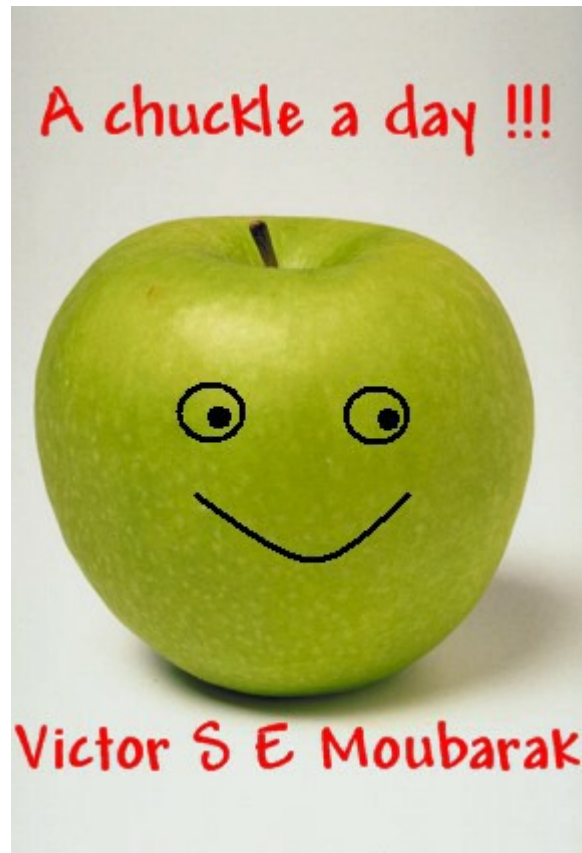


A CHUCKLE A DAY



A CHUCKLE A DAY

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Victor Moubarak was born at an early age as a baby a long time ago in a far away northern land where men were strong and big and tough and women told them what to do.

He soon realized he was born into poverty when his mother carried him around in a supermarket plastic bag instead of a pram.

Like many children Victor learnt a lot from his parents. They taught him at an early age the love for adventure. He used to come home from school and find that they had moved house. Undeterred Victor never knew the meaning of failure; he always had to look it up in the dictionary.

As a young man he determined to do well in life and decided to get on the stage ... the first one out of town. He joined a traveling theater and performed many times as the front end of a pantomime horse; but he decided to quit whilst he was ahead.

In his life Victor has faced many ups and downs, especially when working as an elevator attendant in a Department Store. He was quick to learn however the usefulness of books and always carried with him a large volume of the Encyclopedia Britannica. It was particularly useful for standing on and reaching the top button in the elevator.

His hobbies include sitting down, writing and painting. He has written a few books to be found on his website; and he is currently busy painting an old chair and the garden gate and fence.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Also by Victor S E Moubarak



“VISIONS” (ISBN 978 1 60477 032 2).

“VISIONS” is a fictional story of three children who see an apparition of the Lord Jesus on their way to church. They tell their priest, Father Ignatius, about it; and pretty soon news spreads throughout town.

People react to the news in different ways. Some readily believe; others mock and scoff in disbelief, whilst some react violently towards the children and their families.

Parishioners seek guidance from Father Ignatius whereas the Church seeks to hush the whole story in the hope that it goes away; whilst Jesus appears again and again.

“VISIONS” challenges readers to ask what they would do in a similar situation – as Christians, as parents or just as onlookers.

A vibrant tale of supernatural events, with a fast-paced storyline and strong believable characters, “VISIONS” is a challenging must-read Christian book for everyone ready for a reality check on what they actually believe.

“VISIONS” is available from all good bookstores and on the Internet. It is also available in Kindle, Nook and other electronic versions.

I pray that God blesses each one of you dear readers, old and new, and may He be with you and your families always.

Victor S E Moubarak

www.holyvisions.co.uk

A CHUCKLE A DAY

At the seaside



I was on business at a seaside town and I finished my afternoon meeting early. I decided to take a walk on the beach. It was warm and everyone was either swimming or lying there on the sand half-naked enjoying the sun and cooking slowly.

Not me. I decided to be as inconspicuous as possible in my pin striped suit, emerald green bow tie with pink spots, hat with a bright feather sticking out of the side, and of course, dark sunglasses.

I must admit though, I envied all those people enjoying the cool sea. They certainly looked happy, so I decided to join them. I approached the edge of the sea and took off my shoes and socks, which I put inside the shoes. The red sock in the left shoe and the green sock in the right shoe ... that way I'll remember which is which when I get to wear them again. Then I rolled up my pin-striped trousers all the way to just above the knee and I walked into the sea.

Oh ... it was lovely. Even though people looked at me suspiciously! I could see the expression on their incredulous faces through my dark glasses and they could not see that I was looking at them looking at me. So I had the advantage on them I think. Even though they were giggling surreptitiously and nudging each other.

Anyway ... I ignored them as I am accustomed to doing when people stare at me in the street or on the train in my attire.

Suddenly, I started dancing and hopping from foot to foot in the sea, splashing water everywhere and attracting more attention to myself.

A woman asked: "Is this Candid Camera?"

A number of onlookers laughed at me and someone said "I think he's filming a comedy film. Where are the cameras Mister?"

I must admit, the same thought would have crossed my mind if I saw someone in pin-striped suit dancing in the sea; but I was in too much pain to see the funny side of what was happening. I got out of the water to reveal a huge jellyfish stuck to the outside of my right leg. Why is it that with all these half-naked people in the sea the jellyfish chose me to attack? Does he not like business attire perhaps? Or is it the feather in my hat and my green bowtie?

"Jellyfish ... jelly fish ..." I cried out in pain.

"Oh ... quickly," said a rotund woman, "you must wee-wee on it!"

A CHUCKLE A DAY

How could I possibly wee-wee on it whilst wearing a pin striped suit? Or wearing anything for that matter! The creature was attached on the outside of my leg just below the knee and I can't see it as a physical possibility to attack it with ... Oh never mind.

The woman then said, "Or you can let someone else wee-wee on it!"

As I could not see a queue of volunteers ready to assist me in this manner I continued to jump up and down and hitting the jellyfish with my hat. It broke the feather right off and made the hat quite un-wearable.

A young man came running to my help and said "You have to pour vinegar on it! Do you have any vinegar?"

"Oh yes," I thought, "I always carry a gallon bottle of vinegar in my pocket just in case of such an occurrence."

But I was in too much pain to say anything. I just shook my head. The man asked someone to run to the Fish and Chips shop nearby and get a bottle of vinegar.

"I have no money!" said the other person.

I got out my wallet and gave him a £5 note ... the smallest currency I had. He smiled and ran away. I wondered if I'd ever see him again.

Eventually he returned with a small bottle of vinegar which the first young man gently poured on the jellyfish. It shriveled and let go of my leg.

"You must get this seen to in hospital." said the young man.

I nodded and thanked him. I turned round to get my shoes only to find that the tide had come in somewhat and taken them out to sea with the red and green socks waving at me happily as they sailed away!

I hopped bare feet and minus my hat into a taxi and to the nearest hospital.

And the moral of this story, dear friends, is: Never go to sea in a pin-striped suit!

A CHUCKLE A DAY

I am really hot !!!



A friend of mine is quite an inventor. He is always in his little hut at the bottom of the garden making different gadgets and things “to make life better”. Or so he claims. I must admit that some of his inventions are somewhat innovative although I can’t see them catching on and becoming best sellers. For example he has put a little red LED light at the back of his cap which lights up when he goes out walking at night so that vehicles can see him. Practical? Yes ... Fashionable ... I don’t think so!

The other day he asked me to test his latest invention.

He has somehow managed to weave a very thin wire backwards and forwards inside the lining of a jacket which he bought from a shop. He then connected the wires to a battery the size of a small book which he placed in the inside pocket of the jacket. By flicking a switch the wires warm up gently and keep you warm on cold winter days.

Now I’m sure that I read about similar devices somewhere or other; but my friend assures me that his system is different ... I couldn’t understand a word of what he said in techno language, so I nodded politely and smiled.

He took my nodding as acquiescence to testing the “Warmma-Coat”; as he calls it.

I put the jacket on one cold and breezy morning and walked to the local shops to buy my newspapers and some chocolates. I just can’t read the papers without chocolates. Somehow they make me concentrate better. But I digress.

On my way to the shops the electric system in my jacket must have short-circuited because I got a slight twinge in my right shoulder which made me wince a little.

I ignored it and carried on walking when it happened again, only a little stronger.

Fortunately, it stopped for a while whilst I was shopping, but when I came to the check-out to pay for my goods ... it happened again but much stronger this time. I recoiled a little and grimaced somewhat at the electric shock.

“Are you winking at me?” asked the beautiful young female cashier.

“No ... I’m not.” I replied embarrassingly as I winked at her once more.

“There ... you did it again” she said, “what’s the matter with you?”

A CHUCKLE A DAY

I was about to reply when a further electric shock made me smile involuntarily and wink at her twice.

“You’re being suggestive ... you are!” she cried in a loud voice, “I’ll call the manager!”

Seconds later the manager appeared out of nowhere with a security man. She must have pressed some hidden panic button, I suppose.

“What’s the matter?” he asked her.

“Mr Thornicroft ... this customer is making suggestive innuendos by winking at me!” she complained.

“Is this true sir?” he asked, “we take exception to improper behavior by our customers towards our employees!”

“I assure you that I did not do or imply anything improper” I replied as I winked at him twice.

“Sir ... you are quite out of order” he said sternly as he saw me wink, “I’ll have to ask you to leave these premises or we will call the police!”

As I tried to explain my innocence he noticed a plume of smoke rising from my right shoulder.

“Sir ... have you been smoking? It is a criminal offence to smoke in public places and I may have to detain you until the police arrives” interrupted Mr Thornicroft as he motioned to the security guard to do his business.

A crowd soon gathered by the check-out as other shoppers became interested in my dilemma. Why can’t people just mind their own business and continue shopping?

“I assure you I don’t smoke ...” I protested as the security guard attempted to put his hand on my right shoulder then thought it better not to.

“I don’t smoke ... but my shoulder clearly does!” I said trying to make light of the situation.

And that’s exactly what happened next. The right shoulder did light up in green flames and acrid black smoke.

The manager quickly picked up a two-liter bottle of beer and emptied it on my head whilst the security guard got hold of a foam emitting fire extinguisher and covered me in foam from head to toe.

I can announce that beer and foam don’t mix. Some got into my mouth with dire results.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

As I was led out of the store coughing and spluttering I heard a customer explain to another “Instant combustion ... it happens a lot you know. It’s more common than you think!”

I cleaned the foam as best I could and walked back home never to return to that shop again ... and never to trust an inventive friend.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Keep it under my hat



The rules in our office are quite clear and strict. We should not bring any pets to work.

Why is it then that some people insist on “bending the rules” when in reality they are outright breaking them and risking severe disciplinary action; if not being fired from the job altogether.

For example someone brought a kitten in one of those carrying cases because the creature was not too well and its owner was on her way to the vet after work. Admittedly, the cat did not leave the carrying case or cage at any time, and was only in the office for a couple of hours, having been collected from home at lunch time. But if the boss had come in I’m sure that person would have been reprimanded or probably lost her job; especially since the boss is allergic to cats.

What if I had a hippopotamus as a pet, or a crocodile? Would it be OK for me to bring them to work on my way to the vet?

You think I’m exaggerating don’t you? Well, I’m not.

Last week someone brought in a chameleon or lizard type creature. I don’t know what it was. All I know is it was about three inches long and it was ugly; even though it was supposed to be a baby of the species.

Apparently some colleagues had been talking about unusual pets a few days earlier and one of them decided to bring this reptile to show the others. The animal was brought to work in a shoe box and taken out to show everyone. It jumped out of the owner’s hand and ran on the large conference table where we were supposed to have a meeting.

Yes ... you’ve guessed it. The boss came to the meeting a few minutes earlier than expected.

Everyone panicked and froze ... except Joe. He’s a quick thinker and a bit too clever for comfort.

He quickly grabbed my hat from the coat stand ... yes, my expensive cowboy type hat with the long feather on the side ... I call it a plume, not a feather ... more stylish!

Anyway, Joe picked up my hat and as quick as a flash put it on the lizard trapping him underneath.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Everyone kept a straight face ... or tried to. I noticed one or two badly concealed smirks and one person was literally going red in the face trying to hold back a guffaw of laughter as well as nature's release mechanism.

I was furious of course. My expensive hat used as a cage and a subject of subterfuge. Can you imagine that? And it's silk lined on the inside. I dread to think what that wretched creature is doing under there.

I said nothing of course. I could hardly risk someone else losing their job; even though my precious hat was the real victim here.

I sat at the place nearest to the hat and we all started the meeting.

The boss sat at the far end and did not seem to notice even though once or twice the hat moved on the table all on its own.

This led to the person nearest me to laugh quietly and then stifle a sneeze.

The boss said "Bless you" and for some stupid reason I replied "Thank you!"

Why do I do silly things like that? What possessed me to say "Thank you"?

Luckily the boss did not notice who had sneezed.

At the end of the meeting my boss suggested he and I visit one of our suppliers who is only half a mile away from our office.

I put on my coat and followed him when he said: "Put on your hat ... it's a little cold out there and we're walking!"

Everyone froze again and fixed their eyes on my hat on the table.

I had to think and act quickly ... very difficult when you can't multi-task!

I picked up the hat in a scooping motion and put it on my head.

You should have seen everyone's face when they saw nothing on the table where the hat once was. I was proud of myself and my magical sleight of hand.

My quick triumph quickly faded as I felt the lizard grappling tightly at my hair. I kept a straight face and left the room hurriedly after my boss.

On our way there, as we walked down the street, the silly creature tried to escape once or twice by raising my hat off my head. The boss didn't see it, but a passerby thought I was saluting him by lifting my hat and he did the same with his.

I pushed the hat further down my head so that the brim was almost at eye level. That should trap him solid ... I thought.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

In response the vindictive reptile started pulling at my hair struggling to get out. The pain was agonizing but I could hardly do anything about it. How could I possibly explain the situation to my boss if he found out what's under my hat?

He would hardly take me seriously after such an incident.

We walked side by side with him doing most of the talking about some budgetary situation or other and me making un-intelligent noises more as a response to pain than contribution to the discussion. At one point as I grunted he said "Well ... I'm glad you agree with this. Perhaps you can go ahead and implement it." I had no idea what I had agreed to.

