atrocious. Everyone hated them, except Al, who remained firmly convinced (despite what everyone told him) that he was an artistic genius.

I started hanging out with Al shortly after we met, mostly because I had a part-time job at a bakery to help pay my tuition, and didn't get out on the weekends until about one a.m.. By then, most of my other friends were either passed out drunk on the floor of a frat house or were having sex in the back seat of someone's car.

But Al, who was living in a dorm room in a building adjacent to the one I was living in, rarely left his room on weekends. Instead, he would invite some artist friends over and they would sit around playing poker, doing drugs, and singing protest songs.

One night, he happened to glance out his window as I was coming back from work. He leaned out and called to me. "Hey man, you wanna play some poker?" I didn't, but since I didn't really have anything better to do, I went up to his room. This turned out to be a good move for me, because I took him for almost 200 dollars that night. In fact, everyone who played that night won money, except Al.

His problem as a gambler was immediately obvious to anyone who ever saw him play. In poker, blackjack, or any other card game that I ever played against him, Al had a tendency to chuckle uncontrollably whenever he had a good hand. Once, he got four Aces and proceeded to laugh so hard that he fell out of his chair, rolled out the door of his dorm room and down three flights of stairs.

Despite the fact that Al was such a terrible gambler, he continued to gamble every night, and naturally continued to lose. Even more naturally, I started cutting class to visit and engage in high-stakes wagering with him, and soon was able to quit my bakery job, move into a posh off-campus apartment, and drive to school in a new Mustang. But, all good things come to an end, and after only a few weeks Al had lost every cent to his name.

My last recollection of Al from our college days is of the art exhibition held at the University sometime during the second week of December, 1968. Al was showing seven of his paintings at that exhibition, and was hoping to sell at least four of them, which was his only hope of paying his tuition for the following semester.

“If I sell all seven, we’ll play some three card monte tonight, eh?” he whispered to me as we entered the exhibition hall.

Of course, not one of his paintings sold. A critic from the Pittsburgh Press reviewing the exhibition wrote:

“Mr. Oppenheimer’s selection of subject material (seven paintings of Josef Stalin sitting on a toilet, alternately wearing a top hat, a derby, a baseball cap, a miner’s helmet, a clown’s wig, a fez, and a yarmulke, but otherwise exactly the same) is almost as poor as his technique ... this man may well be the worst artist ever.”

The next day, Al packed up his belongings and moved back to his parents’ home somewhere in central Pennsylvania, and I was not to see or hear from him again for more than twenty years. In those next twenty years, I went on to earn a doctorate in psychiatry, get married, have two children, and open up my own private practice in uptown Pittsburgh.

As I said, I had no contact with my old friend over that period of time, but I did read about him several times. In 1977, after almost ten years had passed since I had seen Al, I happened to be thumbing through a copy of *Time* when I came upon an article entitled “Albert E. Oppenheimer: The Next Picasso?”

Needless to say, I was stunned. This man, an old college buddy, a guy whose paintings had inspired more than a few art lovers to vomit back when I had known him, had just sold three paintings for more than \$100,000 each.

This news did little to change my day-to-day existence, however. I mean, sure, I was surprised, but I hadn’t had contact with the man for nearly a decade, so it wasn’t like I was going to look him up and give him a call

or anything. For all I knew, he might not have even remembered me. Besides, I was doing well, and after such a long time had passed since I'd seen him, I really felt no compelling desire to see him again. I'd had closer friends than Al even back in the days when I saw him all the time.

And so it went like this for ten more years. I went on about my own personal business, and about every third year or so I'd come across a few articles about Al, or see him being interviewed by one of those moronic talk show hosts, like Phil Donohue or Oprah Winfrey. I always read the articles and watched the talk shows he was on whenever I happened to come upon them, but I never really gave them much thought once they were over.

Now, at this point, you're probably wondering where this story is headed. So, I knew this guy in college, and he was a lousy artist, and now he's a great artist - big deal, right? Well, if that was all there was to it, I would have never written this thing to begin with.

In the fall of 1987, I was in the seventh year of my private practice, and was expecting to earn about \$300,000 that year. It had been a long time since I had had a vacation, though, and after a while psychoanalyzing a bunch of lunatics starts to take a toll on you.

So, my wife and I were planning a short vacation in Jamaica when a funny thing happened — Albert E. Oppenheimer walked into my office. He had gone right past my secretary, who was busy phoning the police when I first saw him enter the room. “Jim,” he asked, “remember me? We went to college together.”

“Al! Yes, of course I remember you! It was only, I don't know, maybe a year or two ago I saw you on Oprah.”

“You saw that, huh? Cool. Well, uh, there's a reason why I'm here. I need to talk to you about something.”

“Sure, anything,” I told him. “Doris,” I called to my secretary, “there's no need to call the cops. This man's an old friend of mine.”

Doris, who was peeking into the room from behind where Al was standing, acknowledged this and went back to her desk in the lobby.

“Please, sit down.” He took a seat across my desk from me, and I continued. “You’re lucky you caught me when you did. I was just finishing up some paperwork on my last patient, and I was gonna head out of here a little early today. I’m going down to Jamaica this weekend, and I still have a little packing to do. So, what brings you here, Al?”

Al took off his bright orange, horn rimmed sunglasses and set them down on my desk. He still dressed like a hippie — a tie-dyed shirt, ripped blue jeans, and a headband with a peace symbol on it. He began rubbing his eyes and forehead as though he were suffering from a migraine. “Well, Jim, I’ve got problems. You’re the only psychiatrist I know. I mean, I’ve thought about seeing someone else, but I can’t trust just anybody. I’ve got to be certain — absolutely certain — that everything I tell any psychiatrist remains completely confidential. You’re the only person I can trust.”

“I see. Well, ummm, how soon were you expecting to get started with this? You know, I’ll be leaving tomorrow, and I’ll be gone for a week.”

Al looked down at the floor and sighed, but didn’t answer.

“I’m happy to see you, Al, and I’d be more than happy to go out and have a beer with you or something, but if you want me to psychoanalyze you, you’re gonna have to wait.”

At this point Al leapt out of his chair & over the desk, and started to choke me. “THIS CAN’T WAIT, MAN!” he screamed. I struggled and got his hands off my throat, and he backed away.

“What the hell are you doing?”

“Look, I’m sorry, man, but this is too important for you to just shrug off. What I’ve got to tell you is of international importance, so you’d better listen. As a matter of fact, you’re involved already. I think I was followed here.”

In my mind's eye I saw a little flag pop out of the top of Al's head. On the flag were the words "Paranoid Schizophrenic". I've seen these cases a million times, and I knew the flag was right.

"Followed by who?" I asked.

"I don't know," he responded, lighting a cigarette and nervously looking out of the window of my 12th story office. "Maybe the government, or the mafia, or the KGB. I can't be sure."

One thing about looney-birds (as we psychiatrists call them) — their stories almost never really make sense. His story, at this point, seemed as realistic as a David Lynch movie, which only reinforced my early diagnosis of him. I decided, however, to let him continue, provided he could condense his story enough so that I could still get home in time for dinner. Friday night is lamb chop night at my house, and I was hungry. I figured that if his story was too unbelievable, I'd just have him arrested, but if he could tell me a story I believed, well...

He proceeded to relate to me the most fantastic story I have ever heard. I would never have believed it, except that he always seemed to be able to back up his claims (partially at least) with papers which he would pull out of the small knapsack he carried with him, whenever I seemed to doubt what he was telling me.

It seems that after he left the University of Pittsburgh, Al stayed with his parents for only a few weeks. He then joined up with a band of hippies and went out west with them to form a small commune in the Arizona desert. After a few weeks, they ran out of money and the commune members all went their separate ways.

Al, while hiking through the desert on his way to Phoenix, stopped to paint a picture of the desert landscape, but just before his brush touched the canvas, he blacked out. He awoke a while later, finished the painting, and moved on.

Upon arriving in Phoenix, he needed money for food, and so naturally tried to sell his painting of the desert. Astoundingly, not only did his painting sell, it sold to the renowned art critic Wendell Bachmann, who,

by miraculous coincidence, happened to be walking down the street on his way to the grand opening of a new art gallery in downtown Phoenix. He took one look at Al's work and, declaring it a masterpiece, proceeded not only to buy it, but also to make sure that it was shown to the public that day at the new gallery.

The painting was a success there as well, and the director of the new gallery promptly commissioned two more paintings from Al, which he produced on the spot. "Now," Al said to me, "this is the most important part of what happened to me there in Arizona. I found out two days after I sold those paintings that the government had been testing nuclear weapons very near the area where I made that first painting."

He had made a good deal of money on that first batch of Arizona paintings, and he used some of it to buy a car and get an apartment in his favorite town, Las Vegas. Soon, however, he would again be in financial trouble. The paintings he was doing in Las Vegas weren't of the quality of his Arizona pictures, and people quit buying them. Added to this, of course, was his gambling addiction, and so you can see why he was soon out of money entirely.

"At first I thought there must be something about that Arizona air, or just the desert or something," he told me. "So I drove back down there and went into the desert for a few days and painted a few more pictures — and just like before, I blacked out just before I started to paint." Afterwards, he took his new batch of work back up to Phoenix, and again the paintings sold.

Al then left Phoenix to return to his apartment in Las Vegas, and within a few months had lost all his money at the Casinos. So, like before, he again left for the Arizona desert, but by this time the government had ended its nuclear testing in the area. "That was the one time I went out there and didn't black out, and it was also the one time I couldn't get anyone to buy my desert paintings," he told me.

At that time, Al was flat broke, and since he was unable to find a buyer for his most recent artwork, he was forced to spend a night in a shelter for the homeless in Phoenix. "And that's where I finally figured it out, Jim. I had read all about the nuclear tests that had been going on out

there in the newspapers, so that was already in the back of my mind. But when I was in that shelter, they had a TV on, and I was watching it, when the most amazing thing happened.”

“What was that?” I asked.

“*The Incredible Hulk* was on!” Al exclaimed, jumping out of his chair and raising both hands into the air.

“Well, that is amazing. Incredible even,” I said calmly as I reached for the phone to call the police.

“Don’t you get it? If radiation could turn Bill Bixby into Lou Ferrigno, why couldn’t radiation transform me into a great artist?”

I put the phone down.

“Every time I was near a high level of radiation, I produced great paintings, but when I wasn’t around the radiation, the stuff I was doing was awful. So, it became apparent to me right then that the only way for me to continue my career as an artist was to go around from place to place — wherever they had a reactor — and cause small nuclear ‘accidents’ along the way.”

It was 1978 when he was struck by this revelation. He had already developed a reputation as an inconsistent genius, but was still unknown enough that he could go most places and not be recognized.

So, onward he went, back to his home state of Pennsylvania, to the nuclear power plant at Three Mile Island. Now, I won’t bore you with all the little details of how he did it, but suffice it to say that Al managed to break into the facility, touch off a minor catastrophe, paint a few pictures, and escape without being caught.