As we approached the suppliers' premises I felt a wet feeling under my hat as no doubt the lizard decided on a new plan of attack in order to get free.

We entered the building and a young lady offered to take my coat and hat. I gave her my coat and decided to crumple my hat and its content quickly into my briefcase.

She noticed my head and hair were wet and I said "It's been raining ..." as I wiped it off with my handkerchief.

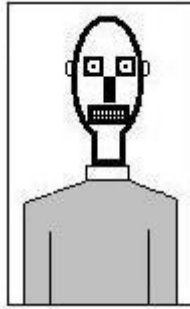
Why did I say such a stupid thing? Does it often rain under peoples' hats where you come from?

After the meeting with the suppliers I left my boss, went to a coffee bar where I rang the reptile's owner and asked him to meet me there and collect his pet.

I am now looking for a new hat. The silk lining in mine has been torn to shreds.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Father Gaston



Father Frederic, our Parish priest, is away for two weeks and has been replaced by Father Gaston, a priest of French origin, until our regular priest returns.

Father Gaston doesn't say much, maybe because he hasn't much to say to us. Who knows! He is tall and thin and looks very severe. He has one of those unfortunate white skinny faces which look like a skull. A long oval shape with sunken eyes and bony features revealing the contours of his jaws as he grins benignly rather than smile. I bet he could turn someone into a pillar of salt by just thinking it. I don't mean that he is nasty or evil in any way; he just looks that way and would frighten any cat out of its nine lives. Maybe I should introduce him to mine.

Last Saturday I went to confession. Father Gaston was in attendance.

We have one of those wooden confessionals which consists of a compartment in the middle which the priest enters and sits on a bench, and we genuflect on either side, pulling the curtain behind us so no one sees us, and tell him all our wrongdoings. We have to whisper, of course; otherwise everyone in church would hear our sins. If they were to hear mine they would no doubt be in hysterics of laughter! I knelt down and whispered closely to the opening in the confessional: "Forgive me Father, for I have sinned ..."

"I cannot hear you!" said Father Gaston in his strong French accent loud enough to be heard in Paris.

"Ehmmm..." I cleared my throat as I got nearer still to the little window opening in the confessional. At that point my knee slipped off the kneeler on the floor and I crashed forward hitting my face hard against the panel behind which the priest was sitting. He must have jumped out of his tightly stretched skin dropping his jaw to the floor in the process. I know that the rest of the penitents in church must have been startled out of their meditations too as I heard murmurs echoing behind the confessional curtain. I straightened myself and soon realized that the knock to my face had started a nose bleed. I took out a handkerchief quickly and said in a loud enough voice to be heard by everyone "We'll have to continue this conversation at another time ..."

I got out of the confessional holding my head back and covering my face with the now red handkerchief. As I made my way to the exit I heard a lady say to another: "I'm not going to confession today. This new French priest is rather violent with his penance!"

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Mrs Felix



The next door neighbour on my right is a lovely old lady living alone in a large house ever since she was widowed a few years ago. She spends her time tending to her lovely gardens both at the front and at the back of the house.

The front garden in particular is a joy to see. It is always full of flowers of every kind and colour especially roses. Red ones, pink ones, cream coloured ones all smelling heavenly as you walk past her house.

To be honest, she does employ a gardener, who visits every other day, but why be uncharitable and take away any credit which she deserves. Her garden is perfect and that's a fact.

I was off to buy a newspaper the other day and I saw her pruning the rose bushes. I greeted her as per usual and she just mumbled something incoherent under her breath.

“Are you all right Mrs Felix?” I asked politely, “you seem awfully quiet today!”

“Oh I'm sorry ...” she apologised, “I'm very upset just now ... Churchill is dead!”

Well, I know she is a little elderly, but not so much so that she's losing her marbles poor soul. We all know that the famous politician has passed away years ago, but this is taking bereavement a bit too far. It's not his anniversary or is it? I thought to myself.

She noticed the puzzlement on my face and added, “Churchill is a pet of mine ... or rather he was!”

I nodded silently and thought, we all have our favourite celebrities or film stars I suppose, but I've never heard of a favourite politician. Then the light bulb switched on in my head ... she has, or had a pet named Churchill.

Now I've never seen nor heard a dog barking in her back garden, nor have I seen a cat there either. So what possibly could Churchill be? A rabbit? No ... she doesn't look like a rabbit person. A tortoise maybe ... a bit too slow I suppose, even for her.

“I found him dead in his cage ...” she said.

Ah ... a budgie. Or a prize winning budgie to be precise! I wondered what he'd won prizes at ... whistling in the dark without any sheet music perhaps. Or

A CHUCKLE A DAY

holding his breath whilst looking at the little mirror in the cage? My brain cells were suddenly in overdrive and I was rehearsing budgie jokes to myself. I wonder whether a budgie is good at budgie jumping I asked.

“I’m thinking of burying him in the back garden ...” she said, “will you help me do it?”

That’s odd I thought. I always thought dead budgies get a naval burial down the toilet ... or is it goldfish? Anyway ... let’s help this kind old lady and notch it up as my good deed for the year.

I entered the house and she showed me a little cardboard box which once contained biscuits. There, lying peacefully on its side on a bed of soft cotton wool was Churchill. All three inches of him.

I took the box from her hands and its cover and followed her in the back garden. She chose a nice shady place by a tree and decided to bury him there. I put the box and its lid on the garden table and followed her to the shed to get a spade.

And just then it happened ... catastrophe of all catastrophes. Out of the bushes came my own stupid cat from next door. He pounced on the table, grabbed Churchill in its mouth and ran away. It all happened so quickly in slow motion ... like it often does in the movies.

I thought ... Noooooh ... in slow motion of course.

I can often think in slow motion ... my speciality.

I stood there frozen on the spot while all this happened. Mrs Felix continued totally unaware towards the shed.

As I regained my senses I rushed to the box and put the lid back on.

I started digging furiously where she asked me to ... all the time praying that she did not wish to see Churchill one more time by opening the box.

As soon as the hole was large enough I picked up the box from the table and placed it deep down.

“Aren’t you going to say anything nice?” she asked, “You being a religious man and all ...”

“Oh yes ...” I replied, “dear Churchill I have never had the pleasure of knowing you in life... but I’m sure you brought a lot of happiness to Mrs Felix and all those who were fortunate enough to know you ... may you now rest in peace ... wherever you are!”

“Amen ...” said Mrs Felix wiping a tear as I buried the box hurriedly; and as my cat came out of the bushes licking his lips in sheer delight.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Shakespearean Tragedy



Now not many of you know this ... in fact none of you know this, because I've never mentioned it before ... but I am a Shakespearean actor.

And by that I don't meant that I am a contemporary of the great Bard himself ... somehow fossilised and just discovered and brought to life.

Although some people have been known to refer to me as an old fossil ... I can't think why ... rather unkind I reckon. Just because I dress differently doesn't mean one has to be insulted! I just happen to like wearing a toga. It gives me an air of dignity and decorum.

See what I've done there? I used two words with the same starting letter ... dignity and decorum. It's called alliteration. No ... not an affliction ... that's a totally different kettle of fish. It's alliteration ... a poetic effect achieved by using several words all starting with the same consonant. Dignity and decorum! Delicious delicacy ... and so on.

Maybe I'm a poet and I don't know it.

Anyway ... as I was saying ... I believe a toga gives me an air of je ne sais quoi! Especially when I add a twig from an olive tree to my hat! People point at me as I go to the shop in the morning to buy my newspaper and say ... look at that guy wearing a dress and a bowler hat with a tree on top. Must be Nero!

So, as I was saying ... I am a Shakespearean actor and a member of a small troupe who perform publicly at various venues far and wide. The further the better our audience might say ... but they're being unkind.

We're very good really. Matilda, Hilary, Gerard and I. It's a small troupe as I said ... an ensemble you might call us. We try our best to be as authentic as possible when performing our plays ... even though some of us are getting on a bit.

Poor Matilda for instance ... she made quite a vision as Cleopatra with her false teeth and hairnet.

Age shall not wither her, nor custom stale her infinite variety ... as our Bard would say.

And there she was dear Matilda ... totally un-withered and her infinite variety not at all stale.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

But I digress ... as I am wont to do.

To get back to the point ... our little troupe rehearses our productions in our living room every Wednesday evening. We put the headphones on the dog so we don't disturb his TV viewing and we gather there to read our lines.

Now being a perfectionist, I like to dress in full costume beforehand and rehearse my lines in front of a full length mirror. You should have seen me as Mark Anthony the other day ... frightened the cat I did!

This evening I was rehearsing my lines from Hamlet.

To be or not to be ... that is the question! I said in my best English accent. To be ... or not ... to be ...

And the cat came into the room meowing and rubbing himself against my legs. I gently pushed him away and continued ... To be ... or not to be ...

But the wretched cat continued to pester me ... and my rehearsal turned more into ... To meow ... or not to meow ... that is the purr ... purr ... question.

Go away ... I said to the silly creature ... this is a monologue ... not a catalogue!

But it wouldn't go away, so I eventually put him out in the garden just as my guests arrived.

So there we were ... Matilda, Hilary, Gerard and I ... enjoying a nice cup of hot lemon tea.

I like to offer them lemon tea because it loosens the vocal chords you see ... it was also on offer and a little cheaper at the supermarket this week.

So we were enjoying a nice cuppa and chatting away casually when the cat came in and gently placed a dead mouse at Matilda's feet.

Eeeeeek!!! She screamed loudly throwing her hot tea in Gerard's lap. He suddenly awoke feeling the sudden rise in temperature and accidentally kicked the small table sending teapot, sugar and Viennese biscuits flying through the air.

I like to offer Viennese biscuits because they're so delicate ... and also on offer ... buy one get one free. So I got two packets.

Anyway ... in the mayhem that ensued the dog suddenly awoke and rushed out of the room still wearing the headphones, dragging the TV to the ground as it broke into millions of pieces.

The whole evening's events were totally disrupted and our rehearsals adjourned to a date in the very distant future.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

The cat enjoyed the Viennese biscuits but was not too partial to the lemon tea. I understand both Matilda and Gerard are consulting their respective lawyers. Hilary on the other hand is still taking tranquillisers.

But such are the vicissitudes of life that your fortune soon changes without any warning.

All this time I have been driven to maddening distraction by my cat plotting against me and then, just out of the blue, something happens to change things completely.

I have now landed a big part in a play that's showing locally in town. I play the part of a mouse.

I know it's not Shakespeare but he could have written it I suppose ... if he was into pantomimes. That's a British comedic theatre style ... for those of you who don't know.

I play one of the mice which turn into horses in the Cinderella story.

As you know, I like to rehearse my lines in full costume at home in front of a full length mirror.

I realise that in Cinderella I don't have any lines to say per se ... I just stand there dressed as a mouse together with three other actors ... then there's a big bang as the Fairy Godmother waves her wand ... the lights go out ... at which point the four mice leave the stage, and when the lights switch on again we've been replaced by four other actors dressed like horses.

It's very complicated you see and requires a lot of rehearsals to get it right.

So I took my costume home and put it on ... then I stood there in front of the mirror looking like a giant mouse.

And that's when the vicissitudes came into full effect in my life.

The cat came in and AHHH!!!! He was totally frightened out of his nine lives. He thought one of the many mice he has been chasing in the past had come back for revenge. He climbed madly on top of the wardrobe and would not come down ... shaking to death he was.

What a turn of events. The cat who made my life hell all these years is now cowering away like a quivering jelly on top of the wardrobe.

But vicissitudes have a way of changing quickly. Hence the word vicissitudes.

The lazy dog usually half-asleep in front of the TV woke up suddenly upon hearing the cat's commotion.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

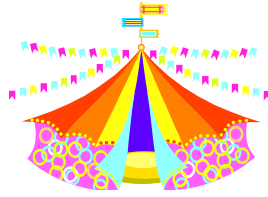
He looked at me and decided there's no way he'd let a giant mouse usurp his territory.

He started growling ... I tried to calm him down ... but he pounced toppling me onto the ground and biting me in several unmentionable places.

I'm currently recuperating in hospital ... but considering playing the role of the lion in the production of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

At the circus



Why is it that people mistake the way I dress for what it is not?

Let me explain.

The other day we went to the circus as a family. I was dressed in my usual cowboy type hat with a large feather on the side, an orange colored jacket with large squares in a lighter shade of orange, and bright red tartan trousers; not forgetting my favorite bow tie of course!

We sat in the big top, which as you all know is a large circular tent with the audience sitting all round the circumference with the show taking place in the middle area of the tent.

The music was blaring loudly, every one was happy with excitement and all was going well ... until someone pointed out that they'd forgotten something in the car. Being the gentleman that I am I got up to get the forgotten item.

On the way back I must have mistakenly taken the wrong opening in the tent. I stood in a long corridor type enclosure with a lot of other people some dressed as clowns, others in Tarzan type outfits carrying heavy weights, others in ballerina costumes, and then behind me people came holding on to horses, and one man gave me a small donkey to hold by a rope tied to his neck. Then further behind us came more people with elephants and tigers in cages on trucks.

There was a big drum roll from inside the tent and pretty soon everyone moved forwards to a loud fanfare.

It was obvious to every one but me that I was part of the big entrance into the large tent announcing the start of the show.

I had no option but to walk forwards with the crowd holding on to the donkey.

As we entered the tent the clowns beside me started to throw a large beach ball at each other.

One of them caught the ball and threw it at me knocking my hat off!

I heard the audience roar in delight.

I stopped and bent down to pick up my hat when the clown behind me kicked me in the backside to the delight of the audience, except my family sitting nearby!

A CHUCKLE A DAY

I let go of the rope holding the donkey and went back for my hat. At which point, for some reason, the donkey ran away from the orderly queue and started hopping up and down like a wild bucking bronco.

This frightened the elephants which started trumpeting loudly.

Fortunately someone caught the donkey quickly and order was restored although the audience thought it was all part of the show as they applauded enthusiastically and laughed loudly.

I put on my hat and walked in unison with everyone else once more around the big tent. Whilst looking straight ahead trying to avoid eye contact with my family I accidentally stepped into a deposit left there by an elephant. The audience near me at the time whooped in delight!

Eventually I followed everyone else out of the big tent and I made my way back to the car to get cleaned up.

I returned to my family and had great difficulty explaining the whole situation to them.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Feline Dilemma



It was about five o'clock in the morning when I heard a sound outside in the front garden. It sounded like cats fighting.

I looked out of the front window and saw two cats chasing each other in our garden. One of them, doing the chasing, was our tom cat. The other one was some female cat owned by someone down our street.

Our tom cat must have been making advances to his girl friend because he was carrying a bunch of flowers and a box of chocolates, figuratively speaking you understand. But the other cat was either playing hard to get or was not at all interested in his amorous advances. How am I to know? It's difficult enough for us men to understand women let alone female cats!

Anyway ... both cats were jumping all over the garden and in the street like hares do in early March. And in all their jumping my cat landed hard on the side of my neighbor's car setting off the alarm.

Both cats flew away and I was left there at the window watching the lights in the car going on and off and the alarm sounding loudly enough to awaken the whole neighborhood.

Minutes later our neighbor came out bare feet and in his pajamas. As he approached his car he must have slipped on the damp grass and landed hard on his backside. He switched off the alarm using a remote control key whilst still sitting on the wet grass.

Before he managed to get up his little dog terrier came out running from the house barking like mad and running down the street.

The neighbor's wife then came out in her negligent. (I bet you're all looking this word in your dictionary. I like using French words in my stories – it adds class!)

She helped him up and he got in the car to go and fetch the runaway dog. For some reason, instead of going forwards he reversed hurriedly and mounted the sidewalk hitting a tree behind him. He let out some profane words which I will not repeat here and then drove off at speed.

His wife waited for him in the street. About ten minutes later he returned and got out of the car with the little dog in hand.

The thing is ... do I tell him that it was my cat who set off the car alarm or not?

What do you think?

A CHUCKLE A DAY

A Labra what?



A friend of ours asked if we could look after their dog whilst they go away for the weekend.

Now if it was up to me, seeing I'm always kind and ready to oblige, I would instantly have said "No!"

The reason being that if anything is likely to go wrong it surely will; and more often than not it will affect me.

But I was not asked and the dog duly arrived last weekend. It's a white Labradoodle. They tell me it's a cross between a Labrador and a poodle but I'm not sure which parent was more cross when this creature entered the world. It looks more like a big sheep with fluffy white fur everywhere including its legs. A low lying cloud more like!

And it's called ... wait for it ... "Koocheekoo".

Note the spelling. The owners insist on it. Apparently it's registered in some kennel or other by that name and they can trace its lineage further than I can trace my family tree.

It's pronounced "Koo ... chee ... koo ..." You must leave a little space in-between the three syllables and change the intonation in your voice as you call his name.

Anyway ... I was made to volunteer to take this ball of fluff out for a walk. As soon as we got out in the street he started bouncing and galloping as if he was fitted with springs on its legs. I tugged gently at its lead and got him close to me so he couldn't bounce all over the place like a helium balloon.

We walked up our street and then we stopped on the edge of the sidewalk to cross the road. He stood on his back legs and tried to lick my face. I gently got him down again and waited for a gap in the traffic so we could cross.

As I looked left and right for enough space in the traffic to cross the road the stupid creature lifted his back leg and did his business on my leg.

Now why did he do that? I mean ... I know I was wearing my brown corduroy trousers and a green jacket at the time. But that is no reason to mistake me for a tree.

I also had my large cowboy-type hat with the big feather on at the time. Surely that should have alerted the dim-witted dog that I was not a tree inviting him to leave his territory marking deposit.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

I lifted my right leg, almost as a reflex action to see the damage done to my corduroy when, at that very instant, the dog noticed a cat some distance away and made a run for it. He caught me off-guard and off-balance ... I dropped flat sideways like a felled tree. I'm sure I heard someone shout "Timber!"

I held on tight to the lead whilst the dog was pulling hard, standing on its hind legs, and barking its head off to attract the attention of every passer-by.

It was at that point, whilst lying flat on the ground, that I noticed that my nose was only inches away from another solid deposit left there by another dog.

I got up hurriedly and put my hat on. I calmed the dog down, cleaned myself a little ... I'll never wear those brown corduroys and green jacket again ... and we made our way to the park.

At the park the dog bounced like a balloon at the end of the lead and barked at everything in sight. It was friendly barking ... more to say "Hi ... look at me ... am I not beautiful?" and it had the effect of attracting several sideways glances and smiles as if to say "What is an idiot like him doing with a dog like that?"

And then disaster happened.

Somehow the tiny collar round the dog's neck broke and the animal ran away at speed.

I stood there for a second or two totally frozen as he fled at the speed of light.

Then, more as a moral duty, or because it is the stupid thing to do, I ran feebly after him with no hope on earth of ever catching him and shouting at the top of my voice "Koo ... chee ... koo Koo ... chee ... koo ..."

It must have been quite a sight.

A man in brown trousers and green jacket, with a feathered large hat, prancing about in the park shouting "Koocheekoo!"

I don't know what people must have thought, but I noticed parents hurriedly packing up their picnics, gathering their children, calling their dogs and rushing to their cars. An old lady walking her small dog waved her umbrella at me menacingly to defend herself. A group of young men playing football all stopped to watch whilst their coach blew his whistle loudly and shouted "Play on! Play on!"

I eventually reached the large pond in the middle of the park totally out of breath and mentally calling the dog every expletive and unrepeatable name I could think of except Koocheekoo.

To my horror the crazy animal was swimming in the middle of the pond and upsetting the ducks, swans and other wildlife.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

His immaculate white fluffy coat had turned into a soggy dirty black mess as he yapped happily at the water fowl around him

Two young men in their early twenties saw my dilemma and offered to get him. They stood by the edge of the pond and whistled at the dog throwing bread on the water they had brought with them to feed the ducks.

The dog swam towards them then seeing me he got out of the pond and ran at me standing on its hind legs to lick my face.

My lovely green jacket was covered in mud, and then, as if this was not enough, the dog stood there and shook himself violently to spray me from head to toe with dirty water off its coat.

The two men managed to use the lead I was holding to tie the dog again and then, slowly and fumingly, I walked him back home.

Should we ever meet, dear readers, please do me the great favor of never uttering the word “Koocheekoo” as it stirs in me several memories of suppressed anger and dread.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Forest picnic



Last summer our young priest thought it a good idea to take some youngsters, aged between 16 and 20 from under-privileged families, for a day out in the forest at the edge of town. The idea was to go out on Saturday, have a picnic lunch and return early evening about 5 o'clock in time for evening Mass.

Somehow, he managed to convince me and a few other adults to go with him and help with supervision and also to provide transport there and back.

We arrived at the forest at about 9 in the morning and we parked our cars on the edge of the forest. Everyone was excited and well prepared. They all carried haversacks filled with all sorts of picnic foods and drinks, and cameras, binoculars and all kind of other things that are considered necessary for a day out in the forest. They were all dressed appropriately of course. Shorts were the order of the day and big thick boots and hats. Even the young priest did away with his white collar and wore a multi-colored open necked shirt and a large hat.

I wore an old pair of khaki short trousers I use when gardening and I brought with me my large cowboy-type hat; the one with the large feather. I had an open necked shirt, so no need for the turquoise bow tie with pink flowers!

I brought with me some sandwiches and small drink in a plastic bag, and most important of all six large bars of chocolate. You need chocolates when out for a long walk; it helps keep your sugar levels well under control if you get tired. Six bars should be enough so I can share them around with the rest of the group.

To save me carrying the chocolates in the bag I put them in the back pockets of my khaki shorts. Three bars in each back pocket. They fitted perfectly.

They all moved eagerly ahead into the forest with the priest leading the way and a few adults interspersed every now and then. I chose to be the last one in the long queue of people, which would give me an opportunity to stop and take a rest every now and then. I'm not into long walks, especially in the forest.

On and on they walked and they sang as they walked. "Sing Halleluiah to the Lord ... Our God reigns ... Seek ye first the Kingdom of God ..." and several other hymns led by the priest at the front and echoed by the rest all the way back to me.

Pleasant it was. But tiring too! Where exactly were we heading? Searching for Dr Livingston or the treasures of the Inca?

It was getting hot ... very hot under a punishing sun which you don't often get around here. Even the feather in my hat was the worst for wear.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

After what seemed miles of walking I felt a trickle down my legs. I stopped and to my horror discovered that the six bars of chocolates had melted soaking my short trousers and dripping away leaving a tell-tale track of brown behind me.

I felt my face go red as panic set in.

What am I to do? I pulled out the empty wrappers of chocolates from my pockets, for that is all that was left ... empty wrappers. Each bar was 600 grams; so that's more than three kilos of chocolates melted down my pants and on my legs with embarrassing visual results that would be almost impossible to explain away.

I tried to wipe as much as possible with my handkerchief which soon became soaked anyway and of no use. I hid the handkerchief under some leaves and forest debris. No point in putting it back in my pocket is there?

I scraped as much of the chocolate off my legs but they still looked embarrassingly brown, as indeed was the back of my trousers.

I could see the rest of the gang well away in the distance. I must catch up with them if I'm not to get lost.

I took off my jacket and wrapped it round my waist by the sleeves just like trendy people do when they pretend they are hot. Well ... I was hot all right ... with embarrassment, panic and fear of getting lost.

I hurried and caught up with the rest of the team just as they were settling down in the woods for a picnic lunch.

I whistled nonchalantly as I arrived and sat on a log some distance away so as not to over-power them with the sweet aroma of melted chocolate.

The young priest said "Grace" and they all started eating their picnics.

Now, why is it when things go wrong for me they continue to go wrong?

As I sat there considering how best to hide my situation for the rest of the day I heard an ominous buzz around me. I'd inadvertently sat on a wasps nest in a hollow in the tree trunk I was on.

Now ... they have the whole forest in which to nest ... why choose this particular tree trunk?

Pretty soon I was up on my feet and dancing in a panic, tapping on my buttocks and legs as I did so.

Wasps up your short trousers are no fun I tell you.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Everyone stopped eating and turned to me wondering what I was up to. Then they realized and a few adults came to my rescue shooing away the wasps with their hats and napkins.

Once the wasps had gone a pleasant young lady helper offered me her chair and the young priest got me a drink of white wine from his haversack to calm my nerves.

The young lady saw me shivering and said I was in shock. I should take the jacket off my waist and wear it to keep warm.

Well ... I could hardly do that? Could I?

The sight of my chocolate stained brown trousers would send her into shock!

I sat there calmly for the rest of the day and when it was time to go home one of the men helpers offered to drive my car back as I was not in a state to drive ... so they said. Although they did not know the real reason why!

Needless to say, I did not join them to Saturday evening Mass but drove straight home for a quick shower and change of clothing.

I hate chocolates. I hate picnics. And I hate forests. Wasps too!

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Morning Warning



The laminated edge on the bathroom cabinet had come loose and last night I put a drop of super strong glue on it to fix it and left the tube on the shelf.

This morning, waking up early in the dark, I went to the bathroom to brush my teeth and wash. By mistake in my hurry I picked up the wrong tube and put glue on my toothbrush.

Immediately, my toothbrush got stuck solid to my teeth!

No matter how much I tried I could not budge it. The bristles on the toothbrush and my teeth had become one. United in marriage until death do them part.

No matter how much I tried to pull, push, or move the brush left or right; it just did not move. It remained stuck to my teeth and protruding from my mouth.

In a panic I yelled for “hlp” but the vowels in my words were stuck to my teeth and would not come out, since you normally require your lips to pronounce your syllables and vowels, and my lips were held permanently open by the protruding toothbrush.

I picked up the tube and read: “Sticks anything to anything permanently regardless of conditions. Works instantly on wet and dry surfaces just as effectively.”

Great!

There are quite a few words here which I don’t like at all. “Anything ... permanently ... instantly ... and wet.”

What am I to do now?

I can hardly go to work with a toothbrush sticking out of my mouth.

I could poke someone’s eye out standing on the crowded bus. That would make an interesting injury compensation claim.

“I hurt my eye!”

“How did you do it?”

“Someone with a toothbrush out of his mouth poked me in the eye on a crowded bus!”

A CHUCKLE A DAY

The Insurance people would never believe it.

And what if as I walked down the street a bird happened to perch on my toothbrush?

What do I do then? Do I shoo it away or leave it there? What if it pooped all over my shirt whilst perched there?

My imagination did somersaults somewhere within my brain whilst the toothbrush remained stuck there anticipating my next move.

What if I rinsed it with soapy water? Soap tastes awful and is ineffective. How about bubble bath liquid? Tastes just as bad. Shower gel? Shampoo? Aftershave lotion? None seem to work.

I look in the mirror and in desperation I get an idea.

What if I wedged the toothbrush in the bathroom cabinet's door and pulled back sharply? One strong hard pull back with my head, whilst holding the door in position with both hands should do it.

Well ... nearly.

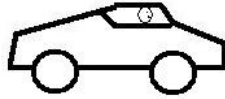
The toothbrush handle broke and all I have left in my mouth is the end bit with the bristles. Still stuck fast to my teeth and refusing to consider divorce.

I can now pull my upper lip down slowly and stretch it over the toothbrush end to cover it from view. It looks as if I have a thick lip as happens when you're punched by a boxer.

I eventually go to the dentist who somehow manages to free me from my ever so clingy toothbrush.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

GPS Lady



There I was driving on the highway and listening ... no, obeying, every word that the GPS Satellite Navigation System lady is telling me.

Turn left, go right, and keep straight ahead ... and so on.

To be honest, she was doing pretty good and was not reading the map upside down; as happens when I have a certain person next to me guiding the way. Not once did the GPS lady say, “you should have taken the left turn we just passed”, half a mile after we passed it. And she never told me to watch out for that cyclist, and I’m too near the parked cars, or that I was going too fast in a built-up area.

I was very impressed with the soft spoken GPS lady, especially since she never shouted that I don’t listen and where did I ever learn to drive.

But she did something very strange.

She suddenly said, “I’m going for a comfort break”.

“Hein?” I thought.

Then there was a lot of chatting in the background. A number of female voices talking about all sorts of things. They talked about knitting patterns and the price of wool, then they talked about cooking and the best way to make pizza dough, and after that they started gossiping about various TV programs and celebrities.

It was obvious that the GPS lady had abandoned me and left her microphone on; and I was listening to her colleagues chatting amongst themselves in between calls and giving directions to their other vehicle drivers.

I continued driving since you’re not allowed to stop on the highway and I prayed and hoped as every mile went by that she’d soon return from her comfort break and direct me to my destination.