Just like before, Al’s radiation-aided pieces sold, and for outrageously high prices. He undoubtedly would have lived out the remainder of his life on the money from those pictures if not for his gambling habit. Although he no longer lived in Las Vegas, his new home in Pennsylvania was within driving distance of the the new Casinos in Atlantic City, and

he could be found there frequently from 1981-84. By late 1984, he had lost all of his money gambling again.

Realizing that security had been beefed up in American nuclear power plants, Al decided to go abroad — hence the Chernobyl disaster.

“No way. I don’t believe it,” I said when he told me this, as I had said many times during our conversation that night — but then he showed me his passport and a copy of the New York Times, which showed a picture of a mob of people in Chernobyl, and in the background you could see Al walking down the street (heading for the airport), carrying several paintings.

“Then, of course, the same thing happened. I sold the paintings and lost — well, a lot of money gambling.”

“What do you mean by ‘a lot’? You didn’t lose it all like before?”

“No, not this time. See, I figured that I was due to hit a lucky streak soon, but I didn’t want to take a chance of losing everything like I had done in the past, so I hid \$100,000 in a suitcase and buried it in the woods a few miles from my house, and borrowed money from loan sharks so I could keep gambling. Now that I’ve lost all the money they gave me, I have to give them the money I buried or they’ll kill me.”

That was his story, which brought us to the point where he had come to see me. “Jim, I have no intention of giving that money up. I’m going to go get it and move to Brazil. But before I go, I need a favor from you.”

“What’s that?”

“Well, I need some help with my gambling problem. Obviously, it’s caused me some trouble over the years, and I don’t need the same things happening to me once I get to South America.”

That said, Al got up and walked over to the door. “Come on, let’s get out of here. I’m not sure if this place is safe.” I got up, grabbed my coat, and followed him downstairs and out of the building, where we quickly hailed a taxi and sped away.

“Okay, where to?” the driver asked.

“Take us down to 10th and Main,” Al responded. “I’m staying in a hotel near there,” he whispered to me. “We should be safe there, and you can call your wife from my room.”

Once we stepped out of the cab, though, trouble started. The sound of gunfire seemed to surround us. Al and I both dove to the pavement, as did nearly everyone else in the vicinity. A few bullets hit the windows of our taxi, which had not yet begun to leave when the shooting began, and broken glass rained down on and around us. After only a few seconds, the shooting stopped.

As we got up we could see, about 20 yards in front of us, two men in dark, pinstriped suits lying on the sidewalk, their bodies riddled with bullet holes. Hearing some commotion behind us as well, we turned around and saw two more men wearing dark suits lying on the ground. They, too, had been shot to death.

“You see that guy ahead of us?” Al asked me as he pointed to one of the dead men. I nodded. “I met him in Atlantic City. His boss is one of the guys I borrowed money from.”

“Yeah? Well, what about those guys behind us?”

“I’m not sure. G-Men, Russkies maybe. No way to tell.”

“They must’ve accidentally shot each other while trying to shoot us,” I said. “We sure were lucky.”

“Yeah. Come on, let’s go before somebody else starts shooting at us,” Al said, tugging on my arm to get me to move. Instead of going to Al’s hotel room, though, we stopped at a nearby bar — reasoning that if his enemies knew he was in town, they may have booby-trapped his room.

At the bar, we ordered a couple of beers, and Al asked me what I thought he needed to do to kick his gambling habit. “For some reason,” he told me, “I seem to be jinxed. Even if I get all the right cards, it doesn’t seem to help, because it’s like everyone seems to be able to read my mind, and so no matter what kind of hand I’m dealt, I always lose.”

“Well, I’m not sure what you should do, Al. I mean, it’s been a long time since I saw you gamble, but I’d say your problem isn’t that you’re unlucky.”

“You think I’m not unlucky? Why, I’ve probably lost close to two million dollars in Casino gambling alone!” he said indignantly.

“I understand that,” I replied, “but from what I’ve seen, I really don’t think your problem is bad luck.” At that, he just rolled his eyes and groaned. “Look, what’s your favorite game to bet on?” I asked.

“Poker. Five Card Draw.”

“Okay. Now, I remember when we used to play in college, and you were right about one thing — everyone always knew when you had a good hand.”

So I proceeded to explain to Al that if he were able to maintain a straight face, he might actually start winning some money. He doubted me at first, but we played a few hands of Five Card Draw right there at the bar (using a spare deck of cards that he always carried with him), and he won fifteen dollars from me.

Then, armed with his newfound knowledge of how to be a better gambler, Al thanked me and left. His one final request to me was that I never tell this story to anyone, because he didn’t want anyone to know where he had gone into hiding (1150 DePerez St., Sao Paulo, Brazil — it’s the little red house on the corner), but this story is just too important for the public not to know.

So, now that you’ve read the whole shocking story (which I swear is true), I hope that you will remember never to buy paintings from artists who hang out on street corners, particularly if the artist is glowing and has three hands.

THE END.

A Really Revolting Romance

If you've ever ridden a rollercoaster ten minutes after eating five chili dogs and scarfing down an entire boxful of laxatives, then you know what José felt like when he was dating Helga. Sure, taking a dump in your pants while travelling upside down at 60 miles per hour is no fun, but the wonderful aftertaste those chili dogs leave in your mouth make it impossible not to go back for more.

Their first meeting was so romantic — like that old movie, *Love Story*. (On second thought, it was probably more reminiscent of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.) It happened on a cold and rainy Sunday in Detroit, at McDonald's. A disgruntled employee had decided to secretly include a free cockroach with every hamburger, and before long everyone in the place was throwing up.

And then the alligators came in! Some damn fool who lived in the neighborhood had been raising them since they were just little lizards, and on this day he decided to take them out for a milkshake. Of course, what *they* were really interested in was *human flesh* — and they got plenty of it!

Meanwhile, over in one corner of the restaurant, Helga was projectile vomiting, and with one particularly strong blast she managed to splash José right in the face — catching him in mid-yawn.

Intrigued, he asked for her phone number.

A week later, they went out on their first date together. Ah, it was glorious — the wine, the music, the gunfire (well, what do you *expect* at a rap concert?) Later that night they had sex. It lasted all of two minutes — Helga finished first and abruptly ran off into the distance, cackling like a maniac.

This left José seething with anger. He felt so *used*. How dare she achieve satisfaction before him?!? Indeed, how was such a thing even *possible* given the ineptitude of his lovemaking technique, a technique that had left so many women unsatisfied in the past? And so at that moment he swore he would get revenge on her.

For weeks, José plotted and planned. He developed complicated schemes and devious devices (including the patented Sex-o-Matic®, which he later sold to Ronco for a considerable sum of money), all designed to lure Helga back into his bed, where he was confident that this time he would finish first.

And at last the time came when they were together in bed again. They writhed around passionately, and after almost thirty seconds... Helga was finished again. Immediately she sprang up out of the bed, slipped into the circus tent she called a dress, and dashed out of the apartment.

Now José was *furious!*

Over the next few months, he lured her to bed at least a hundred more times, but always with the same result. Finally, he had had enough — it was time to end this relationship. So, one evening he walked over to her house and knocked on the door. “Helga,” he intended to say (in his thick Lithuanian accent), “we’re through. I don’t want to see you no more.” Then he planned to quickly turn around and pass wind in her face.

But no one answered the door.

He knocked again, and still no one answered. After roughly five hours of continuous knocking, it occurred to him that she might not be home.

José never found out what happened to Helga that night, but one morning, many years later, he noticed her name in the obituary column of his local newspaper.

Now was his chance! Dropping the paper, he rushed down to the morgue, where he discovered that Helga's body had already been cremated. Not about to let a little thing like *that* stand in his way, José grabbed the urn containing her ashes and hurried back to his apartment. Now, he thought, there was *no way* she could finish first!

And yet somehow she did.

José was never the same after that experience. He spent his remaining days working on his tan and combing his pencil-thin mustache... But actually, that was what he had always done, so really he *was* pretty much the same afterwards.

Which just goes to show that some people never learn.

THE END.

The Dream

I walked into the house
And sat in a yellow chair
And then I saw a mouse
Flying thru the air

I pulled out my silvery gun
And shot the flying beast
Then I thought that I had won
And that I'd have a feast

But I was very wrong
As I was soon to see...
The hairy beast got up
And bit me in the knee!

I ran out to my car
And drove it back to town
Driving so long & far
O'er the sun-baked ground

A second later I woke up.
I was in a padded cell.
I couldn't understand it...
I must've gone to Hell!

The Destitute Detective

Life as a detective is never easy. You deal with dangerous, dishonest characters, often in the seediest parts of town, and have to work all kinds of crazy hours. The mysteries you're asked to solve are often complex and, well, mysterious. Even for an old pro like me, the job is dirty & difficult. The one good thing about it is that it pays well, at least if you get the right cases. My name is Ira Banner, and I'm probably the greatest private eye you've never heard of.

Why haven't you heard of me? Why is my name not synonymous with the greatest crime busters of the ages? There's one simple reason I never made it into the pantheon of famous sleuths: I was poor.

You see, the most successful detectives work on expense accounts, and if they're really lucky, those accounts are more or less openended. In other words, if you're working a case and a clue pops up that leads you to a witness in Paris who can bust the whole investigation wide open... well, for some guys that'd be a great break. But for me, it'd be nothing but trouble.

First, I'd have to fill out paperwork requesting funds to buy a plane ticket to France. Then, I'd have to argue with my client about why the

ticket was really necessary. And finally, I'd have to cry in my beer over the fact that my stupid client wouldn't approve my request, while yet another mystery that I was on the verge of solving would slip through my fingers.

Fame and fortune thus eluded me on many occasions, and the resultant frustration caused me to develop a rather large drinking & gambling problem. Those problems, combined with my penchant for womanizing, led me to the brink of total financial ruin.

My low point came about three years ago, when my landlord threatened to evict me from my cheap, roach-infested apartment. I knew I needed to act fast if I was going to keep a roof over my head, which is a very important part of winning over the ladies.

My mind was racing as I left my apartment that day. I hopped into my broken down, fifteen year old Volkswagen convertible and started cruising around town, hoping that the fresh spring air would help clear my mind.

I tried to remember the name of a woman who had called me a week earlier, trying to get me to take her case. I took *her* instead, and turned the case down. I just hoped she wasn't the kind of dame who'd hold a grudge.

Fortunately, even though I couldn't recall the woman's name, I was able to find my way back to her house. It was an awfully big house — a mansion, really, and so I figured she must have some dough. Once I got there, one of her servants directed me to the pool behind the house, where he said I would find her.

As I approached the pool, she happened to glance my way and swam over to meet me.

“So, Mr. Banner, you've returned. Looking for a little action, I presume.”

She seemed a little hostile. Ordinarily, that kind of attitude is my cue to flip someone the bird and skedaddle, but I was desperate, and so I pressed on & tried to look cool.

“Well, that’d be nice,” I replied. “Some other time, perhaps. For now, I thought I’d inquire into the matter you asked me about last week — the case of your husband’s death.”

“Ah, my husband,” she said as she climbed out of the water. She was wearing a bikini so skimpy it was nearly invisible, and she had the kind of body that’d make a Playboy playmate envious. I struggled to maintain my composure. “What about him?”

“Well, he’s still dead, I take it,” I stammered.

“Unless he’s found some way to come back,” she replied.

“Of course, how silly of me. What I meant to say was... the case regarding his death is still open, I hope?”

She informed me that, although the matter was still unsolved, she had hired another investigator to look into it.

“Would you consider hiring a second P.I.?” I asked. “I’ve got references. Anybody will tell you that I’m the best.”

“Oh, I’m quite certain you are the best, Mr. Banner. That’s why I contacted you first. But the other man I hired is extremely talented as well. And besides, I don’t much care for the way you treated me last week. That ‘love ‘em and leave ‘em’ attitude of yours is really most repulsive.”

So now she was attacking my lifestyle! I bristled. “I’m sorry you feel that way,” I said. “Can I have the job?”

She could sense that I was serious about taking the case and softened a bit. “Yes, of course,” she said. “And if you can capture whoever it was who murdered my husband, I’ll give you double your standard rate.”

That was music to my ears. “Okay, great! I’ll need a couple hundred up front, and a number where I can reach you so you can wire me the additional money I’ll need to cover my expenses.”

“I’m afraid not, Mr. Banner. Because of the way you behaved last week, I’ll not pay you a dime until you’ve solved the case!”

My jaw dropped. “Until I’ve *solved* the case?!? But — my expenses! How do you expect me to work without an expense account?”

“That’s your problem, not mine,” she said, as she climbed the steps leading up to the back door of her house. She opened the door and stepped inside. “In the event that you do solve the case, you know where I can be reached. Good luck!” And with that, she closed the door.

That’s how my luck was at that time. I finally had a case, but I still had no money. And if I was gonna pay the rent on time, I had to solve the mystery of what’s-her-name’s husband’s murder within sixteen hours. It wasn’t gonna be easy, but hey — I’m Ira Banner!

I drove around town for a while, not knowing where to start. I knew there was a dead guy out there, and I was looking to find out who killed him, but being that I couldn’t remember either his or his wife’s names, I was sort of in a bind. Then it hit me — my assistant of the last ten years — I could ask *him* for help!

“Hey, what’s happenin’, Hoss?” my assistant, Mike Hancock, greeted me as I strode into his living room. Mike was a filthy, drunken loser who had been unemployed for most of the previous decade. He managed to find gainful employment just often enough so that he could collect benefits payments from the state for at least six months out of every year.

It was irritating, to say the least, because most of that time, when he *was* working, he was working for me, and yet somehow he always seemed to be able to game the system so well that the state paid him better than I ever did, and indeed he made a better living than me, even though he was my assistant.

“I need your help, Mike,” I told him. “I’m looking to find a killer, but I don’t know who the victim is. Have you been following the news lately?”

“Yeah, sort of.”

“Do you know of any rich socialites in this area who’ve been off’d lately?”

“Yeah, sure. That guy Henry Shaw.”

That did it. Once Mike mentioned the name Henry Shaw, it all came flooding back to me. Shaw’s wife was named Laura, and... well, that was it, actually. I couldn’t remember any other relevant details of the case. It reminded me of Laura, though. Wow, was she hot.

Anyway, I explained to Mike that I had been hired to look into the matter of Mr. Shaw’s death, and asked if he knew anything that could be of use to me.

“Well,” he responded, “I went to a fundraiser at their mansion last summer. You wanna see the pixture?”

“Yeah, let me see the *pictures*.”

The thing about Mike was, even though he was a lazy, stinking drunk, he was a great assistant. He could always be counted on to get me a cup of hot coffee first thing in the morning, and he always knew not to interrupt me when I was alone with a lady. On the other hand, he was also as dumb as a post. And he was annoying as hell. His grammar was atrocious, too, and I knew that if he said *pictures* just one more time to me, I’d have to belt him.

“Here ya go, dog breath,” he said as he handed me a photo album.

“Which one’s Henry Shaw?” I asked as I leafed through the book.

“That’s him there... and there... and there.”

“Hmmm, that was some fundraiser,” I remarked. Suddenly I spotted myself among the revelers. “Hey, that’s me!” I exclaimed. “I don’t remember this!”

“You must’ve gotten pretty loaded,” Mike chortled.

“Yeah, I guess so. Well, now I know what Shaw looks like, but who would’ve had the motive to kill him?”

“I’m pretty sure he had ties to the mafia — some crime family based in *Illinois*. I could *ax* this chick I know. She used to deal with them quite *often*.”

I could feel my blood pressure rising. How can it be that so many people mangle the English language this way? You’re not supposed to pronounce the “s” in *Illinois*! The word “ask” is not pronounced “ax”! And the “t” in “often” is silent! How many times had I heard English teachers correct students on basic points like these when I was in school? And yet people still get stuff like this wrong with such alarming regularity it drives me absolutely insane! I mean, if knuckleheads like him can get high school diplomas, why don’t I have a doctorate? Seriously, somebody should offer me an honorary degree already!

But I digress. “Okay,” I told Mike “you look into that. I’m going to step out and grab a bite to eat. I’ll check in with you later and see what you found out.”

“All right. See ya, dude.” I started out the door when Mike added “Hey, you wanna take these pictures with ya?”

“Yeah, I would. Thanks, Mike,” I said, before punching him hard in the solar plexus and snatching the photo album out of his hands.

“I’ll call you later.”

“Okay,” Mike huffed, as he stood in his doorway doubled over in pain.

As usual, Mike's information turned out to be totally worthless. "Why is it that I think that guy's such a great assistant?" I asked myself. Is it really all about the coffee?

Fortunately, when I was out getting my lunch, I overheard someone say that a woman named Maria Bell was staying in a hotel near town. I recognized that name instantly, recalling that she was linked with an infamous crime family from Illinois. Why was she here in New Jersey, I wondered, and could she spare a five-spot so I could buy some gas?

My car wheezed into the parking lot at the Grand Wyatt Hotel, and I made my way up to Maria's room. I wasn't about to take any crap from this dame, and if she didn't spill her guts right away, I knew I might have to get tough with her.

I kicked the door open and quickly checked around to see who was there. She was alone, wrapped in a towel and sitting on the bed watching TV and eating potato chips.

"I'm only going to ask you this one time," I began my interrogation.

"Who killed Henry Shaw?"

She just stared at me, dumbfounded. Finally, after a long moment had passed, she spoke: "Wha--?"

What could I say? I was putty in her hands! Her long black hair, full red lips and heaving bosoms turned my mind to mush, and not for the first time. And so I changed my strategy for dealing with her.

"Please, please, please!" I begged. "I've got to solve this case to pay my rent! I'll be out on the street! You don't want that, do you?"

"Why should I care what happens to you?"

"Oh, nice attitude. No wonder you're a criminal." I dropped to my knees. "Please tell me! Pleeeeease!! Pleeeeeeeeeeease!!!"

After a few hours of whining & groveling, she finally cracked. “All right, I’ll tell you! It was Christoph Schmookovsky who killed Henry Shaw!”

“Schmookovsky, eh? I’m not surprised. Where’s he hiding out now?”

“He’s in Atlantic City, meeting with some casino owners. That’s why he killed Shaw.”

Suddenly, it all made sense to me. Schmookovsky was a short, dumb looking, buck-toothed Russian thug — a first-rate creep responsible for most of the murder & mayhem in the area. I had known all about him for years, but could never pin anything on him because I lacked the funds to conduct a proper investigation.

“Schmookovsky needed to kill Shaw in order to clear the way for negotiations to bring a new casino to Chicago. Shaw probably wanted that deal for himself, and would never have cut Schmookovsky in on the action!” I explained to Maria, even though she already knew the whole story.

“Your deductive powers are amazing!” she gasped.

“Gee, thanks. So are yours!” I gushed.

“Now all you have to do is go down to Atlantic City and apprehend Schmookovsky. You’ll have solved the crime, and with him in jail I’ll no longer be in danger!”

“Yeah, I’d love to do that,” I said, “but I don’t have enough gas in my car to get out of the parking lot! Uh, you wouldn’t happen to have any cash, would you?”

Maria shook her head.

“Any bank cards? Credit cards? Money orders? Food stamps?”

She had nothing, and so I was forced to make some phone calls and see if I could get Schmookovsky to come to me. I contacted Schmooko-

vsky's men and informed them that Maria was now working with me, and arranged a meeting at a favorite hangout of mine — a bar called Duke's. A buddy of mine owned the place, and he would usually let me eat there for free. I convinced him to close up early, 'cause this confrontation would likely be bloody.

“What are you gonna do when he gets here?” Maria asked me.

“Are you gonna shoot him?”

“Well, under normal circumstances, that's exactly what I'd do. But I had to pawn my gun last week so I'd have money to buy beer, and now all I have are these.” I pulled a handful of bullets out of my pocket and showed them to her. “I suppose I could throw these at him, but I think I'll try something different instead.”

Just then, Schmookovsky entered the room. “Banner! We meet again!” he said. “And for the last time!” He produced a .44 Magnum and pointed it at me.

“Wait!” I cried. “Before you shoot, have a drink on me.” I walked over behind the bar and started mixing a couple of drinks.

“You're buying drinks? I thought times were tough for you, Banner!” Schmookovsky gloated.

“Don't believe everything you hear.” I replied, handing him a drink.

“This is a very special drink. I think you're gonna like it.”

“What's in it?”

“Oh, just a little beer, vodka, and baking soda. It's delicious!”

Schmookovsky took a sip and smiled. “Hey, this *is* good!” he exclaimed, and quickly emptied the rest of the glass. “I've gotta pay you for this!” he said, pulling out a large wad of hundred dollar bills.

“No, no. I told you, the drink’s on me!” I said as I gave Maria a knowing wink.

Schmookovsky kept arguing, insisting that he be allowed to pay me. For him, it was merely an excuse to flash the wad of hundreds in my face. He was such an ostentatious bastard, I knew he’d be unable to resist. Plus, he figured that waving all that money in my face was even worse than shooting me, and he was right.

Meanwhile, Maria crept up behind him and smashed him on the back of the head with a barstool.

“Thanks, baby” I said. “He almost got me!”

“Oh, no, thank you, Mr Banner. If it wasn’t for you, I’d have had no chance against Schmookovsky and his band of thugs!” Maria said as she wrapped herself around me.

“Call me Ira,” I replied, and kissed her.

“Gee, this is just like in the movies!” she said.

“Yeah, only if they ever made a movie about me, it’d no doubt be some low budget piece of garbage. There’d be some no-talent loser playing me, and... well, I hate to even think about it. Come on, let’s take this ugly SOB down to police headquarters.”