I slowed down a little to give her time to get ready, wash her hands, that sort of thing, and return to me.

As the miles went by on my dashboard meter there was no sign of my GPS lady and plenty of signs of my nervous tension reaching new heights.

Then I saw that the highway was splitting into two some miles ahead. I read the notices above the highway saying that to the left you go somewhere or other, and to the right you go somewhere or other totally different.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

But which way is my way? I knew where I wanted to reach my destination but did not know how to get there. If I took either of the two roads ahead I could well end up miles from where I wanted to go. I had a pressing meeting to attend and I could not afford to get there late.

I decided to get off the highway and stop at the safest place possible. I got out of the car and searched for an old map book I knew I had. If modern technology gave up on me I'll get back to the old and tested technology.

A few minutes later a police car drew up and stopped behind me. Two huge policemen in high visibility jackets came out and approached me.

“What seems to be the problem Sir?” asked one of them, “has your car broken down?”

“No ... the car's OK,” I replied hesitantly, “It's my GPS lady ...”

“GPS lady? You mean the announcer on your system. What's the matter with her?”

“She's gone for a comfort break!”

“What?” asked the incredulous policeman.

“The GPS lady directing me to my destination said she needed the toilet about half an hour ago and she hasn't come back!”

Try as I might I could not convince the two policemen what had happened. They suspected I'd been drinking and asked that I take a breathalyzer test there and then to check the level of alcohol in my system, followed by urine and blood tests at the police station.

I protested and they threatened to arrest me. I took the breathalyzer test which of course was negative. I was as sober as a judge who'd lost his GPS lady.

Then it occurred to me to tell them that she left her microphone open and I could hear her colleagues chatting about cooking and knitting.

They approached the vehicle and opened the door. Mercifully, her colleagues were still chatting away. This time they were talking about ballroom dancing.

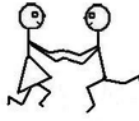
“Sir,” said the second policeman in a stern face which he could hardly keep straight, “this is Women's World on the radio. You must have inadvertently turned off the GPS system!”

They let me off with a warning to be more careful, and went away to write their report.

My GPS lady guided me to my destination, albeit somewhat late.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Dance ... dance



I must confess I've always wanted to be a professional dancer. Just like Fred Astaire or any other dancers you see in the movies and on TV.

The problem is I have big feet. Enormous feet!

When I get on the dance floor there is no room for anyone else because of my big feet. They take over the whole dance area.

And when I dance I tread on other peoples' feet. If it's a slow dance with the lights dimmed right down people trip on my feet and fall all over the place. I've had to put little flashing yellow lights on my shoes and a bleeping sound so that people can see my feet in the dark.

People say that the lights add to the atmosphere on the dance floor but the bleeping sound interferes with the music.

Someone suggested I take up line dancing. In line dancing people stand next to each other and mostly move sideways; so there's no danger of stepping on anyone's toes.

I tried line dancing. My big feet moved so slowly sideways that other dancers tripped over them as they moved left or right.

I tried ballet dancing. When I stood on tip-toe my head hit the ceiling and brought down a few tiles.

At a wedding once I danced the Hokey Cokey (Hokey Pokey). You know the one?

**You put your left leg in, your left leg out,
In out in out, you shake it all about,
You do the Hokey Cokey and you turn around
That's what it's all about.**

It was quite a sight seeing everyone else fall all over the floor whenever I stuck my feet out. At one point my big foot came out so suddenly it hit Aunt Matilda in the face sending her spectacles flying in the air. Everyone stopped to search for her glasses and I inadvertently kicked a few of them to the floor as I continued dancing not realizing what had happened.

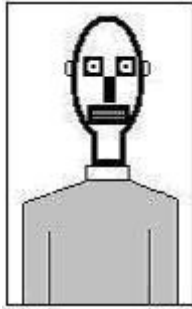
The birdie song wasn't a success either ... nor was the conga line dance when they all follow each other across the floor.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

So regrettably, Fred Astaire and all other famous dancers will get no competition from me. I'll just sit on the side lines tapping my feet to the music ... and watch everyone else bounce about as I shake the floor boards with my big feet.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

When priests get old



Once upon a time there was an old priest who became rather forgetful and tired of giving sermons at Mass on Sunday.

He used to write down his sermons and then read them at Mass; but more often than not he used to forget bringing his sermons to church; so at sermon time he had nothing to read anyway.

He reasoned that if he had to write down his sermons in order to remember them, then how could the congregation be expected to remember them after leaving church.

With such impeccable logic he decided to do something about it.

One Sunday morning at Mass he announced: “I’m getting old and forgetful. I really can’t be bothered anymore with writing sermons I instantly forget. So from now on there will be no more sermons at Mass!”

His congregation was very disappointed and some even complained to the Bishop.

The Bishop called the old priest in for an explanation. Somewhat pensively the old priest explained that he could no longer remember what to say in his sermons, and even though he prepared sermons in writing, he often forgot to bring his writing to church, which meant he had no sermon to deliver.

The Bishop sympathized with the elderly colleague and said: “Here’s something you could try. Next time you have to give a sermon say in a loud voice ‘I have an announcement to make!’

“This will ensure you have everyone’s attention. They will hang on to your every word.

“Then say just as loudly ‘I have fallen in love with a woman’.

“Now this will certainly have them all listening very carefully and remembering your every word.

“And then calmly tell them about the Virgin Mary, and all the good she did for us. It will be easy. Just speak from the heart of your love for Our Lady”.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

The old priest was overjoyed and the following Sunday he stood proudly at the lectern and said loudly:

“I HAVE AN ANNOUNCEMENT TO MAKE!”

And sure enough everyone sat up in their pews to listen very carefully. The old priest then continued just as loudly:

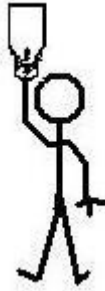
“THE BISHOP HAS FALLEN IN LOVE WITH A WOMAN ...”

As the congregation stirred in their seats the old priest went on:

“I can’t for the life of me remember her name ...”

A CHUCKLE A DAY

In a pickle



I just love pickles. They are juicy, crunchy, sour, salty, tasty and all other good things besides. If you happen to like them, as I do.

I had a large glass jar of pickles and every day I took some out to enjoy with my meal until eventually there was only a tiny little bit of pickle right at the bottom of the jar. It would be a shame to waste it.

So I put my right hand into the jar and tried to dislodge the bit of pickle at the bottom. It was quite a squeeze to get my hand in and ... ehm ... how shall I say this ... my hand got stuck inside the glass jar.

No matter how much I tried to pull it out my hand was stuck inside the jar at the wrist. No twisting or turning would release it.

I remembered from science classes at school that heat expands things and makes them bigger ... so a little heat would enlarge the neck of the jar and release my hand.

Wrong.

I poured boiling water inside the jar and nearly cooked my hand trapped in there. I raised my arm up in the air to empty the jar quickly and got hot water splashing all over me.

There must be a logical solution to this. I don't want to break the jar in case the glass cuts my hand to shreds.

I decided to phone Aunt Philomena. She's an expert at everything and is sure to have an answer.

It's difficult picking up the phone and dialing the number with one hand. I picked the phone with my left hand and balanced it gingerly on my left shoulder. Then I started to dial Auntie's number. As the phone was ringing I got an itch just above my right eye. I raised my right hand to scratch it and hit my head hard with the glass jar knocking myself to the ground.

I must have passed out for a few seconds.

I could hear a distant voice saying "Hello ... hello ... stop breathing heavily down the phone or I'll call the police ..."

A CHUCKLE A DAY

I said incoherently “Is that you Aunt Philomena?”

I explained that I was not a phantom obscene phone call maker and told her my predicament. The poor lady must have been in shock because all she muttered was “Butter ... plenty of butter ...”

She was obviously thinking about making cakes or something delicious which is quite her forte.

All the talk of butter made me hungry. I went back to the kitchen and with my free hand I put two slices of bread in the toaster.

I got a packet of butter from the fridge but it was too cold and almost solid. To soften it a bit I put the packet in the microwave oven for a minute or so.

When I got it out of the oven it was too hot and I dropped the packet of almost melted butter on the floor.

I bent down to wipe it with a towel and I slipped backwards on the melted butter and the water I had previously splashed all over the place.

As I landed on my back my hand must have struck the ground hard and broke the glass jar into million pieces.

I was found later when my family returned from the shops lying unconscious in a pool of water, congealed butter and broken glass ... but no blood.

I blame Aunt Philomena for this!

A CHUCKLE A DAY

My subconscious and I



Me: Hmmm ... I have a few days free right now and maybe I should ...

Subconscious: Oh good ... we're going on holiday!

Me: Holiday? No ... of course not ...

Sub: But, we haven't been on holiday for sometime ...

Me: Yes we did ... we went to the seaside for the weekend two years ago ... that was nice ...

Sub: Wasn't it just? OK ... what will you do with your free days?

Me: Well, I was intending to plan ...

Sub: Oh no ... not more plans. You're always planning something; and writing documents, and filing all sorts of bits of paper. It's your need to be in control of everything. Always planning! Why can't you let things be? Surprise yourself. Be instantaneous. Let things happen for a change, without any plans and schedules. What is it you're planning this time?

Me: Well ... my funeral, as it happens.

Sub: What?

Me: My funeral.

Sub: Are you feeling well? No aches and pains I should know about? Apart from your brain that is! What's brought on the sudden need to plan your funeral?

Me: Well ... It helps get things organized ... you know ... when the time comes. It saves the bother and worry for those left behind to have to sort things out.

Sub: But ... the whole purpose of dying is to get others to sort things out. It gives them something to do and stops them moping around with miserable faces.

Me: It would be nice to organize the funeral service in church. My favorite readings ... favorite hymns ...

Sub: Oh no ... not those sad hymns. What is it with people and sad hymns at funerals? Why not sing something cheerful?

Me: Like what?

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Sub: Like Chitty Chitty Bang Bang or Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious. Maybe people would like to sing those at your funeral rather than your sad hymns.

Me: But people always have mournful songs at funerals.

Sub: Don't they just? And what is it with that song from the movies? What's it called? "And I will always love you". With that very long elongated ... "I" ... which goes on and on before singing "will always love you". What's all that about?

Me: It's sad. It depicts the love people have for the person who has died.

Sub: What nonsense. If you really love someone you tell them so when they're alive. When they're with you. And you show that love through the way you treat them. Not tell them all about it when they're dead ... When it could be too late.

Me: You have a point there ...

Sub: I always do. Take my advice. Forget about planning your funeral and go and show your love for somebody.

Me: How well put ...

Sub: And another thing ... you're a pain in the neck ... working your way South!

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Einstein, Education and other important things you should know



I've always considered education to be very important; especially scientific education. You know ... physics, chemistry, biology, medicine and engineering. The kind of education that makes the world a better place.

Full of enthusiasm, I went to the library the other day and I started reading scientific books. I found one that particularly interested me entitled "Einstein's Theories Explained Easily For Those People Who Knew He Was On To Something Good But Never Quite Understood What This Great Genius Was Trying To Teach The World!"

I must admit they could have done with a shorter title. The title was so long it carried on to the back cover.

Anyway ... I started reading this book "Einstein's Theories etc ..." and noticed that sitting at the table next to mine was a man reading a book about World Statistics. It was a much shorter title although it had the same number of pages as my book. Every so often he muttered to himself "Oh dear ..." "Dear oh dear ..." and such like expressions spreading doom and despondency on my re-awakened enthusiasm for the wonders of science.

Eventually he lent over towards me and said "Do you know that every time I take a breath in and out someone somewhere in the world dies!"

I suggested he uses a better mouthwash.

But I digress. Back to my book. Which is much more interesting, I tell you.

Einstein was quite a clever person you know. It's really amazing what that man knew. It's so wonderful that every so often the world produces great geniuses like him who discover or invent new ways to improve our lives and makes us all better for it.

Folks like Einstein and Penicillin didn't get to where they are by just kicking a ball in the park, you know. I bet they spent many an hour in the library reading books and doing their homework instead of watching TV.

Here are a few interesting facts I learnt from the book about Einstein.

The furthest away you are from the earth's gravity the faster time goes. Say you're on earth with nothing better to do than looking at your watch. And out there very far away in space there's another person also looking at his watch. He'd be in a spaceship of course; otherwise he won't be able to breathe in space. Anyway ... according to Einstein the other fellow's watch will go faster than yours.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

To prove this, scientists have placed a very accurate clock, measuring the smallest nth of a second, at the top of a very tall skyscraper, and an exactly similar clock on the ground floor.

After a period of time the clock at the top of the building was a few minutes ahead of its counterpart at the bottom. It had gained time because at the top of the building time was faster than at the bottom. Because it was further away from the earth's gravity.

Not convinced, I tried this experiment at home.

I put a clock upstairs in the bedroom and another one downstairs in the hall.

The following day the clock at the top was ONE HOUR ahead of the one downstairs.

The battery in the clock downstairs had run out.

Einstein also claimed that because time is faster in outer space, away from the earth's gravity, then someone in outer space, say a twin, would age faster than his brother on earth.

The book therefore recommended that people should not live in high-rise apartment blocks because they'll age faster than people living at ground floor level. Especially if the elevator is not working and they have to walk up and down all those stairs to their apartments.

Enlightened with this knowledge I have moved our bedroom downstairs and the kitchen, (where we don't go that often thanks to fast-foods delivered to our door), has been moved where the bedroom was.

The bathroom moved downstairs by itself when I overfilled the bath with water and it came down through the roof.

Einstein also said that in outer space, at the very edge, space is curved. This is because, apparently, gravity (I don't know whose gravity if gravity is in effect on earth); but stay with me for a while on this ... in outer space the very edge of space is curved because gravity makes it so.

I could not understand how this related to bananas being bent; maybe they come from outer space. Or perhaps I was distracted by another book about fruits which someone else in the library was reading.

Einstein also taught about light. Did you know that nothing can go faster than light?

If you could arrange a race between say light, sound and someone in the fastest car ever made; light would always win. That's because it has moved off the starting line before the sound of the starting pistol has reached your ears.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

And if the fastest car was driving with its lights on, then its light would reach the finishing line at the same time as the other light running on foot. Because light travels at a constant speed regardless of its mode of transport.

The light from the sun reaches the earth at the speed of light. The distance it has to travel however is so long that by the time it reaches the earth it's night time down here and we've all gone to sleep.