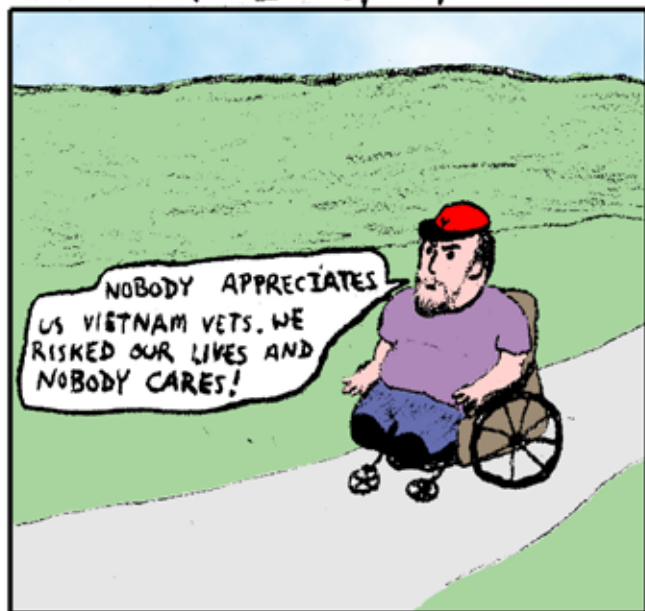
Everything seemed just peachy keen as Maria and I left Duke’s that night. How was I to know that Laura Shaw would be so ticked off about what had happened between us that she would try to rook me out of my hard earned dough, and that I wouldn’t be able to collect for another three weeks?

Of course, it all turned out not to matter much, anyway. Sure, I lost my apartment, but I won the lottery a few days later and have been living the high life ever since.

Well, that's my story, for what it's worth. Until next time, I'm Ira Banner,
King of the Detectives.

THE END.

VIETNAM VET by Floyd Jones





How Jesus Ruined X-Mas

This is the story of how one man — one vain, self-centered man — single handedly ruined Christmas. That man's name was Jesus Christ. It all started one year when Jesus went to the North Pole to pay a visit to Santa Claus.

Santa was working busily at his desk. It was Christmas Eve, and he needed to finish his paperwork before he could begin delivering toys. Suddenly, the intercom buzzed.

“Santa, there's a Mr. Christ here to see you,” his secretary said.

“Ah, let him in, let him in! Ho ho ho!” The door to Santa's office opened and Jesus marched in. He had been prepared to start off their conversation with a barrage of insults, but the merry old man's kindly demeanor threw him off guard.

“Jesus, I'm so glad to meet you! I've read a lot about you, young man. Please, have a seat.”

Jesus sat down in the big, comfy chair in front of Santa's desk. "I was just going over some of my lists here — checking them a second time, you know, to ensure accuracy. I'll be leaving in just a few minutes to deliver toys to all the good little children of the world. But enough about me... what brings you here, Jesus?"

"Well," Jesus answered tersely, "as you know, the Christmas holiday is named after me — for my birthday."

"Ah, your birthday! Your birthday!" Santa exclaimed. "And you want a birthday present, right?"

"No," Jesus replied, but Santa wasn't listening. He was already digging through a big bag of presents that was sitting behind him. In a flash he produced a gift, wrapped in the prettiest paper you've ever seen.

"Here you are!" bellowed jolly ol' Saint Nick.

"No, no — I don't want a present. That's not why I'm here!"

"Go ahead, open it," Santa replied. "Don't be modest."

Jesus sighed and unwrapped the gift. When he saw what it was, he nearly jumped out of his robes in excitement. "Wow! A crucifix necklace!" He quickly draped the solid gold necklace around his neck. "This is... well, it's terrific! It's just what I wanted. Thanks, Santa Claus."

"Nonsense! I owe everything I have to you, young man! Why, you're the one who started this whole holiday! If it wasn't for you, I wouldn't be in business!"

That reminded Jesus of why he had journeyed to the North Pole in the first place. "Well, actually, that's why I'm here, Santa. You see, I think that this whole gift-giving thing is distracting people from what Christmas is really all about — my life and teachings and things like that. With all this gift-giving going on, hardly anyone is paying attention to *me* anymore!"

Santa frowned. “I see,” he said quietly. “Well, what do you expect out of me? Do you want me to shut down my whole operation here?”

That was exactly what Jesus had wanted when he first entered the room, but the old man’s display of kindness had made him start to re-think his position. “Well, no,” he stammered, “I don’t think that’d be necessary. That might be a little bit drastic, but definitely something’s gotta be done, because my message is being lost on the people out there, in part, I think, due to the things you’ve been doing.”

“Well, I’m sorry to hear you feel that way, Jesus,” Santa said as he glanced at his wristwatch. It was almost eleven o’clock. “You know, it’s getting late and I really must be going. I’ll tell you what — you come back up here after the holidays and we’ll see if we can work out some sort of a compromise, OK? Ho ho ho!”

“I guess that’d be all right,” Jesus said, rather dejectedly.

Just then, Santa’s face became quite red indeed and he began clutching at his chest. A moment later he fell to the floor with a thunderous crash and was gasping for air. A tiny elf carrying a bag of medical supplies rushed in from out of nowhere and began administering CPR.

After a few minutes had passed and the situation seemed to have calmed a little, Jesus asked the elf if Santa was going to be OK. “Look,” responded the elf, “he’s had a mild heart attack. He’ll be all right again after a while — maybe a few months bed rest — but he’s not gonna be able to ride that sleigh tonight, that’s for sure!”

Santa Claus looked to Jesus. “You’ll have to do it!” he said. Jesus turned around and looked behind him, wondering who had come in. “You’ve got to fill in for me!” Santa continued. “You’ve got to deliver the presents to all those little children out there! No one else can do it!”

Jesus knew Santa was right. The elves were obviously too small to drive the sleigh, and there was nobody else around. Still, there was no way he was going to do it! “Me? Deliver presents?” he asked incredulously. “Sorry, but I deliver my own message, and that’s it!”

Santa Claus could hardly believe his ears. “But — the children!” he pleaded.

“Well, hey, I think that this might be a good thing for them! It’ll show them that the true meaning of Christmas is about me and my message, not about all those presents and stuff.”

Jesus’ staggering display of pomposity was too much for the elfin doctor to take. “What?!?” he demanded. “Are you crazy? Santa Claus is lying here incapacitated by illness and you refuse to help him out because you feel like you haven’t been getting enough attention lately?” What are you? Three years old?

That was the final straw for Jesus. No one could talk to Him like that! “Look, it’s my holiday, and that means it’s my decision, and I say I’m not delivering any presents! I’m off for Jerusalem! So long, gentlemen!” And with that, Jesus turned and stormed out of the room.

“No, wait!” the tiny doctor called out. “I take it back! Please reconsider! Pleeeease!” But it was too late. Jesus was gone, never to return again, and all the toys that year went undelivered.

And that, boys and girls, is how Jesus ruined Christmas!

THE END.

Thirteen Greasy Truck Drivers

Thirteen greasy truck drivers
Locked in a prison cell.
Eating, smoking, watching TV
and waiting for their bail.

Thirteen filthy truck drivers
Oh, how bad they smell...
If you met them, you'd agree with me
And hope they stay in jail!

The Evil Brain Lives!

Sunday morning, 10:30 AM: Paul Anderson was sitting in his dining room contemplating the most momentous decision he'd made in weeks — whether to eat an apple or a pear for his midmorning snack. He lived a dull life and he liked it that way. His job as a mail clerk was steady & predictable, and it paid the bills. His girlfriend, Wendy, was a schoolteacher whose idea of fun was to sit at home and watch old movies on TV.

Unfortunately, he also had a pal named Benny, who had decided that Paul needed more excitement in his life, and had made it his mission to ensure that it happened. So, on that sunny Sunday morning, when the clouds were tranquil and the birds were chirping, Benny burst into Paul's house unannounced, carrying a birthday present for his friend.

“Paul, where are you? I've got somethin' for ya! Paul, what are you hiding for?” he shouted as he ran recklessly around the house.

He had been in such a hurry when he entered the place that he had run right past the dining room without noticing that Paul was there. And so he charged into each and every room, frantically searching for the man who was calmly eating an apple at the dining room table.

Finally, he ran back downstairs and saw Paul. “There you are! Where’ve you been? I’ve been lookin’ all over for ya!”

“I was just eating,” Paul answered.

“Look, I brought you a birthday present. And only three weeks late. Go on, open it up.”

“All right – relax already! I’m almost finished,” Paul said, as he continued chewing. “Hey, you know Wendy’s coming over in a few minutes. We’re gonna go bowling – you want to come along?”

“Sure, I’ll go. You gonna open that or what?”

“All right, all right – I’m opening already!” Paul tore the wrapping paper off the box, wondering what was inside. From the size of it, it was probably a clock-radio, he imagined. A moment later, the box was open, and Paul examined its’ contents. He jumped back in horror. “What the hell is this?” he asked.

“What’s it look like?” Benny responded cheerfully.

“I’m afraid to say.”

“Don’t be afraid. Tell me.”

“It looks like a brain,” Paul replied.

“You’re right on the money, pal!”

Paul took a few seconds to consider the situation. “You got me a *brain* for my birthday?” he asked. “What is this, an insult? Are you telling me you think I’m stupid or something?”

“No, of course not. You’re very intelligent!”

Paul stared at the brain sitting silently inside the box. “This isn’t a human brain, is it?” he asked. “If it is, I don’t even want to know where you got it from. You didn’t kill anyone, did you?”

“Don’t be ridiculous.”

“Is this why you’ve been spending so much time in the cemetery lately? Have you been robbing graves again?”

“No, no, I’m all through with that.”

“Well what, then? How do you explain this? What the — what kind of present is this?” he demanded.

“Okay, look,” Benny replied, “I knew you’d react this way at first, so just calm down for a minute and let me explain.”

“Please do.”

“Okay. Remember those classes I was taking at City College last year?” Benny asked.

“I knew it!” Paul exploded. “That medical class! You stole the brain from the laboratory, didn’t you?!?”

“I’m not talking about the medical class — I’m talking about that Russian language class I took. Remember that?”

“Oh, yeah. So?”

“Well, as you may recall, I picked up the language pretty good. So, for the last year or so since the class ended, I’ve been subscribing to these Russian and Ukrainian magazines, you know, to keep up on my language skills. And then about two months ago, wouldn’t you know that I come across this ad in one of those magazines.” Benny withdrew a magazine from out of his jacket, opened it up and dropped it on the table. Paul picked it up and looked it over.

“Which ad are you talking about? The circled one?”

“That’s the one!”

“I can’t read this! It’s in Russian! What does it say?”

“It says ‘Hitler’s Brain For Sale — four million rubles or best offer.’”

“Four million rubles? How do you have that kind of money?”

“It’s only 65 bucks.”

“Ohhh. Hey, wait a minute — wait just a cotton-pickin’ minute! Are you telling me that this is the brain of Adolf Hitler?”