I've tried to measure the speed of light in my home experiments. I think I've actually proved that some of Einstein's Theory about light may well be wrong.

If nothing goes faster than light then how come with these new energy efficient light-bulbs I can get downstairs faster than the light at the top illuminates the staircase?

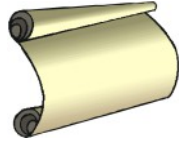
But then these light-bulbs were not invented when Einstein was around. So we can't blame him for getting this one wrong.

Finally, a word about Einstein's Theory of Relativity.

This one is simple: The richer you are the more relatives will turn up at your funeral.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Understanding Paul's Letter to the Corinthians



I entered the house after delivering another load of tents to the local Outdoor Pursuits Shop.

Paul was sitting at the table writing on another pile of parchment papers.

“Hello” I said, “would you like a hot drink?”

“What have you to offer?” he asked without looking up.

“Hot boiled fish water sweetened with honey ...” I replied casually.

“The same old brew ...” he mumbled in disgust, “when will someone discover coffee, or tea or hot chocolate drink?”

“There’s also hot milk and honey from the Promised Land!” I said encouragingly; but he did not answer.

I asked him what he was writing.

“It’s a letter to the people of Corinth ...” he said, “I have to finish it today and send it before postage costs go up yet again ...”

“They’ve asked me for advice on how to live ... just basic advice. I mean ... can’t these people think for themselves. Here, have a read” he continued, as he passed me some bits of parchment which smelled like old goat skins.

I read ... “Chapter 7 - Verse 1”

For some reason Paul always wrote his letters by numbering every chapter and every verse. I don’t know why he did that. Must be some affectation of some kind I suppose. He wrote:

“A man does well not to marry.”

“Hein?” I thought, “what’s he on about?” I kept on reading what seemed to be rather personal advice to these Corinthian people; albeit good advice I must say, and then again, at Verse 7 he wrote:

“Actually, I would prefer if all of you were single as I am ... You single people and widows, it is better if you continue to live alone; just as I do ...”

I stopped and looked at him writing there. I wondered why he’d never got married. Perhaps having met my mother-in-law he got frightened out of matrimony altogether.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

But his advice made no sense. How can he possibly say a man should not marry, and in fact he'd prefer all of them to remain single and live alone?

I asked him "How would people multiply if they followed your advice?"

"What's Mathematics to do with it?" he replied without looking up, "they can learn their multiplication tables like every one else!"

"No ..." I said hesitantly, "I mean ... you know ... doing it ... having babies ..."

"Oh ... I gave them a let out clause in Verse 9" Paul continued nonchalantly, "I told them if they can't control themselves they'd better get married anyway."

"I really can't understand those people ... why can't they distract themselves by playing card games, or Monopoly or similar board games. The shops are full of them!"

I kept on reading and I must admit I got a bit embarrassed at the personal advice which followed. He meant well, I suppose, and maybe those Corinthians were a little slow on the up-take and needed very detailed advice on how to live as early Christians.

Then at Verse 26 he repeated his opinions again.

"If a man is unmarried he should stay this way. If he is married he should not get rid of his wife!"

"Charming" I thought, "no doubt he's considered the costs of divorce and alimony when giving this advice".

But then his letter continued:

"Are you unmarried? Then don't look for a wife ... I would rather spare you the everyday troubles that married people will have."

Well, my mother-in-law certainly has had an influence on him; I thought.

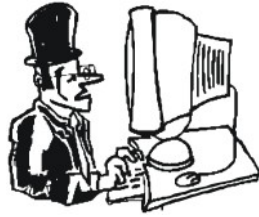
I got out of the house somewhat more confused than those Corinthians will be when they receive this letter.

I was met by my wife and mother-in-law coming home from a shopping trip. Before I had time to welcome them mom-in-law said:

"What are you doing lazing in the sun? Have you no work to do?"

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Computer Poker



I was working late into the night intent on finishing my research assignment due in next day for an important Board meeting. I double checked some details on the Internet when I got a Pop-Up.

“CONGRATULATIONS – You have won a prize! Click below.” It said in bright colours.

Maybe because I was tired and in need of distraction, maybe because I’m just stupid ... but without hesitation I clicked my mouse where advised.

The next screen gave me \$10 online to play poker.

“Yeh right ...” I thought, **“I don’t know the first thing about poker. Anyway, if this computer is online whoever is on the other side can easily ‘read’ my cards ...”**

So more out of disdain than anything else I put the whole \$10 and clicked for some cards.

I can’t recall exactly what happened next, the screen said something **“Flush”** and my \$10 turned to \$50.

I put down my cup of coffee and smiled wryly. **“Beginner’s luck! No doubt.”**

I put down \$10 and lost them. Then another and yet another.

“This game is addictive, I must say ... here’s my last \$10 then back to work.”

To my surprise my last \$10 was greeted with a fanfare and a flashing \$500 in bright red.

“Wow ... what happened there ... is this thing for real?” I gasped as I dropped hot coffee on my lap.

I clicked play again and the flashing sign turned to a question.

“Double or quit?” asked the computer.

It was getting rather late and I really had to finish my assignment. So I clicked OK and waited until the cards were dealt one at a time, and the familiar prompt to move on. I clicked again and then jumped out of my seat at the louder fanfare and fireworks display which lit up the screen.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

“You have won \$1000” flashed the big letters in bright red.

“This must be a joke” I thought to myself. “It’s not for real ...”

I clicked the mouse again ...

“One last chance – one card – highest wins!” challenged the computer.

I clicked and got the 4 of Hearts.

“Aha ... so that’s their trick. Now I lose the lot!”

The computer placed a card slowly on the screen and then turned it over.

The 2 of Diamond.

“You have won \$5000 !!! Enter your details below to receive a check.”

My heart pounded ...My hands trembled ... This isn’t really happening ...

I started writing my name ...

“BANG” popped my speakers.

“APRIL FOOL” flashed the screen.

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A CHUCKLE A DAY

Castle Adventure



This is a true story which happened to me years ago when visiting an ancient castle in Scotland.

The day of our visit was very cold and wet with a northern wind whistling through the windows. The guide taking us round was so old that you may have been forgiven if you thought that he was there when the castle was first built. He spoke in a very Scottish accent and wore a kilt made of the laird's tartan colours.

Having completed our tour the old guide stopped suddenly and looked at me with a wry smile. "There's only one place I haven't shown you !!!" he said.

"Where's that?" I asked shivering from the cold wind.

"The dungeons !!! Follow me."

We followed him down a narrow spiral staircase winding ever downwards like an everlasting corkscrew. It was getting darker as we got deeper into the castle's bowels. He picked up a flaming torch and said: "No electricity down here. This is an original torch. We use oil to light it these days".

Eventually our guide stopped and said; "Down that corridor there, all those doors are dungeons."

He opened the first door and we entered. A few moments later our eyes adjusted to the darkness and we could see the heavy chains hanging from the walls. In a corner were a few instruments of torture. He pointed at dark patches on the walls and explained that it was dried blood.

As we turned round to leave the torch in his hand ran out of oil and went out suddenly. He reassuringly ushered everyone out and I heard the heavy door clang shut.

"Hey wait ... I'm still in here" I shouted. I rushed forward and tripped on something on the ground, I hit my head as I fell and must have lost consciousness.

The next thing I remember is feeling very cold and shivering. My eyes adjusted to the darkness. I could smell the dank atmosphere of this prison and my fear played havoc with my imagination. Was I to be the latest victim of this torture chamber?

I looked up above the heavy door and saw a glimmer of light through some loose stones. If only I could get up there and shout for help.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

I pulled a heavy table towards the door. I used every last ounce of strength even though I was cold and shivering. It's amazing how fear and panic can be a motivator when necessary. I put a box on top of the table and I climbed. First the table, then the box.

I stood on tip toes pulling myself up by grasping tightly at a few crevasses in the ancient wall. I wanted to look through the small hole through which light shone into the dungeon.

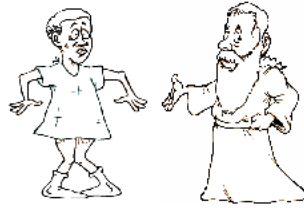
As I stretched a little more the box I was standing on gave way ...

And that's when I fell out of bed and broke my arm.

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A CHUCKLE A DAY

At the Gates of Heaven



One day I died and went straight to Heaven where I was met by St Peter at the Gates.

“Ah ... you’ve arrived!” he said looking at his electronic notepad, “it says here that you claimed to have a sense of humor when alive ... let’s test that shall we?”

“Tell me a joke ... make me laugh and I’ll let you in!”

I was astounded at his attitude on such a solemn occasion; I stumbled to find the right thing to say.

“Ah ... not so funny now, are you?” continued the Saint.

“But ... ehm ...” I mumbled sensing my throat getting drier with nervousness.

“So ... what will it be? A funny joke ... or will you go straight down without a parachute?” chuckled St Peter through his thick beard.

“You’ve just laughed ... a little ...” I pointed out sheepishly, but not without a modicum of forlorn hope, “surely that counts as a joke!”

“That’s true ...” replied St Peter, “you’ve always been ridiculous to look at anyway ... so I’ll let you in.”

I smiled, wiping the cold sweat from my brow.

“Not so fast ... not so fast ...” said St Peter standing at the doorway blocking my view of who was already there. “I need to check a few things first to see whether you need to spend some time at the Purification Center.”

“Purification Center?” I asked.

“Yes ...” he replied with a chuckle, “you Catholics call it Purgatory. It’s like a car-wash to make sure everyone who enters here is cleansed.”

I gulped and waited as he tapped furiously on his electronic notepad. It beeped once or twice and then he said.

“I see that a few years ago you prayed an indulgence to St Victor; your namesake. I remember he was quite pleased about it at the time. Not many people tend to mention him in prayers and for weeks he went around with a big smile on his face. Normally people pray to the more popular Saints ... First Division Saints, you know.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

“It works both ways I suppose. It’s nice to get so many prayers and requests; but quite honestly I get so many that I hardly have time to read them all.

“Anyway ... for your indulgence to St Victor you get one week off from the Purification Center.”

I smiled silently.

“What’s this I see ... you also started another indulgence to some obscure Saint I’ve never met. This place is so large it’s just full of Saints. You can hardly walk a few yards without bumping into one. But I’ve never met this one.”

I tried to remember that particular indulgence but couldn’t.

“That’s a pity ...” said St Peter, “you never finished the indulgence. So it doesn’t count. In fact I’ll have to add two extra weeks in the Purification Center.”

I began to despair when the telephone in the little guard-house by Heaven’s Gate rang. He answered it and then said.

“Hmmm ... it looks like you have friends in high places here. I’ve been asked to let you in.”

I smiled and moved forwards a few feet; but he blocked my way yet again.

“You’ll have to get changed first,” he said, “Go behind that curtain and put this white gown on ... we all wear them here!”

“But ...” I hesitated gaining a little confidence, “this looks very much like the gowns they give you in hospital ... it is all open at the back!”

“That’s right ...” he replied, “it is exactly the same gown. As I said, we all wear them here ... just don’t stand too close to a hot radiator, and watch out when you sit on a cold park bench!” then he chuckled very loudly once again.

He saw my hesitation and then continued in a much gentler voice with as serious a face as he could muster.

“We like people to be helpful to each other here in Heaven; it’s not a selfish place you know. When you wear this gown, go around and find someone who is very handy with a thread and needle and ask them to sew it up at the back. That’s what everybody does. Help each other.

“In time, you’ll learn to sew and then you too will be able to help newcomers.

“Also, this gown will teach you humility. You’ll be able to swallow your pride and ask others for help. You’ve always been a bit proud and a little independent. Now’s the time to learn how to rely on other people and to accept their offer of

A CHUCKLE A DAY

help. Oh ... and be grateful too when they help you. Don't forget to say: Thank you!"

"I will ... I will ..." I replied timidly.

"Remember" he said, "this gown open at the back will teach you to help one another, will give you humility, make you accept people's offer of help, and remind you to say Thank you! You'll also learn how to sew, and of course how not to stand too close to a hot radiator!"

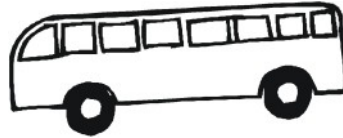
He laughed heartily once again and then said, "So, what will it be? Will you wear the gown or are you going down with no parachute?"

I grasped the gown from his hands and woke up in a cold sweat clutching the bedcovers tightly in my hands.

I must stop having cheese and whisky before bedtime!

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Bus ride home



Once upon a time an old gentleman was taking the evening bus back home after a long and tiring day at work. It was an old bus dating from the 1950s. It had wooden benches facing each other so that passengers sat either face to face or back to back – depending of course on which bench you were sitting on.

The old man took his usual seat and prepared himself for the long journey home. At last, it was Friday, and he looked forward to a peaceful weekend. There was no one else on the bus except for a middle-aged woman sitting nearby, reading her newspaper.

Rocked by the gentle swaying to and fro of the moving vehicle the old man shut his eyes for a while to catch forty winks.

His slumber was soon to be disturbed when at the next stop two very beautiful young ladies came in and sat on the bench opposite him. They were in their early twenties, exquisitely made up and obviously going to a really fancy party or some classy celebration. The old man wished wistfully that he were forty years younger and going to the same event.

Minutes later, one of them commented on the heat in the bus, then almost in unison, they un-buttoned their overcoats revealing different dresses yet identical in that they both featured such a low and generous décolletage that it left little to the imagination.

The old man looked politely to his left and noticed the middle-aged woman raise her eyebrows in horror. Yet she said nothing.

His eyes looked to the front and he was aware that he was staring. He felt his face go red. He glanced out of the window for a while, and then unintentionally looked forward once again. It was obvious he was more embarrassed than the two beauties in front. He didn't know what to do for the best. He couldn't just move seat; that would be too obvious.

He was about to look away once again when one of the young women said in a loud voice "What are you staring at?"

He started to mumble something, when the other young woman joined in "You should be ashamed. Ogling at us like that!"

Affronted he certainly was. For it was no intention of his to admire what was freely on display. He was about to apologise when he suddenly stopped, leaned forward towards one of the women and said "Madam, I think you should have this small lump checked by a doctor, it may well be breast cancer."

A CHUCKLE A DAY

“What?” said the woman, “What are you talking about?”

“I should know, madam” the old man replied gently, “I am a retired doctor”.

“Don’t listen to him,” said her companion in disdain.

The old man pointed at the second girl’s right arm and said calmly, “and you madam, should have that skin discolouration seen to. It could well be malignant”

“What do you mean malignant?”

“It could be skin cancer,” he replied knowingly.

The two girls fell silent. They buttoned their overcoats. Minutes later the bus stopped and they got off.

As the bus drove away, the old man looked at them standing in the street, anxiously looking at the first girl’s breast, then at the arm of the second one.

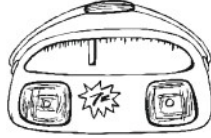
He was about to doze off once again when the middle-aged woman, who had witnessed the whole event said, “It’s lucky you’re a doctor. You probably saved those girl’s lives you know!”

“Oh I’m not a doctor,” he replied with a smile, “but I certainly ruined their evening!”

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A CHUCKLE A DAY

Radio Interview



“This is James Jones here in the High Street and I have with me Arthur Bartholomew who has witnessed everything as it happened. Now tell me Arthur, you were first on the scene as I understand it

“Don’t nod; they can’t see you nodding on the radio. Is that OK?

“You’re nodding again; are you nervous? Now you’re shaking your head. Just speak to me and don’t worry about the microphone.”

“I’m not nervous.”

“Good ... good ... now you told me earlier that you saw the horse running amok ... where did it come from?”

“Over there ...”

“Don’t point Arthur ... the listeners can’t see you pointing ... so the horse came from the top of the High Street and ran through the market ... where did it end up?”

“It ran through the market then jumped over here ...”

“Yes ... that’s over the market stalls. Don’t point Arthur. Just say where the horse jumped.”

“That’s right ... then he ran over there ...”

“You’re pointing towards the school ... that’s where the horse ran to?”

“That’s right ... over there where that car is going.”

“I see ... although the listeners can’t ... anyway ... he ran by the school in George Street. Tell me Arthur ... was it a big horse would you say?”

“It was that high I suppose ...”

“Yes ... to explain to the listeners ... that’s about six or seven feet high. A fairly big horse.”

“Or it could have been this high ... it all happened so quick ...”

“That’s a bit less. So about five to seven feet high ... a medium sized horse or probably a little bigger. Now tell me Arthur, what colour was it? Black, white ...”

A CHUCKLE A DAY

“No ... no ... more like this colour I would say ...”

“Arthur ... you’re pointing at my trousers. The listeners on the radio can’t see that. I would say the horse was a darkish gray. Would you agree? You’re nodding again ... people can’t see you nodding on the radio.”

“Sorry. It could have been a little darker ... more like the colour of that thing.”

“Don’t worry Arthur ... thank you for your help. So to summarize for our radio listeners ... the horse ran from over there, jumped over here, and then proceeded in that direction. It was about this high or possibly that high and according to Arthur here it was either this colour or that colour.”

“Or a shade in between”

“Thank you Arthur ... This has been a most challenging interview to give a new reporter and I’m going over there for a drink!”

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A CHUCKLE A DAY

Chaos Theory Explained



In Chaos Theory the butterfly effect is an assumption that if a butterfly somewhere far away flutters its wings then the air turbulence it creates, no matter how small, will move a little more air, and that little air will in turn move more air, and more and more that eventually, several weeks later, a hurricane will develop somewhere else far away.

Can you imagine that? A flap of a butterfly's wings creates a hurricane weeks later?

Actually, I have seen Chaos Theory happen in reality as I'll explain right now.

This happened several years ago in Scotland one New Year's Eve. I had been invited by a friend to his large house to celebrate Hogmanay with his family and friends. There we were, about fifty people or so, gathered in his back garden waiting for the midnight hour to start our outdoor celebrations. Most people were in traditional costumes and I, to oblige and be polite, agreed to wear a kilt provided me by my host.

I must admit it felt a bit draughty and awkward, especially since it was a little cold that night in deepest Scotland.

As I was the guest of honour, or so he said, I agreed to give the countdown to midnight so that the celebrations might begin.

There we were chatting politely to each other, and I standing on the makeshift rostrum next to the band consisting of about a dozen pipers and drummers, when a lone moth, or similar such like insect, flew up my kilt. I immediately and as a reflex action started hopping from foot to foot as the confused insect tried to find its way round in total kilt-induced darkness.

The band leader thought I was doing a modern hitherto unknown highland jig and he gave the signal for the band to start playing.

At this, someone else lit the bonfire in the garden which immediately rose to ten feet flames lighting the whole place.

This prompted another person to start the fireworks display which lit the sky in numerous colors and resounding bangs all over the neighborhood.

The guests all held hands and started singing Auld Lang Syne at the top of their voices around the fire.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

This brought out the neighbors from next door into their garden.

“What are you playing at Henderson?” shouted MacTavish the neighbour, “It isn’t midnight yet. We’re at least seven minutes away man ...”

“Of course we’re not!” Henderson shouted back, “your clocks must be slow!”

“And you’ve no purpose to dress up in our national costume and have bagpipes and drums ... you’re not even Scottish!” retorted MacTavish.

“Of course I am ... my great great grand mother was from Dundee, I’ll have you know!” said Henderson getting red in the face.

“Yes ... and she was exported or deported to Australia for reasons best known to herself. You’re no more a Scot than a kangaroo is. You’re even having a barbecue ... now you can’t get more Australian than that. A barbecue on New Year’s Eve!” MacTavish came back with obvious laughter from his friends on his side of the garden fence.

“I’m Scottish enough to give you a Glasgow kiss old man ...”

“Leave my husband alone” interrupted Mrs MacTavish, “you’re Australian all right; and like all Australians you want to celebrate the New Year before every one else ...”

At this, for some unknown reason, the band-leader decided to get the pipers and drummers to play *Waltzing Matilda* and all of Henderson’s guests started dancing round the bonfire and singing the Australian National Anthem.

“There you have it ... *Waltzing Matilda* ...” shouted MacTavish drowned by his dogs barking at Henderson’s dogs, “you’re Australians ... the lot of you ...”

“And you’ve made us miss the New Year countdown ...” added Mrs MacTavish, “it’s ten minutes past midnight at least ... and we haven’t done first-footing.”

At this point, Henderson’s neighbours from the other side came out into their garden and, believe it or not, they were Greeks.

“Happy New Year to you all” shouted Stavros obviously the worst for wear with drink, “does anyone want a cup of Ouzo?”

Some of Henderson’s guests stopped dancing and went towards Stavros.

“We also have stuffed vine leaves plenty ... and *youvarlakia* with *avgolemono* and *baklava* too. Plenty ... plenty ...” continued Stavros as his wife brought out a large dish laden with food.

At this point two police cars arrived, no doubt called by some other neighbours, and four policemen entered Henderson’s back garden.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

“We’ve had reports of a disturbance” said one of the cops.

“Of course it’s a disturbance ... it’s the New Year. What do you expect? Get a drink down your neck officer ...” replied Henderson offering the policeman a bottle of whisky.

“I think you should keep the noise down, Sir!” said the policeman turning down the drink.

“Sarge ... you can’t get them to celebrate quietly. Not tonight surely?” asked the second officer.

“Take a baklava with you!” shouted Stavros from his side of the fence as the police left, “or a Greek kalamata olive. It is the best!”

The shouting, singing and music continued through the night as the MacTavish’s and the Stavros’s joined the Henderson’s in their back garden and celebrated the New Year international style.

I never got to find out where that moth ended! Must have flown away by a sudden gust of Southerly wind.

A CHUCKLE A DAY



It was a lovely summer's afternoon that Sunday when we sat as a family and enjoyed a sumptuous Sunday lunch. We had roast beef as well as fried chicken which had been marinated in all sorts of flavorsome spices and herbs; accompanied by an assortment of vegetables including of course the dreaded Brussels sprouts.

I have never understood why God created this particular vegetable; but create it He did. No doubts He has His reasons and one day we'll discover how beneficial it is for us and how silly and uneducated we have been to dislike it so. However, for now at least, most people I know don't seem to like it.

I don't count myself amongst them, of course. I'm neutral in this respect. I would eat Brussels sprouts if offered to me but I would not go out of my way to ask for them in a gourmet restaurant.

But that Sunday, Brussels sprouts were on the menu. I believe they were mixed with walnut pieces and fried onions, if memory serves me right.

We had Auntie Philomena staying with us for a few days and we had also invited Father Frederic to Sunday lunch. The two had never met each other so we sat them next to each other around the large dinner table.

It was a lovely meal with pleasant conversation on no particular subject and all subjects that came to mind.

After lunch, we all moved to the living room to enjoy a nice cup of coffee and continue our discussion.

Father Frederic sat on the sofa leaving a little room for someone else to sit beside him and a few minutes later, as well all made ourselves comfortable, Auntie Philomena came in and sat beside the priest.

Sadly, and embarrassingly for her, as she lowered herself in the well upholstered settee she accidentally broke wind with a thunderous loud noise.

I should mention at this stage that Father Frederic is somewhat hard of hearing; and he therefore did not notice nor pay attention to what had just happened.

I immediately tried to cover Auntie's embarrassment by asking him loudly some Ecumenical question that came to mind.

As I leaned towards him speaking a little louder than usual I noticed his face going a little pale as the tell-tale strong smell reached my olfactory senses.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

He looked at me accusingly as Auntie got out of the room saying “I forgot the biscuits in the kitchen ... I’ll go and get them!”

She was followed by the rest of the family leaving me alone with the kind old priest and the smell from hell.

Suddenly, the Ecumenical question became totally irrelevant as my mind went blank and my hurt pride and wounded honor urged me to shout at the top of my voice “It was not me!!! It was her!!! She did it and went out leaving me sharing her stench.”

But being the stupid gentleman which I am, I said nothing. I kept quiet and protected a lady’s pride and honor by my silence.

“Would you like a biscuit?” I asked Father picking up the large serving dish which was there all the time.

“That’s a lovely piano ...” replied Father Frederic getting up from his seat and moving towards the open window. “Our church organ needs mending ... it doesn’t pump so much wind in the pipes as it used to.”

Somehow, the uneasy conversation which followed and the fresh air from the open window, diluted the heavy atmosphere in the room as eventually the rest of the family rejoined us accompanied by an innocent looking Auntie Philomena.

Since that day, Father Frederic keeps his distance from me whenever we meet.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Waspy Summer



It was one of those annoying Summers you sometimes get in Britain.

Rain and a little sun, then rain, and sun again. Over and over for days.

This meant that the grass in the back garden grew taller and taller and it proved impossible to cut it. Whenever we had a little sunshine the grass was too tall and still wet and it would not cut with the lawn-mower. As it dried and we got ready to cut it, that's assuming we had nothing better to do at the time, as soon as we got the lawn-mower out it started to drizzle again.

I went out to the shed to put the lawn-mower in again and I noticed just under the roof what appeared to be a large nest of wasps. They were buzzing around all over the place and saying to each other: "Here he is again ... shall we have some fun like last year?"

The previous year I had inadvertently disturbed their nest and got stung several times, no doubt to their delight and amusement.

But not this year ... revenge will be finally mine.

I quickly got into the house, searched my telephone directory, and rang a Pest Control Firm. I'd never used them before but their name sounded quite proficient: "Pest Control" – Direct and to the point.

About half-an-hour later a small white van with absolutely no signage whatsoever turned up.

"That's good ..." I thought, "very discreet. I wouldn't want the neighbors to know I have pests ... and have them speculate what they could be."

Mice ... rats ... cockroaches ... fleas ... or other vermin. Some neighbors can be quite nosy and would look at me with disdain if they knew I had pests. And let's face it ... some pests are more acceptable than others. Like wasps for instance, and bees, or bats ... they are treated with respect and are environmentally more acceptable to society.

Anyway ... out of the little white van comes a man in his forties dressed in a yellow T-shirt and blue jeans, and a young lady in her mid twenties dressed in a thin, almost transparent blouse, and the miniest of mini skirts.

Now I'm not a very clever man but I'm sure that a yellow T-shirt is not the ideal apparel. Bright yellow tends to attract flying insects. Even I know that.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

But then, maybe this is part of their disguise to fool the neighbors. Perhaps they'll dress up in overalls and face masks once they're in my garden to avoid being stung.

They got to the back garden and I warned them that the grass is slippery and wet.

They ignored me and walked all the way to the shed. The man took out a little notebook from his pocket and said: "Let's see what we have here ... asp ... adder ... bee ... bumblebee ... cockroach ... cricket ..."

"Great ..." I thought, "he'll go through the whole alphabets until he finds they are WASPS !!!"

Then, to my amazement, he took a little extendable metal stick from his pocket and opened it out like you do with old style car radio aerials until it was some five feet long. He moved a little closer to the nest, leaving the young lady a few feet behind him, and started poking the nest with the stick.

As I said, I'm not a very clever man, but I knew straightaway that this was not a wise thing to do. I withdrew a little.

The young lady remained a few feet behind him as he disturbed the wasps which started buzzing like a small dark cloud up ahead.

He kept poking, almost destroying the nest, with his stick.

"There are no wasps in this nest" he said to the young lady behind him, "it's empty".

She stood there and said nothing.

I shouted "They're right above your head ... you'd better move away quick!"

He looked up at the dark cloud getting nearer and ran away knocking the poor lady so hard that she fell flat on her back sending her legs flying right up in the air.

He then slipped and fell right on his face in the wet grass and mud. He got on all fours and ran towards me like a dog; followed by the young lady doing the same.

They stood up beside me cleaning themselves from the wet mud which covered them from head to toes.

"They're wasps all right!" he said with authority, as he looked at the poor creatures buzzing around their destroyed nest.

"What do we do now?" I asked.

"Oh ... I'll spray some powder to stop them returning to the nest!" he replied.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

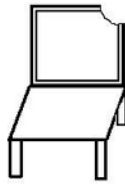
He got some powder which he sprayed like a white cloud everywhere; no doubt including his lungs.

I paid him, somewhat reluctantly I must admit, and they left never to be seen again.

As for the wasps; I suppose they built a new nest somewhere else.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Business Proposition



Dear Friends,

I have a very interesting business proposition to put to you which will mature into a valuable investment.

But first let me give you some background.

A certain member of our family recently made a batch full of black buns. Now for those who don't know, this is a rich Scottish fruitcake which is encased in pastry and then cooked. It is a particular delicacy up North on Hogmanay; and other celebratory occasions.