“The one and only.”

“The Adolf Hitler who ruled Germany, started World War II, perpetrated the Holocaust?”

“You know any other Adolf Hitlers?”

Paul found himself speechless. He stared at the brain for a few more moments, considering the situation yet again. Finally, it struck him — this was a joke! “This isn’t Hitler’s brain!” he said. “You can’t buy Hitler’s brain thru mail order!”

“Why not?” Benny asked.

“Because you can’t! Besides, Hitler blew his brains out with a gun, and then the other Nazis burned his body so that no one could identify him.”

“Wrong.”

“Wrong?” Paul asked. “What history books have you been reading, pal?”

“I’ve been reading underground Russian newsletters,” Benny replied, “and corresponding with with some of the soldiers who were there in Berlin back in ’45 who remember seeing Hitler taken away in chains. That’s what led me to this ad.”

“Are you kidding?”

“No, I’m not kidding. See, when the Russian Army got into Berlin in ’45, they found Hitler there, alive and kicking. So they grabbed him

and took him back to Moscow, where they tortured and killed him. But they told the Allies that story about him killing himself and burning his body so that no one would interfere with their plans to torture him. Plus, they figured they'd get some valuable state secrets that they didn't want to share with the West. Anyway, after they killed him, they sliced and diced his body into a thousand pieces, and saved the brain for research purposes. They had it in Moscow for decades, but a couple of years back, when everything went kablooie over there with all those Republics breaking up, the brain sorta got lost in the shuffle. My sources tell me that it ended up in the Ukraine, in the hands of some dentist who has a liver problem — he needed some fast cash for an operation, so he was willing to sell the brain for a song. And now you have it, buddy. You can put it on your mantle or something. This'll be a great conversation starter at your next party!"

Paul regarded Benny suspiciously. "I don't believe it," he said.

"You don't believe what?"

"I don't believe that this is Hitler's brain."

"What do you mean you don't believe it?" Benny asked incredulously. "I've checked this out thoroughly! Look, it even comes with a certificate of authenticity!"

"Let me see this," Paul said, examining the certificate. "Oh, this is nice. This is convincing. Look, where are you from — the backwoods of Arkansas? How can you fall for this?"

"Fall for what? This is a legitimate deal!"

"Sure it is. And I'd like to sell you some swampland in Florida."

"What am I gonna do with swampland? I — all right, very funny. Okay wise guy, what if I could *prove* to you that this is really Hitler's brain?"

"Well, I suppose that would make things more interesting." Just then, the doorbell rang, and Paul knew it must be Wendy. "Come in!" he called.

“Okay, great. I’ll see you later,” Benny said as he grabbed the brain and hustled out the door, passing Wendy as she walked in.

“Oh, hi, Benny” Wendy said as Benny slipped past her. “What’s in the package?”

“Oh, nothing. I’ll see ya later.” And with that, Benny was gone.

“What was that all about?” she asked Paul.

“Well, see, he thinks that he bought H... uh, I’ll tell you later — you ready to go?”

“Yeah, I’m ready.”

“Okay, hang on a sec, I gotta get my ball.”

Friday evening, 9:57 PM: Paul and Wendy were hanging out at Paul’s place, watching *Gold Diggers of 1935* on TV, when suddenly Benny charged in through the front door, skidding to a stop in the middle of the living room.

“Paul! Wendy! Oh, am I glad to see you two! You wouldn’t believe what I’ve been through these last few days!”

“This wouldn’t have anything to do with that stupid brain you bought, would it?” Paul asked. “Because if it does, I don’t want to hear about it.”

“You gotta hear about it, man. You gotta help me. The brain — he’s crazy! He wants to take over the world again!”

Wendy turned to Paul. “What’s this all about? Is this what you wouldn’t tell me about the other day?”

“Yeah,” Paul answered. “See, Benny thinks he bought Hitler’s brain from a mail-order ad.”

“He’s out in the car,” Benny interjected. “You want to see him?”

“Yeah, sure,” she replied.

“No, you don’t want to see that – it’s disgusting,” Paul objected.

“Yes I do – I think it sounds cool.”

“I’ll go get him,” Benny offered. “But I warn you – this isn’t for the faint of heart!”

Moments later, the brain was sitting in a jar on Paul’s kitchen table. Wires connected the brain to a lone stereo speaker sitting just inches away from the jar.

“Okay, so you’ve connected the brain to a speaker – this has got to be the most ridiculous thing I’ve ever seen. What happens now?” Paul asked.

“Well, he should start talking,” Benny replied. “I don’t know what the problem is. He was yelling at me in the car all the way here – he just wouldn’t shut up! It was very frightening.”

Wendy examined the wiring. “Maybe one of these came loose.”

Benny looked closely and began adjusting the wires a bit. “You know, this whole thing is very eerie – when you hear him start talking, you’re not gonna believe...”

“Aaaah!” shrieked a strange voice from the speaker. “Du schweinhund! Was ist los mit du?”

“There, I got it – see?” Benny said proudly, as Paul and Wendy’s jaws dropped in shock.

“Benny! Benny! Kommst du hier, ja?” the voice beckoned.

“Yeah, in a minute, okay?” Benny replied. “See?” he asked his friends, “he speaks German. He’s Hitler!”

Paul still couldn't believe it. "Just because he speaks German doesn't mean he's Hitler," he said. "A lot of people speak German."

Benny smiled confidently and addressed the brain: "Hey, brain! Who are you? You're Hitler, right? Hit - ler?"

And again the hideous voice sounded from the speaker: "Ja, ja!" it said. "Ich heiße Hitler! Während des tausendsten Mal, mein Name ist Hitler! Ich bin Adolf Hitler, dummkopf!"

Fortunately for our heroes, it didn't take fluency in German to understand what the brain had said. Anyone who's watched half a dozen episodes of Hogan's Heroes could make the translation.

"Get him to say something else," Wendy insisted.

"Okay," Benny replied. "Hey, brain – speak! Come on, Hitler, say something! Sprechen Sie! Sprechen Sie!" He whistled to the brain as if he were commanding a dog. "Speak, boy, speak!"

And the eerie voice responded once more, this time sounding somewhat annoyed. "Ich belohne Sie froh Dienstag, wenn Sie Ihre Freunde heute töten!"

"What'd he say?" Paul asked.

"Benny's face had gone white. "I think he said he wants me to... kill you," he said.

"What? Kill me? What'd I do?!?"

"Yeah, and he says this kind of thing all the time, too! Always giving me orders – trying to get me to do terrible things. He's crazy, I tell you! Crazy!"

"And he wants to have me killed, eh?" The thought of it ticked Paul off. "I own you now, Hitler!" he shouted at the brain in the jar. "You're mine, man! I'm gonna stick you on my mantle and you're gonna entertain at parties, and and if you don't like it, you can lump it, buddy!"

“There’s one thing I don’t get,” Wendy chimed in. “Assuming the brain is who he claims he is – well, what I don’t understand is how it’s alive. I mean, he should be dead without a body to support him.”

“He was dead,” Benny explained, “until I brought him back to life.”

“How’d you do that?”

And so Benny told the tale of how he had revived Hitler’s brain...

“I set the brain down on a table,” he began, “while I mixed various chemicals in my kitchen sink. I’ve studied lots of things over the years – psychology, biology, foreign languages – but I don’t know squat about reanimating old brains. So, I just started mixing together any old thing I could find – some Ajax, a little hair tonic, some mouthwash, you know – whatever. After a while, the stuff started bubbling, so I emptied the water the brain had been stored in and poured my concoction in the jar with it. Well, as far as I could tell, nothing happened, so I went to bed. Then, I got up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom, and who did I see there but the brain. He had *followed* me there!”

“How did he follow you?” Wendy inquired. “He’s only a brain!”

“I don’t know. He’s got strange powers. The only thing I know for sure is that that brain is pure evil. No good can come from having him around – he’s got to be destroyed! Only I don’t know what to do with him. I’d flush him down the toilet, but he’s too big!”

“What do you mean, you want to destroy him?” Paul asked. “He’s my brain now. I want to keep him.”

“Oh, I’m afraid that’s out of the question, home-boy.”

“Why’s that?”

Benny was stunned. “You can’t go inviting evil into your house like this! It’s like inviting Satan himself over for dinner! It just isn’t done!”

“Well, I’m certainly not gonna just throw it away. This thing is a historical relic. It’s undoubtedly worth a lot of money. At the very least, I’ve gotta keep it until, you know, maybe I can sell it or something.”

“No, no, no!” Benny protested, and then stopped himself. “Wait a minute — yes! That’s a great idea! I know a lot of people who would pay top dollar for this thing! The only problem is, how do we contain its’ evil? I mean, this thing’s ready to start World War III as soon as it can raise an army! And he’s charismatic, too. He had me on the phone the other night contacting arms dealers for him! He’s got a sort of hypnotic spell he casts over you! We’ll have to be very careful with him — for starters, we’ll have to keep him under lock and key, except when showing him to potential buyers.”

“Okay,” Paul said, “that sounds reasonable.”

“All right then. You lock him up and I’ll talk to some people I know who might want to buy him.”

Weeks passed, and Paul & Benny interviewed several people interested in buying the brain: World War II buffs mostly, but also a few would-be entrepreneurs who thought there was money to be made somehow. More ominously, Benny had heard that some neo-Nazi types had gotten wind of what was going on, and freaky-looking skinheads had begun appearing in the neighborhood, and driving by Paul’s house.

“You know,” Paul concluded, “we’re never gonna sell this brain. No sane person will want to buy it!”

“What are you talking about?” Benny asked. “I thought we decided to sell it to that one guy — the guy in the suit. I thought he had some dynamite marketing ideas for the brain!”

“No, we don’t wanna do that. If the brain gets out there and gets all that publicity, who knows what kind of havoc he’ll wreak? After all, we never did think up any way to contain his evil.”

“You’re right,” Benny sighed. “So what are we gonna do with him?”

“I don’t know. Do you have any fireworks left over from the 4th of July? Maybe we could just blow him up?”

“Nah, I don’t have any left.”

Paul paused to give the matter some thought. The whole thing was beginning to seem like more trouble than it was worth. “Well, okay then,” he decided, “let’s just sell him to that guy. Let *him* deal with the evil powers!”

“Sounds good to me,” Benny agreed. “You get the brain. I’ll call our friend.”

Paul walked upstairs to his bedroom, opened the closet door and removed the safe-box into which he had deposited the brain a few weeks earlier. He spun the combination wheel to the right, then left, and then right again. Finally, he opened the box and saw that it was empty.

The sight chilled him to the bone. He called Benny, who was wasn’t exactly horrified, but he wasn’t happy about it, either. (Benny wasn’t the kind of guy who worried too much about matters of great consequence. He could, however, easily become quite panicked about more trivial issues, such as misplaced car keys or being served day-old bagels.) Then, as they returned downstairs into Paul’s living room, they were greeted by yet another unwelcome sight — five neo-Nazis brandishing nightsticks.