Now for some reason, this particular batch of black buns was harder than usual. I mean, black buns in our household are normally hard, but this lot was so hard you could have built a house with them. If you had enough of them that is; which thankfully we didn't.

No one wanted to eat them so I took them to the local park to feed the ducks in the pond. To my amazement the black buns floated on the surface of the water. Perhaps they were hollow inside, or the rising pastry had trapped some air between the casing and the fruitcake inside.

As soon as these pastry bricks floated on the pond a flock of ducks came floating towards them cackling with excitement. The sound attracted even more ducks and swans and birds who gathered around me for a Scottish feast.

Surprisingly, their sharp beaks managed to break through the concrete pastry and into the cake but ... oh horror ... as soon as the ducks and swans ate some of the fruitcake they sank to the bottom of the pond like stones. A while later they got up to the surface and quickly got out of the water belching and farting and searching for indigestion tablets.

I got home somewhat dejected at my failure in introducing our ducks to a Northern delicacy; and then it hit me ... (someone threw a black bun at me which I had inadvertently forgotten behind!).

I picked up the bun and pondered. As I held the cake in my hand the warmth I generated started to soften the pastry. I ate a bit. It tasted nice and soft; so did the cake inside.

And that's how genius works, my friends.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

I had in my hand a hard edible substance, hard enough for me to stand on it without it crumbling, yet body warmth makes it soft, and safe to eat, and sweet.

What if I had enough black buns ingredients to mould the cake into the shape of a seat?

We quickly made another lot and in about an hour or so we had made a small baby-sized chair. It was strong enough for me to sit on, I tell you; yet, after a while I could break off a bit from the chair and eat it.

That's it folks! Edible furniture has arrived.

We're now discussing business terms with a furniture manufacturer and a large bakery nearby.

We intend making all sorts of seats, chairs, sofas, armchairs, as well as tables and other household items. We're thinking about different flavors too. Chocolate is a distinct favorite as well as vanilla flavored pastry and savory cakes too.

Can you imagine the endless possibilities?

You invite guests to dinner at your house and end up eating the furniture. We're considering meat and vegetable flavors too as well as vegetarian and vegan products.

The advantage of this is that you save on expensive meals which you have to prepare and cook and, every time you have a party you have a new style of furniture to keep up with the latest styles and fashions ... and flavors.

If you go on a picnic, all you have to take with you is some chairs which you can eat whilst lying there on the beach, or nearby a river, or in the park. And don't worry about cleaning up afterwards. Any crumbs you leave behind will be eaten by the birds.

Imagine for a moment sports venues where all the spectators sit on edible seats which they eat whilst enjoying the football game. They'd be able to book a seat in advance in their favorite flavors.

The same applies to cinemas and theaters. Can you see yourself eating through an opera or a concert?

I've received this morning an order for a large consignment of said edible furniture from a famous Department Store. I could have shown you the order, but I ate it.

So if you wish to make a fortune, you'd better invest in this new venture right now. It's selling like hot cakes.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Look out for a camera



I'm sure you've seen those programs where they stop unsuspecting people in the street and film them in funny situations for showing on TV afterwards. Some of the situations can be quite hilarious and the victims usually laugh and agree to have the film shown on TV.

Years ago I worked as a junior with an independent film maker and we were assigned to do such a film.

As I speak French well, the idea was that I would stop people in the street and ask them directions to a particular place in a heavy French accent. As they spoke, I'd pretend not to understand and I'd keep changing the location where I wanted to go.

The camera was hidden well out of view and the sound engineer explained the technical bits.

"The director will speak to you through this ear-piece" he said, "listen to his every instructions."

I nodded.

"This is the latest microphone model. Cutting edge engineering technology." he continued, "It looks just like a £1 coin, just two centimeters in diameter. Yet it picks up sound from a great distance."

I pretended to be impressed.

"It doesn't have a clip!" I said, "How will I clip it to my shirt?"

"You don't" he replied with a smile, "you put it straight on your chest under the shirt. It goes straight on your skin."

"You mean it is glued on me?"

"Not glued ... we use the very latest adhesive solution on the market. Totally invisible, just like water. A tiny drop and the microphone is in place and no one will suspect you're wearing it".

Moments later I was ready for my first victim. I stood in the street looking confusingly in a map book and pretending to be lost. A tall man in a white priest's collar walked towards me from the left. The director said in my ear "Aha ... a man of the cloth. He's bound to be very helpful. Stop him and ... ACTION!"

A CHUCKLE A DAY

“Scuze moi Monsieur!” I said in my best French accent “I cannot find ze hotel ... where iz eet?”

He looked at the map and then proceeded to give me directions.

“Excellent,” whispered the director in my ear, “keep him talking!”

“Tres bien ...” I said “Zat is ze hotel ... but ze restaurant ... eet haz moved ... where iz ze restaurant?”

At this point I felt the microphone slip a bit from my chest. Obviously the adhesive wasn’t as good as I was told. It stopped again on my stomach.

“The sound quality has deteriorated,” the voice in my ear said, “get closer to him.”

I moved closer to the priest and asked another question.

“No good,” said the voice “I hear rumbling as if we’re on a train.”

I hadn’t eaten that morning because of nervousness. This was my first live interview. My knees were trembling. I had butterflies in my stomach and their knees were trembling too. A symphony of hunger pangs and trapped wind played softly into the microphone much to the distress of the director and the sound engineer.

“What the ** is that?” cursed the director in my ear, “fix it quick.”**

I surreptitiously pretended to scratch my stomach whilst continuing the conversation in broken English with the priest. I tried in vain to push the microphone up to its original position but it slipped down a further few inches and stopped below the waistline !!!

“The rumbling has stopped” said the voice, “now we can’t hear a thing. Get even closer to him!”

How do I do that? I thought.

I can hardly ask him to bend down and address me down there so I can hear him better!

Can you imagine the conversation?

“Excuse me Father, I’ve had an ear transplant that went wrong and they put my ear down there. Can you speak a bit lower down so I can hear you more clearly?”

A CHUCKLE A DAY

I ignored the director's frantic screams and I tried to move the microphone again. But you can hardly scratch down there in public whilst conducting an interview with a priest ... or with anyone else for that matter!

Perhaps if I pretended to get my handkerchief out of my trouser pocket, that should do it ... Botheration!!! That didn't work either. The microphone rolled down my trouser leg and fell on the ground.

"That's better!" said the director's voice "We can hear him but faintly. Get him a little closer".

Easier said than done.

What do I do now? Do I lie down on the sidewalk and say "We French are very relaxed people. We don't panic even when we're lost. Why not join me down here so we can discuss directions?"

I gave up in sheer frustration.

In my best English accent I said "Thank you Father. You've been very kind to help me; I know my way from here!"

He smiled in total confusion at my sudden grasp of the English language. He shook my hand and then ... looking down he said, "Someone has dropped a £1 coin. I'll put it in the Sunday collection plate!"

He picked up the microphone and walked away!

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Ambitions Squashed



Two things I've always wanted to do in life are cartooning and playing the guitar. And I failed in both.

No matter how much I try my cartoons just do not translate from what I can see clearly in my head to what is drawn on the paper. Somehow, between whatever straw and cobwebs are collected in my brain and the electro-muscular mechanism in my hand there's a blockage somewhere that turns my every attempt at drawing into something a small child or Picasso would draw.

As for playing the guitar; that's no better either.

Some years ago my wife and I took guitar playing lessons at our local college. We were both very enthusiastic and to be fair she progressed much better than I.

From the start, I could see disaster looming from the very first note ever played.

There were about a dozen or so "beginners" in our class and the instructor started us on a simple exercise. Hold your fingers tight on these strings and press them against the "frets" and with the other hand run your fingers up and down on the string. Here ... near the hole in the guitar.

Everyone managed this well; except me.

My fingers pressed on the frets so hard they almost started bleeding. But my other hand going up and down, up and down, was somehow a few millimeters away from the strings so no sound was coming out. I kept going up and down faster and faster, but speed is not the essence here when you're too far away from the strings.

The instructor asked me to relax and try again. Slower but nearer ... slower but nearer.

I did just that, and this time my fingers got entangled and caught in the guitar strings.

TWANG ... went the guitar and then everything stopped. My fingers got stuck there as everyone laughed and my wife got embarrassed.

Learning to tune the guitar was no better either.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

I just could not differentiate between one note and another. They all sounded the same. You might as well been beating a big drum or have an elephant trumpeting under water it would have sounded the same as my guitar.

The instructor played two notes over and again to get me to appreciate the difference in timbre but they both sounded the same as when I accidentally sit on my cat sleeping in the armchair.

My wife must have thought she married a deaf husband. Although I must admit, like most husbands, I do have selective hearing when it suits.

The next exercise involved using a device called a plectrum or a pick. It's a small triangular bit of plastic used to pluck the strings of the guitar.

It's easy to use, according to my instructor. Hold the plectrum with your fingers and pluck the strings one at a time.

He showed me how to use it and then asked me to try.

I wish I didn't ... and so did he.

I plucked the string so hard that the small piece of plastic flew out of my hand and hit the instructor in the eye.

What he said next could not be put into music no matter what instrument you use. It was a string of unrepeatable words, none rhyming nor musically melodic, and hardly likely to be ever used in any lyrics I can think of.

He left the room for First Aid treatment and we all decided after a few minutes to give up waiting in the classroom and we went home.

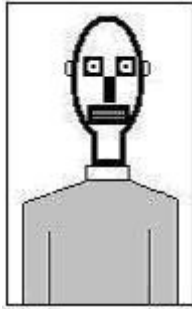
Neither my wife nor I returned to guitar lessons.

I've met the instructor in the street a few times since. He smiles and says nothing and walks away in a hurry.



A CHUCKLE A DAY

Sapristi Alors!



Our church has one of those huge baptismal fonts made of stone or concrete or such like material. Why it's so big beats me. It's an old church and I reckon babies in olden times must have been born really big which must have been an ordeal for their poor mothers. Either that or perhaps in olden times they put the whole baby in the font rather than just wet his head.

Anyway, that aside, it has become a habit in our church to baptize babies during Sunday Mass rather than at a private service at some other time. Just after reading the Gospel, the priest moves to one side near the font and baptizes the child whilst the whole congregation witnesses and joins in the event. It's rather nice I think.

This week Father Gaston celebrated Mass. He is a temporary priest whilst our priest is away. He is French, severe looking with a gaze that would turn you into stone before you even thought of sinning, and a monosyllabic conversation only used on rare occasions when he has something to say.

He also uses reading spectacles which he balances precariously on the end of his long aquiline nose; and looks at you from above them whilst speaking to you. I believe he looks at people from above the glasses so as not to wear out the lenses.

He stood by the font reading from his book whilst the proud parents and god-parents waited patiently as they handed the baby to each other. He was a lively little mite; the baby that is ... about eight or nine months old. You could hear him gurgling and laughing throughout the church.

At the appropriate moment the mother held him on top of the font and as Father Gaston poured water on the child's head he raised his hand out and hit the priest in the face knocking the spectacles in the font.

The priest stopped and said something in French which is not in my Missal. He then reached into the font for his glasses forgetting that his vestments had long and wide sleeves. He withdrew his hand and put the wet glasses on. As water dripped on his face he realized his sleeve was soaking wet. He tried as best as he could, with as little dignity as remained in the situation, to squeeze the water from his sleeve back into the font. He then dried his face and glasses; and continued with the Baptism. I felt sorry for the poor parents. But not so much for Father Gaston. Is that a sin?

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Mon chien



The thing about my dog is that he has learnt French. Yes ... you heard me right. He has learnt French.

We have one of those teach yourself French DVD Video which we play over and again on TV to learn various phrases. As we sit there repeating what is said on TV the dog sits on the carpet watching intently.

I'm sure he's listening carefully and getting the different intonations and accents which so enrich the French language. You can see his ears twitching when certain words are pronounced slowly by the woman on TV.

“Bonjour Monsieur Dupont. Ou est l'hôtel Majestueux?”

Which I'm sure is very helpful and reassuring in case our dog ever gets lost in Paris and needs to find his way back to the hotel.

The thing is ... I don't know whether, in his head, the dog is pronouncing the words correctly, because, he has actually never said them out loud.

It could be that in his head the words are all distorted and garbled up because he pronounces them with a doggy accent. You know ... it's just like you or me trying to speak a foreign language. Our English, American or Australian accents would not pronounce the French, Italian or whatever language words as a native of those countries would. It takes a special skill to speak a foreign language just as a native does.

So how do I know if in his head our dog is pronouncing the French words properly if he never says them out loud like you're supposed to on the Video?

But one thing I've noticed since he joined us in learning French by DVD. His bark has taken a distinctively French timbre as of late.

He no longer goes “Woof Woof” to scare cats away from our garden. His bark is a more elongated “Hein hein hein woooof woooof” as if to say “Oh zut alors! Qu'est ce que c'est ca?”

I'm not sure the itinerant cats roaming our garden understand him anymore.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

The importance of being considerate



To be quite earnest, it's quite important to be considerate too. It helps oil the wheels as it were and makes life run smoothly for you and everyone else don't you think?

Earnestly speaking, I consider myself quite a considerate type of person. But unfortunately this doesn't always work out as intended.

The other day for instance I saw an elderly lady in the street; she must have been about seventy or so, hobbling from foot to foot on the edge of the sidewalk. I waited until the lights indicated it was safe to cross then I held her gently by the arm and said, "Don't worry madam; we'll soon cross over safely to the other side!"

She tottered alongside me looking behind her all the time until we reached safely the other side as the traffic lights changed again. I took off my hat; you know the one, the cowboy hat with a feather, as a sign of respect and smiled politely.

She then hit me on the head with her umbrella.

I was about to say something when she said, "You made me miss my bus, you idiot!"

"I'm sorry madam" I said, replacing my hat and being thankful it was off my head when the umbrella landed, "I saw you hopping from foot to foot hesitantly ..."

"That's because I want to go to the toilet" she hollered, "I've a good mind to pee in your stupid hat!"

I ran away before she did.

This however did not stop me being considerate by nature.

One night I noticed that one of the floorboards in our bedroom, under the carpet, was a bit loose. It made a distinct sound when you stepped on it.

Being very considerate I hammered it in the dark so as not to wake up my wife.

Unfortunately, in the darkness I hammered nails through my shoes lying there by the bed and I pinned them to the floor board.