It was clear that resistance would only invite a severe beating, and so Paul and Benny allowed themselves to be tied up. Their heads were then covered with dark hoods and finally they were hustled out of the house and shoved into the back of a van that quickly whisked them away.

A few hours later, the hoods were removed, and the boys found themselves inside a huge, marble hall. Third Reich-style German flags were hung all over the place, and hundreds of brown-shirted soldiers stood at attention on each side of the room.

“This place looks familiar,” Benny whispered to Paul. “I think this is Kozlowski’s Catering Hall. My friend Ted Lipshitz had his wedding party here last summer!”

“Sieg Heil!” a voice called from one end of the hall.

“Sieg Heil!” the soldiers shouted back.

It was a scene right out of Leni Reifenstahl’s *Triumph of the Will*, except that it wasn’t in black & white, and the voice inciting the soldiers into a murderous frenzy wasn’t der Furher in his full glory, it was just his brain sitting inside a jar, connected to a stereo speaker. Not exactly what the fascist loons had in mind all those years they spent dreaming of his return. Nevertheless, they seemed pretty worked up about it.

Paul and Benny stared up at the stage where the brain was sitting. On one side stood a ridiculous-looking Hermann Goebbels wannabe, dressed up in full Nazi regalia. And on the other side stood — Wendy.

“Wendy!” Paul gasped. “What are *you* doing up there?”

But Wendy wouldn’t even look in Paul’s direction. Instead, she gazed lovingly at the brain in the jar and gently stroked the glass.

“Chicks, man!” Benny sighed. “They always go for guys with strong personalities, no matter what they look like!”

“I can’t believe it,” Paul stammered. “I always figured that if she was gonna cheat on me, she’d at least do it with a guy who had a body!”

“Silence!” the Goebbels wanna-be interrupted. “You,” he said, pointing at Benny, “have the secret to eternal life! You must give it to us, for der Furher needs the precious fluid!”

“Uh, yeah,” Benny responded, “about that... ya see, the thing is I don’t really remember how...”

“DO IT!” Goebbels commanded, as Benny was dragged up onto the stage by a pair of Nazi thugs. On a small table next to the brain were all

the ingredients he had used to create the life-giving potion.

“Come on, Benny,” Wendy begged him. “You did it before, and you can do it again!”

“Yeah, well, what if I don’t want to do it?” Benny asked.

One of the Nazis jammed the barrel of a pistol into Benny’s ribs. “Then you die!” he growled.

“Oh. Well, in that case, where’s the Ajax?” Benny asked, as he began fumbling through the various bottles of chemicals and household cleaners.

“Wendy, how could you rat us out like this?” Paul yelled from his chair in the middle of the dining hall.

“Oh, get over it already!” she yelled back. “I can hang out with anybody I want!”

“Yeah, but Hitler? Since when did you become a Nazi?”

“SILENCE!!” Goebbels roared, and directed his men to gag Paul.

Meanwhile, Benny continued mixing his chemical concoction and scanning the room nervously. He was right, he thought. This place *was* Kozlowski’s Catering Hall. “Paul’s right, you know,” he told her. “He’s always treated you well, and this is how you repay him? And besides, hooking up with a guy like Hitler is never a good idea. You wanna end up like Eva Braun?”

“Just shut up and mix the chemicals, OK?”

“I had a friend who had his wedding reception in this hall,” he continued. “His bride had an ex-boyfriend who was a really bad guy, too, and he actually showed up at the party that night. He was drunk and bent on causing trouble. And so he came right up onto the stage that we’re standing on now and started fighting with the DJ.”

“Be quiet and work!” Goebbels said angrily, but to no effect.

“So they were rolling around, you know, this guy and the DJ, punching & kicking each other, and they accidentally knocked over this big speaker the DJ had brought with him, and it fell into the socket box behind me.”

Wendy looked behind Benny and could see the box on the wall.

“That box controls all the lights and the sound system in this room,” Benny went on. “And so when the speaker fell into it, all the lights got turned off, and it was pandemonium in here until the police arrived. They got the lights turned back on and arrested my buddy’s wife’s ex.”

“Yeah, so what’s your point?” Wendy asked. “That I shouldn’t be dating Hitler or any of these other Nazis ‘cause they’re bad guys? I know that, and I don’t care. You’re not my father, OK?”

“Nah, I don’t care who you date,” Benny answered. “My point is that if the electricity in this place goes out, it’s gonna make it very difficult for your pals here to catch me!” And with that, Benny took the jar full of chemicals he was mixing and flung it into the socket box. Sparks flew like crazy out of it, and all the lights in the hall went black.

And just like at Ted Lipshitz’s wedding, it was total chaos. Some of the Nazis tried to grab Benny, but mostly ended up grabbing each other instead. Others tried to rescue Hitler’s brain, but instead knocked it onto the floor and stepped on it about a hundred times, mashing it into a gooey paste. Goebbels tried to turn the lights back on, but succeeded only in electrocuting himself and inadvertently setting fire to the building.

Benny, on the other hand, knew the layout of the facility well enough to make it off the stage, grab Paul and pull him out into the parking lot. He then untied him and used the ropes to seal the exit doors shut, locking the Nazis inside the burning building. “Wow, that was some adventure, wasn’t it?” Benny said as he tried to catch his breath.

“Adventure?!?” Paul shot back. “That was terrible! We almost got killed! And not only that, my girlfriend dumped me, and now she’s in

there frying along with those neo-Nazi scumbags!”

“Yeah, well, ya gotta break a few eggs to make an omelette, right? C’mon, buddy, let’s go home.”

Police and firemen were just beginning to arrive as Paul and Benny ambled over to the nearest bus stop. The fire turned out to be tough to put out, though, and the building burned for hours, ensuring that there were no survivors, and no evidence of Adolf Hitler’s only trip to America.

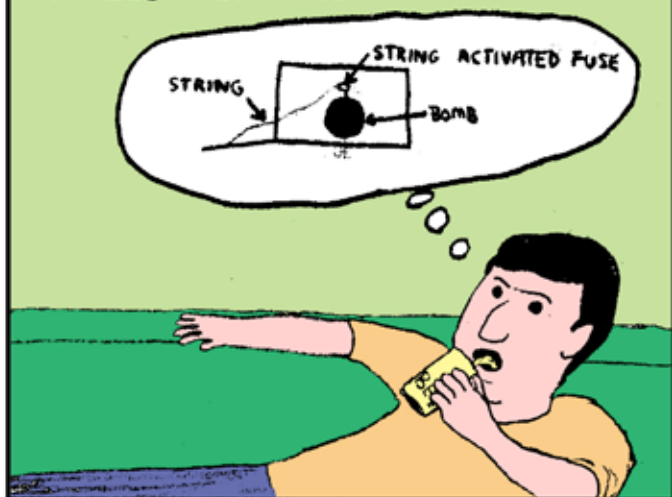
THE END.

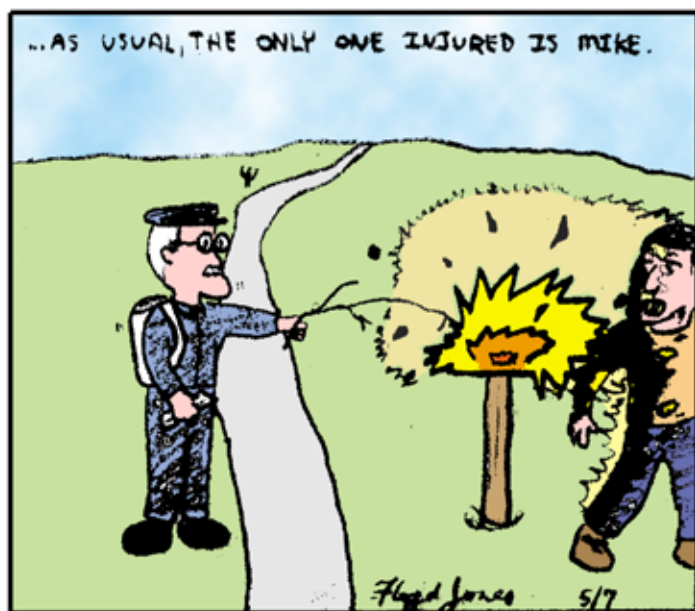
MURDERER MIKE By Floyd Jones

WHEN MURDERER MIKE ISN'T OUT KILLING PEOPLE, HE'S USUALLY LYING AROUND HIS HOUSE DRINKING BEER...



... AND THINKING OF NEW TRAPS TO KILL THE ONE PERSON HE CAN'T SEEM TO KILL - HIS MAILMAN.





How to be a New Jersey Driver

Have you ever thought about going to live in New Jersey? Neither have I. But life's unpredictable, and so you never know — you might end up living there someday. And if that happens to you, you'll need to know How to be a New Jersey Driver.

Step 1: Multitask.

While driving, a true New Jersey driver can do many things: eat a meal, shave, apply makeup, talk on a cell phone, read a newspaper or magazine, or other wholesome activities.

Step 2: Drive super fast.

Speed Limit signs are not meant to be taken seriously in New Jersey. They're a non-functional leftover from a bygone era, like an appendix or the U.S. Constitution. Look at the speedometer in your car: cars are meant to be driven fast. Why else would they go all the way up to 140 mph?

And face it — you're not your grandmother, and you don't live in Iowa. So give 'er some gas! Put the pedal to the metal & have some fun!

Step 3: Ignore traffic signs.

All traffic signs fall under the same category as Speed Limit signs. Stop signs, Yield signs, and every other sign you see while driving in New Jersey... you need pay no attention at all to any of them.

Step 4: Learn how to handle traffic lights.

Green means "go", Yellow means "go faster", and Red means "screech to a halt — unless you're in a hurry, in which case: go ahead & go,

and hope like hell you make it through the intersection without getting killed.”

Step 5: Drink and drive.

Prohibition was repealed in 1933, so everyone over the age of 21 has a legal right to drink. And since the streets are public — paid for with your tax dollars — everyone has a right to drive, too. At least, that’s the attitude here in New Jersey, where drinking & driving is not only a right, it’s a responsibility. So, whether you’re just a little tipsy or falling-down drunk, don’t let inebriation get in your way.

Step 6: Threaten pedestrians.

So you’re driving along and you see a kid crossing the street 100 yards in front of you — what do you do?

In most places, you’d just keep driving like normal. After all, the kid’s a good distance away and not doing anything to bother you. But in the Garden State, you’re supposed to speed up and let that little punk know he’d better hurry or you’ll run him over, even if you have no intention of actually doing so.

It’s a fun way of throwing your weight around and showing people how tough you are because *you have a car*.

Step 7: Ignore the cops.

If a cop pulls you over & threatens to kill your buzz, or just make you late for getting somewhere, all you’ve got to do is flip him the bird & peel out of there as fast as you can. New Jersey police officers are fine, upstanding individuals, and each one of them has a keen sense of humor. Trust me, they won’t chase after you & throw you in jail like they do in most states — here, they’ll just laugh it off — and probably even crack open a brewski of their own!

And that's how you do it. Easy, isn't it? Just follow these simple steps:

- * Multitask
- * Drive Fast
- * Ignore traffic signs
- * Blow through Red Lights
- * Drink & Drive
- * Threaten Pedestrians, and
- * Ignore the Cops.

If you'll just follow these guidelines, some people will call you a maniac, but you'll know the truth: you're a New Jersey driver!

My Vacation with O.J.

(or, Horror on the High Seas)

I never thought O.J. Simpson was guilty of the terrible crimes he was accused of back in 1994. No, I'm not insane. I just think the guy was framed, that's all. I've known the man for years, and he's always seemed like a good guy to me. And that's why, a few years ago, I invited him to come along with me, my girlfriend, and her sister on a Caribbean cruise.

The cruise itself was my girlfriend's idea. Her name was Amy, and she worked as a defense lawyer, often helping out indigent clients accused of horrific offenses. She had always wanted to visit the Bahamas, and had insisted that that would be the ideal place to spend our vacation that year.

Amy's sister, Christine, was in the midst of an ugly break-up with her boyfriend at the time Amy was making travel arrangements, and so it occurred to her to make the trip into a double-date. After all, I had been complaining for some time about a pal of mine who had been going through some tough times and could use some cheering up, too. I'll never forget the icy cold stare Amy gave me when she learned the identity of my aforementioned buddy.

By that time, however, it was too late. Amy & Christine and myself were already on board the ship, which was just about to leave the port when O.J. hustled onto the gang plank. The girls and I had been awaiting his arrival, and the longer we waited, the angrier they got, certain that the mystery man I had picked to be Christine's blind date would be some loser who couldn't even make it to the ship on time. Or worse, a jerk who had decided to stand her up.

"That's the last thing she needs right now," Amy growled. "Her self-confidence is a mess already."

"Don't worry," I answered reassuringly, "he'll be here." I knew he always cut things close, just like on that infamous night when he was almost late catching a flight to Chicago. The girls just glared at me, however, thoroughly unreassured. "He's a great guy," I offered. "You know, he used to be a pro football player."

Christine perked up upon hearing that, but Amy only became more worried. "Sounds too good to be true," she said. And at that moment we saw O.J. boarding the ship.

"Hey, what's happenin', Floyd?" he asked me as he approached.

"Nothin' much," I replied, and shook his hand. "O.J., I want you to meet my girlfriend Amy, and this is her sister, Christine."

O.J. greeted the girls warmly, like a total gentleman. They, however, were too shocked to reply in kind. "My blind date is O.J. Simpson," Christine murmured to herself. "I'm a dead woman."

Later, in our stateroom, Amy let me have it. "What the hell were you thinking?" she demanded. "How could you set my sister up on a blind date with a murderer?"

"Oh, come on," I said. "O.J.'s got his faults, as we all do, but he's no murderer."

“How can you say that?” she shot back. “Don’t you watch the news? It was the trial of the century! Didn’t you pay any attention to it? They had his DNA all over the place!”

I was only too familiar with her arguments, because I had, in fact, followed his trial quite carefully, and had had many an argument about it with the boys down at Clancy’s pool room. “What if I went into the bathroom here,” I asked, “and cut myself shaving? The police could come in later and find my DNA in the sink. But that wouldn’t mean I murdered anybody!”

“What does that have to do with anything?”

“It’s vitally important to understanding his case,” I said. “Sure, the cops found O.J.’s DNA. And they found Nicole’s DNA, and Ron Goldman’s. But that doesn’t mean anything by itself. You have to consider it in context.”

“Meaning what?” she asked.

“Take the blood in the Bronco, for example,” I said. “The cops took pictures of the inside of that vehicle the day after the murders, and no blood is visible in those pictures. But then, three weeks later, they took another set of photos, and in those photos, there’s blood all over the place!”

“Of course there was blood all over the place!” Amy interjected. “That’s because he killed those people!”

“Then why wasn’t the blood there the next morning?” I asked. “In the three weeks between those two sets of pictures, the Bronco was in police custody, and somewhere in that time period, the police admitted that somebody broke into it!”

“So what?” Amy complained.

“So maybe someone broke in there to take blood samples from O.J. and the murder victims and sprinkle them around the inside of the car to

make it look like he was guilty!” I said. “That’s the only explanation that makes any sense.”

“Oh, you’re so crazy!” Amy whined. “Even if you were right — which you’re not — there’s still no excuse for you setting him up for a date with my sister! She’s scared to death to share her room with him! And you know what that means.”

“Oh, no!”

“That’s right! She’s gonna sleep in here with me, and *you’re* gonna sleep in *her* room with that killer!”

Meanwhile, as Amy continued making her silly arguments, two men on the other side of the ship were up to no good.

“Hassan,” one of the men began, “I can’t find the detonator.”

“Have you checked your pockets?” Hassan replied, clearly annoyed.

The first man looked through his pockets and pulled out a small, black plastic device. He looked sheepishly at Hassan. “Oh, yes,” he said. “Here it is.”

Hassan grabbed the other man by the collar with his left hand and slapped him senseless with his right. “Listen, Abdul,” he said, “you’d better get your act together real soon. You’ve been screwing up ever since we left Mecca. We almost didn’t even make it into Miami on time to catch the ship because of your buffoonery. Now, you’d better cut it out, or I’ll beat you some more!”

“All right, all right!” Abdul cried. “It’s just that the pressure of this mission has been getting to me! I don’t even know why I’m here any more!”

“You fool!” Hassan hissed. “We’re here to teach those stupid Americans a lesson they’ll never forget! They keep making movies that depict

Muslims like us as terrorists. It's so insulting! But we'll show them. We'll blow up this ship carrying several Hollywood producers to send a message to the world that Islam is not to be trifled with. It's a religion of peace, after all."

"Ha ha," Abdul laughed. "I can't wait to see the look on Steven Spielberg's face once his head has been detached from his body!"

That evening, O.J. and I were sitting at the ship's bar on the main deck. O.J. was drinking pretty heavily, and I could tell he was depressed. "What's wrong, buddy?" I asked.

He sighed and took another drink. "I think maybe I shouldn't have come out here on this cruise," he said. "That chick you hooked me up with — Christine — man, she's afraid to come near me 'cause she thinks I'm a killer!"

"I wouldn't worry about it," I told him. "I'll talk to her about it. She didn't really follow your trial all that closely. Once she hears the way things *really* went down, she'll realize you're innocent, and she'll be into you."

"I hope you're right," he said. "I still can't believe the way everybody turned against me. Even good friends of mine like Marcus Allen, you know? We asked him to come and testify — just to come in and tell the truth about what he knew about me and Nicole — and the dude refused to do it. All because he saw that junk on TV — Marcia Clark and the rest of those jerks lying about me — and decided I must be guilty."

"I know what you mean," I replied. "I remember when Chris Darden asked you to try on those gloves, and they obviously didn't fit. Everybody was stunned at first, but then almost immediately the excuses started. First, they said that the gloves shrank, which is preposterous, of course. If leather gloves shrunk so easily, no one would buy them to use 'em in the winter. And so then people started saying that the gloves really did fit, and that you were just *acting* like they didn't!"

“Yeah, that’s right! Everybody had spent months talkin’ about how I was the worst actor in Hollywood, and then all of a sudden I’m Laurence Olivier!”

I motioned for the bartender and asked for a refill for both of us. The bartender must not have noticed earlier who was sitting beside me, because this time, after pouring O.J.’s drink, she threw it in his face and called him a filthy murderer.

“Looks like this is gonna be a long cruise,” he sighed.

In the wee hours of the following morning, when even the most ardent partiers had gone back to their staterooms for a little shuteye, the ship was steaming silently through the calm waters of the Carribean. We were about halfway between Cuba and Haiti when, just before sunrise, Hassan and Abdul left their cabin and made their way down toward the ship’s engine room.

“What are you doing in here?” demanded the engineer, as the two Muslim maniacs burst into the room. Immediately, Hassan produced a pistol that he had smuggled on board and shot the man dead.

“Hurry,” he told Abdul, “get those plastic explosives set up and put them all around the engine, and remember to put a few of them onto the hull!”

Abdul dropped to the floor, opened up his suitcase, and got to work. Meanwhile, Hassan made his way around the massive engine room, shooting any other workers who happened to be around.

The plan was to use plastic explosives to blow up the ocean liner’s engine, and simultaneously blow a hole in the ship’s side, which would almost certainly result in the ship sinking quickly, even in spite of the airtight doors throughout the vessel and other safety devices on board. Luckily, the terrorists hadn’t counted on one thing — an ex-pro football player in a bad mood.

O.J. and I had been forced to sleep in the same room because no matter how much reason and common sense I hurled at my girlfriend and her stupid sister, I couldn't convince them that my pal was anything other than a cold-blooded murderer.

Well, as it turns out, years of bedding hot babes (plus perhaps a very mild case of homophobia) made it difficult for O.J. to sleep in a room with another man. So, while I allowed the gentle ocean waves rock me to dreamland, O.J. fidgeted around uncomfortably for half an hour or so, and then decided to go out for a walk.

He meandered aimlessly through the corridors of the mighty vessel, wondering to himself "Where did it all go wrong?" Perhaps he had not fought the public relations battle hard enough — he had allowed the Los Angeles D.A.'s office to define his defense as a "conspiracy theory" involving the entire LAPD.

What nonsense! All he & his lawyers had ever suggested was that perhaps Detective Fuhman had found a second glove at the crime scene and then later secretly deposited it behind Kato Kaelin's guest quarters. And then, in the afternoon of that same day, Detective Vanatter (fooled by Fuhman's "discovery" of the second glove into believing that O.J. must be guilty) sprinkled a little blood here & there, so that unwitting criminologists like Dennis Fung would later tie the blood to O.J..

Who's to say a couple of bad cops, acting independently, couldn't (or wouldn't) do such a thing? After all, Fuhman had already admitted that he and his fellow detectives routinely planted evidence in order to help guarantee convictions against men they believed were guilty! And Vanatter had a vial of O.J.'s blood, one "cc" of which had gone missing in between the time it was collected at police HQ and the time he turned it over to Fung.

But for some reason, the D.A.'s office, the media, and the vast majority of the public were unwilling to even consider the possibility that O.J.'s defense was valid. Instead, they seized upon anything they could to ridicule it... to look away from the simple truth staring them in the face.

And now, even after having been found not guilty by a jury, he was still being ridiculed. They say he must be looking for “the real killer” out on the golf course. Just another cheap shot. “I’m not a detective,” O.J. thought to himself. “So I hired some guys to investigate for me. What’s wrong with that?”

He was getting really tired, and decided to see if he could get a rub-down. And so, bleary-eyed, he opened the door to what he thought was the massage room, and that’s when he saw Abdul the terrorist attaching plastic explosives to the ship’s engines, and a dead engineer lying on the floor in a pool of blood.

“Holy moley, you killed that guy!” O.J. gasped.

Abdul turned and looked at him. “Hassan!!” he cried.

Hassan came running from the far end of the engine room, and when he saw O.J., he started firing his gun wildly.

Quickly, O.J. ducked back out of the room and closed the heavy steel door behind him. One of Hassan’s bullets caromed off the door and sped back toward Abdul, piercing through his left eye. Blood spurted out, and he dropped limply to the floor. Hassan quickly cursed fate, and paused for a moment to consider his next move.

Outside in the corridor, O.J. was considering his next move, too. He had started to look for a crew member to report to, but then stopped himself and wondered if anyone would believe him. “Damn, man,” he muttered, “they’ll probably try to blame this on *me!*” And so he spun around and headed back into the face of danger.

He flung open the engine room door, surprising Hassan, who was praying to Allah for guidance. O.J. ran toward him as fast as he could (which wasn’t all that fast, ‘cause his knees have been shot since the late 1970’s.) Hassan raised his gun, aimed for O.J.’s head, and squeezed the trigger. But nothing happened, because he was out of bullets. So he threw the pistol instead.

O.J. had never been known as much of a pass catcher back in his football days, but he caught this throw, and hurled himself into Hassan, knocking him to the floor. The terrorist struggled to fight, but O.J. pistol-whipped him into submission. And then he boogied on out of there, and went back up to the room we were sharing.

I've rarely seen a man sleep so soundly, or for so long. He totally missed the day trip Amy & Christine and I took in Port-au-Prince, which was a shame, because the weather was lovely, and Christine was becoming somewhat more receptive to my arguments in his defense. I think if he had been there with us that day, those two might've hooked up.

THE END.

Gilmore & Duke Meet Franklinstein

(a short screenplay)

FADE IN:

EXT. STOREFRONT — DAY

INT. STORE — DAY

Duke is painting a sign, reading “Gilmore & Duke’s Delivery Service. We is now open for bizness.” Gilmore walks in and looks the sign over, while drinking a cup of coffee.

GILMORE

Hey jackass, don’t you know English any better than that? You’re not supposed to write “We *is* now open for bizness.” It should be “We *am* now open for bizness.”

DUKE

Ohhh.

GILMORE

Now fix it! (he hits Duke)

DUKE

Okay, okay.

Duke paints over his mistake with white paint. As he does this, Gilmore sets his coffee down beside Duke's paints.

GILMORE

Boy, this business of ours is gonna be great!
Pretty soon we'll be millionaires! We'll probably
have enough money to buy a keg of beer every
day !!

Duke is painting a black line underneath the name of their business. He is painting wildly, with his brush smacking Gilmore in the leg, turning his white pants black.

GILMORE

Hey, hey!! Watch what you're doing, stupid!
Look what you did to my pants!

DUKE

Oh, sorry about that!

GILMORE

Sorry! I'll give ya somethin' to be sorry about!
(he threatens to hit Duke again, but doesn't)
Now go on, finish that sign!

DUKE

All right, all right!

As Gilmore goes on complaining about his pants, Duke accidentally dips his paint brush in Gilmore's coffee & continues painting. Gilmore picks up the other cup (the one containing Duke's black paint). He almost starts drinking, but stops.

GILMORE

As I was saying, this business is gonna be great!
Delivering packages, that's the life for me!

DUKE

Yeah, we'll probably deliver a lot of packages to
lonely old women who'll invite us inside so we
can... you know!

GILMORE

You said it! That'll be sweet!

Duke finishes painting the sign. He stands up, while Gilmore takes a sip
of his coffee.

DUKE

So, what do you think?

Gilmore spits out the coffee/paint onto Duke.

DUKE

Hey, say it, don't spray it, man!

Gilmore punishes the Duke, as we:

FADE OUT.

INT. STORE — DUSK

Duke is just about to walk out the door.

DUKE

Jesus H. Christ, it's been a long day! I must've
delivered about a million packages! Maybe even
a hundred! Yo man, I'm leaving. See ya Monday.

GILMORE

And just where do you think *you're* going?

DUKE

I'm going home! I got a hot date!

GILMORE

A hot date?

DUKE

Yeah. With a girl, too. A girl and a farm animal. The girl don't know about the farm animal — yet!

GILMORE

Well, ya can't leave now. You forgot to deliver this package! (he holds up a box the size of a shoebox)

DUKE

Can't it wait 'til Monday?

GILMORE

No, it has to be delivered tonight! And to make sure you do it, I'm coming with you! Let's go!

DUKE

Aw man, this sucks!

Gilmore pushes him out the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STREET — NIGHT

The Gilmore & Duke delivery van drives along a lonely road at night.

EXT. CASTLE

The van approaches a very spooky looking castle.

INT. LABORATORY

A mad scientist (Dr. Benjamin Franklinstein) is mixing chemicals, while his luscious assistant (Sharon) looks on.

DOCTOR

I've done it! I've done it! At long last, I've finally done it!

SHARON

Done vhat, doctor? Created a formula zat vill give a man superhuman strength and intelligence?

DOCTOR

Even better! I've created the world's first booger-favored soda! (he takes a drink) Ah, delicious boogers! (he starts picking his nose & eating what he pulls out)

SHARON

Oh, doctor! It's moments like zis that I realize vhy I love you!

She hugs him, and we hear the sound of a doorbell.

DOCTOR

Who could be here at this hour? Go get rid of whoever it is!

CUT TO:

EXT. CASTLE DOOR

The boys are waiting at the door. They stand around for a few moments, and Duke starts whistling. Then Gilmore asks:

GILMORE

So, how long have you been into farm animals?

DUKE

Oh, about 4 or 5 years now. You should try it sometime.

GILMORE

Yeah?

DUKE

Yeah. I'll bring a chicken over for ya next week.

GILMORE

Oh, okay. Thanks.

They stand around for a few more moments.

DUKE

It sure is spooky out here.

GILMORE

Yeah, it is, isn't it?

We hear the sound of a wolf howling in the distance.

DUKE

G-G-G-Gilmore, I'm s-s-s-scared! Let's go home!

GILMORE

Not yet. Let's try knocking again.

Gilmore, not looking where he's knocking, starts banging on Duke's head. Realizing his mistake, he shoves Duke out of the way & knocks on the door. Sharon opens the door.

SHARON

Who are you? What are you doing here?

GILMORE

We came to deliver this package.

SHARON

Let me see that.

She takes the package and examines it.

DUKE

(to Gilmore) Hey, a lonely woman! Maybe she'll let us... you know!

SHARON

Zis package appears to be damaged!

GILMORE

Well — it was like that when we got it, it really was!

SHARON

Come inside, both of you. You can explain ze damage to ze doctor.

She invites the boys in. As they enter, Duke says to Gilmore:

DUKE

See, man, she's letting us in! She wants us!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LABORATORY

Sharon introduces the boys to Dr. Franklinstein.

SHARON

Gentlemen, zis is Doctor Benjamin Franklinstein, ze greatest mad scientist in ze world! Herr Doctor, zese delivery men brought you ze brain you ordered. But look!

She hands him the package. The Doc examines the contents of the package (a brain), and looks upset.

DOCTOR

The brain, my beautiful brain! It's ruined! You incompetent oafs! What have you got to say for yourselves?

GILMORE

Well, uh, you see... (to Duke) tell him!

DUKE

Listen here, doc, you can't bully us! We know our rights! We're citizens! And I plead the 5th amendment!

DOCTOR

Look at your cranium! It's beautiful!

DUKE

Cranium? This is a hat!

DOCTOR

Your head! Why, it's perfect! (he examines Duke's head closely) The size, the shape, why, it's positively simian! (he bangs on Duke's head) And hollow as a coconut! It's perfect!

DUKE

Gee, thanks Doc!

DOCTOR

My boy, how would you like to make a grand contribution to science?

DUKE

(sadly) Oh, okay, how much do I gotta give? (he pulls out his wallet)

DOCTOR

Oh no, I don't want your money!

DUKE

Ohhh. (to Gilmore) He doesn't want my money. Gee, he's a swell guy!

DOCTOR

I only want your brain!

DUKE

My brain! Oh no, Doc! I need what little I got!
(to Gilmore) Let's get out of here!

Gilmore stops Duke from leaving.

GILMORE

Hey, what are you doin'? Didn't ya hear what
the doctor said? Just give him your brain, stupid!
It's not like you ever use it for anything!

DUKE

What about when I go to the race track? How
am I gonna know which horses to bet on?

DOCTOR

(to Gilmore) Hmm, perhaps I could use your
brain, too!

GILMORE

My brain??

DOCTOR

Nurse, give them the anaesthetic!

She cracks them over the head with a baseball bat.

FADE OUT.

INT. LABORATORY

Gilmore is strapped to an operating table, while Duke sits in a chair nearby. On a table next to him sits a jar with a brain inside. Dr. Franklinstein is questioning Duke:

DOCTOR

Okay, now tell me, what is seven plus six?

DUKE

Thirteen.

DOCTOR (to Gilmore)

Ha ha ha! You know, I think your friend is smarter now that he has a monkey's brain in his head than he was before!

GILMORE

Yeah, like I didn't know that would happen! Look, Doc, you've proved your point. Now let me go already!

DOCTOR

Oh, I'm afraid not, my boy. Now that I've accomplished a monkey to man brain transplant, I've got to take my work to the next step — I'm going to transplant your brain into this grapefruit! (He holds up a grapefruit & shows it to Gilmore.) And I dare say, with a grapefruit inside *your* skull, you may experience an increase in your I.Q. as well!

GILMORE

Aw, come on, Doc. Be reasonable!

Just then, the Gorilla goes ape inside his cage. Dr. Franklinstein approaches the cage and uses a bullwhip to try to calm the mighty beast.

DOCTOR

Quiet, you! Quiet!!

But the gorilla breaks open the cage door and bashes the doctor over the head, knocking him out.

GILMORE

Way to go, Duke! Now come on, get over here and untie me!

The gorilla makes his way across the room & unties Gilmore from the operating table.

GILMORE

Thanks, buddy. Come on, let's get out of here!

Gilmore starts to leave the room, but the Gorilla grabs him and starts grunting and pointing at his head.

GILMORE

We ain't got time to get your brain back in your body! Oh, look!

Gilmore points over to the other side of the room, where Sharon & Duke are leaving through another door.

DUKE

You were right, guys. She is lonely!

SHARON

Yeah, and now we're gonna... well, you know!

GILMORE

What?!? That gorilla's trying to take our babe!
Let's get him, Duke!

Gilmore & the gorilla chase Sharon & Duke out of the building and off into the distance, as the music swells, and we...

FADE OUT.

THE END.



Atomic Artist tells the harrowing tale of **Albert E. Oppenheimer**, a struggling painter who harnesses the power of nuclear fission to become one of the world's great artists.

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