Next morning when I put my shoes on I couldn't move one inch. I fell flat on my face damaging my cowboy hat.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

I thought I had put on weight in my sleep during the night and the extra calories all fell down to my feet!

That very night I had dreamt I was in a marshmallow factory. I woke up eating the pillow.

I remember another occasion where my considerate nature conspired to work against me. We were on holiday and we went out on an organized boat trip to swim with dolphins. It's something which, for some reason, most people love to do.

The organizers of the trip suggested we go in the sea in teams of six for safety reasons. They wanted to keep an eye on us with the dolphins and we took turns in little groups to swim for a while, and then come out to allow others to go in the sea.

Being considerate as you know, I decided to be one of the last to go in. I stood by the side of the small boat watching everyone else enjoy themselves with the cackling dolphins and caressing them as they got nearer. It was really fun watching those lovely creatures swim around and every so often jump out of the sea.

When it was my turn I went to the communal changing room and put on my tartan swimming costume and took off my cowboy hat.

The other swimmers in my group were already changed in their costumes in seconds and in the water. Unlike me who neatly folded my clothes in an orderly fashion and rested my hat on top.

When it was my turn to enter the water the other people had had enough and got back into the boat.

Just as I entered the water, immediately, the dolphins saw me and they just swam away!

The head dolphin must have said, "We're not swimming with him. He looks weird!" And the others followed him deep into the sea leaving me splashing about minus a hat.

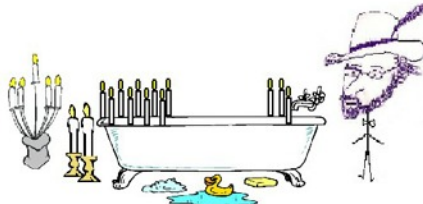
It didn't do my self-esteem any good being avoided by dolphins. And they say they are intelligent creatures too!

Well I very much doubt that! At least I'm not stupid enough to get entangled in fishing nets and get mistaken for a tuna fish.

Being considerate is a great disadvantage in life.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Relax



I think I'm generally, most of the time, a pretty relaxed sort of person. That is when my cat does not plot against me and does something or other to raise my blood pressure.

You can imagine therefore my skepticism when it was suggested that as a family we'll try a few relaxation techniques to help us all "get better" – whatever that is!

First off the mark in this new regimen of prescribed relaxation was music. Off went the bagpipes and drums CD and on came some turgid soft music played on some wooden pipes accompanied by humming from a tone-deaf singer who would have benefited from some throat lozenge.

"Hmmmmm" went on and on the female singer, "Tweeeet tweeeet" accompanied the pipes.

As this did not work the CD was changed for one with recordings of gentle rain from the rainforests. I mean, what's the point in that? It rains here most of the time. Why do I need the recorded sound of rain in a far off land?

This was followed by waves splashing against the shore. Every so often ... "Wooosh" went the waves. "Wooosh" again and again. You're supposed to close your eyes, listen to the sound of the waves and relax.

There was no chance of this happening whatsoever. Instead of relaxing me the continuous wooshing sound made me want to go to the toilet!

The next track was no better either. It was the sound of whales singing.

What's so relaxing about that?

Have you ever heard a whale sing? It goes something like "Woooooo Woooooo". It's an elongated intermittent very tedious screeching whistling sound which is neither tuneful nor relaxing. If a whale went to a music producer or agent and said "I want to sign a singing contract to make records and to perform in Carnegie Hall" it would certainly get thrown out of the building quicker than it got in.

The annoying high-pitched shrill sound reminded me that the kitchen door needs oiling to stop it squeaking. Yet another neglected job which would have been attended to after being reminded several times had it not been for my relaxation schedule.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

I would have been more relaxed if the whale was dressed in an evening suit and bow tie and sang “Nessun Dorma”.

Since music did not soothe the beast it was suggested that a long soak in a warm bath would do the trick.

When I reluctantly agreed to get up from the football match on television and make my way upstairs I found that, to my surprise and total bewilderment, the bathroom lights were off and the place was lit by a million candles.

“It’s relaxing!” I was assured.

Believe me, there is nothing relaxing or reassuring about standing there amongst all those flames and fearing that you’d singe parts of your anatomy.

Why do people light candles in the bathroom? How can sitting in a hot tub like an ornament on an over-sized birthday cake supposed to make you feel relaxed?

I believe candles are bad for the environment. Just think how many candles are lit all over the world on a daily basis. In bathrooms, at the dinner table, in restaurants, churches, birthday cakes as well as numerous other places such as outdoor concerts at night to add to the atmosphere created by a supposedly melodic singer! All these candles contribute to global warming, you know! Not to mention the swarms of hard working bees busily producing the wax to see all their hard work go up in flames.

And then the bathroom was filled with this lingering smell of lavender, or was it lily of the valley, or some other concoction of plants and herbs infusing in the hot bath water and meant to convey to the imagination relaxing feelings of beautiful idyllic countryside meadows and hills covered with every blossom one could imagine. It was all feminine and gentle and beautiful and ...

I mean, what’s wrong with Wright's Traditional Coal Tar Soap, with its long-established strong manly smell used by generations on end to their satisfaction?

Why do we need all these bottles of liquid soaps in a variety of colors and perfumes and silly names like “Angel Bubble Bath”, “Zingvigorating Shower Gel”, and “Action Hair Shampoo and Conditioner”?

Can anyone tell me the difference between a bubble bath and a shower gel? And the ingredients you find in this things makes one’s mind boggle. Some have coconut oil, and mango juice, lemon, passion fruit and a million other ingredients you would not imagine would find their way in your bathroom. A hair shampoo we sometimes use apparently has wheat germ in it; although what purpose this particular ingredient is meant to provide totally escapes me! I suspect we have more cooking ingredients in our bathroom than in the kitchen.

I sat gingerly in the hot tub and felt far from relaxed with all those candles burning around me. I was very nervous in case the cowboy hat I was wearing at the time might catch fire.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Can you imagine?

If the long feather in the hat accidentally came into contact with one of the nearby flames and that spread to the whole hat and then to my bountiful curls? What a disaster that would be!

I just remained there rigid amongst the pink bubbles all around me and did not dare move an inch for the prescribed thirty minutes or so which are meant to make you feel relaxed and wash away all your troubles and worries. Far from being tranquil and stress-free I dreamt longingly for the soothing companionship of my rubber duck and little sailing boat which had been confiscated from me for the purpose of this exercise.

“Are you nice and relaxed?” asked the voice from outside.

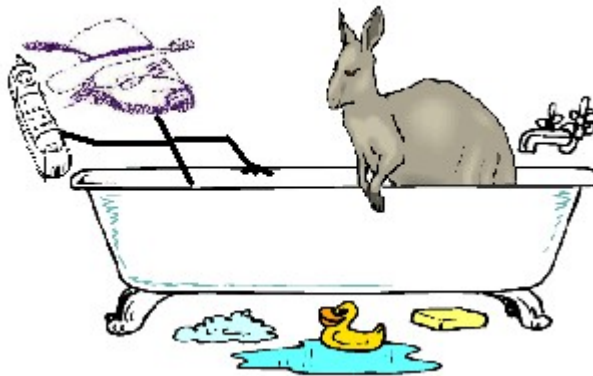
“Yes ... never felt more relaxed in my life. This is wonderful!” I lied through gritted teeth.

I then got out and treated myself to a pint of Guinness and a large measure of single malt 12 years old whisky.

Now that’s what I call relaxation.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Not Waltzing Matilda



I've met some very strange people in my life. Some don't even live on this planet and are lost in their own little world. But none come stranger than Matilda.

She's Australian and no, she does not waltz. In fact she's as bad a dancer as I am. The fact that I mention she's Australian will become apparent a little later on.

Matilda is about sixty-four years old and is an old friend of the family. She lives alone in a secluded farm deep in the countryside in Northern England. She's self-sufficient with a few chickens, ducks, pigs, a cow, a goat and an old horse which takes her and her cart to a nearby town whenever she needs to buy anything; not counting her many cats and dogs. She lives on her pension and is happy in her own world. Much happier than the rest of us I suppose working all hours to make ends meet.

We don't visit Matilda often, but we correspond from time to time.

A few months ago I had reason to make a business trip to a city not far from where Matilda lives. It was on a Friday so I decided to call on Matilda and spend the weekend with the old lady.

I arrived at about five in the evening and after a nice cup of tea she asked me to help her feed her animals. We started with the chickens, and then the ducks and whilst reminiscing happily whilst feeding the cow Matilda realized that time was getting on and she had to go to town for her weekly game of poker with other old folks in the Church club she attended.

She gave me her cell-phone number, just in case, and asked me to make myself at home until her return.

"Don't forget to feed the pigs!" she yelled, as she galloped away on her cart out of the farm drive.

The pigs were a recent addition to her menagerie; all six of them. I got some feed and gingerly entered their enclosure and started spreading the food for them to eat. One of the pigs came eagerly at me to feed and managed to trip me head over heels into the mud.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

My immaculate work suit was totally ruined and I was soaking wet with dripping black liquid all over me. I suppose it was my fault being with animals in my best work suit, but Matilda had asked me to help and I didn't have time to get changed. Luckily, my feathered cowboy hat survived the muddy onslaught and was not damaged in any way. That at least cheered me up no end.

I left the pigs to their devices and entered the house, leaving my dirty shoes at the door, and headed for the bathroom. I ran a hot bath and settled in for a long soak whilst contemplating what to do with the ruined suit. Best to throw it away, I thought.

I was there for a few minutes thinking what color suit I would buy when it happened ...

Oh ... the memory keeps coming back like a recurring nightmare ...

I've had sleepless nights about this, I tell you.

There I was in the bath soaking away my relatively minor worries about a ruined suit when ...

You'll never believe this ... I assure you. You too would have nightmares all your life if it happened to you.

The door slowly opened. I could see the door handle move ever so slowly and then the door was pushed open with an ominous creaking sound as you get in horror movies.

My blood ran cold down my spine in a hot bath!

And then ... a kangaroo got in and walked casually towards me and jumped in the bath with me splashing water all over the place.

I was terrified. Can you imagine? There I was sharing a bath with an animal native of Australia.

Matilda had never mentioned a kangaroo as part of her farm cum zoo. What else has she got in this house? A koala bear, or a platypus?

What was I to do? I did not dare make any sudden movement in case ... I don't know ... in case the kangaroo did something which I'd regret. I became somewhat protective all of a sudden.

He looked at me suspiciously and made un-approving tutting noises like kangaroos make.

I slowly reached for my cell-phone and managed to find Matilda's number and phoned her.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

“Matilda ...” I said in a semi-whisper so as not to alarm my bathing companion, “there’s a kangaroo in the bath with me!”

Now there’s a sentence I never dreamed I would ever say.

She laughed raucously down the phone.

“That’s not a kangaroo sport!” she said in her distinct Australian accent which she has not lost despite her years in the UK, “it’s a wallaby. He’s Joey, my recently acquired pet! Do you like him?”

Well, it was not a question of liking him or not; and the difference between a kangaroo and a wallaby did not particularly concern me that much at the time. It was more a matter of sharing a private moment with a wild animal which showed signs of becoming suddenly agitated; much to my detriment, may I add!

“Oh, he’s being playful,” Matilda re-assured me, “he probably thinks it’s me in the bath. He often has a bath with me!”

I must admit I didn’t know what to make of that. Am I in such a physical state in my prime of life to be mistaken for a woman in her sixties?

Can this Joey creature really not tell the difference between Matilda and I?

I mean ... the difference between me and her is so obvious and plain to see.

How could he miss that?

I’m wearing my cowboy hat with the feather on. When’s the last time this stupid animal saw Matilda wearing such a hat?

“Are you all-right?” said the jovial voice down the phone interrupting my concentration, “are you playing with Joey?”

“I certainly am not!” I replied as masculinely as I could.

I put the phone down and slowly, very slowly, got out of the bath and out of the room as quickly ... but slowly ... as I could, so as not to disturb Joey who followed my every movement with his eyes and smiled as he tutt tutted his disapproval of me!

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Lost



To get straight to the point! I have lost my favorite yellow trousers.

We've looked everywhere. The cupboard where they should normally be. Not there.

The laundry basket. Not there either.

The washing machine. Nope.

The tumble dryer. Not there either.

The clean pile waiting to be ironed. Fooled you ... still not there.

The area of search widened as we failed to find my favorite yellow trousers.

Not behind the washing machine, tumble dryer, oven, fridge, TV or any other item of furniture or household appliance where trousers can hide behind.

We even looked inside the said fridge, oven and so on ... well, you never know!

The house turned into a Where's Waldo scenario with everyone looking for the lost trousers as the area of search widened even further.

Pretty soon helicopters were flying overhead combing the countryside, the hills, mountains and highways.

Speed boats sailed urgently by our coastlines to no avail.

"Let's look everywhere ... lost items are always in the last place you look for them."

Of course they are ... because once you've found them you stop looking!!!

"Let's pray to St Anthony ... he'll help find them."

We did ... and lit candles ... but he would not fess up where he had hidden them.

"Retrace your steps ... when did you last wear the yellow trousers?"

"Saturday morning. I remember it well. It was a beautiful sunny day and I thought they'd match my tartan red shirt!"

"What did you do on Saturday?"

A CHUCKLE A DAY

“I went to the supermarket.”

“Still wearing the yellow trousers?”

“Of course still wearing the yellow trousers! I’m not in the habit of going to the supermarket trouser-less. Especially when wearing those tiny underwear.”

“I meant did you change trousers before going out?”

“No ... why should I? I’m not a baby who needs changing every few minutes ...”

Silence.

And then ...

“What happened after you finished shopping at the supermarket?”

“I returned home ...”

“Still wearing the trousers?”

I did not reply to that goading question.

Silence.

“Did you take the trousers off at any time?”

“Of course I did ... otherwise I’d be wearing them and they would not be lost. Unless I was of course lost myself and then they’d most certainly be lost with me. But since I am not lost and I am not wearing the said lost trousers and they do not happen to be easily visible and available anywhere; one can only safely conclude that they are lost and I am not!”

“Calm down ... don’t get your trousers in a twist!”

Silence again.

“Ehmmm ... what I meant is, when did you take your yellow trousers off? Was it in the bedroom? Bathroom? Or somewhere else when visiting someone ... hee ... hee ... hee ...”

The conversation ended there.

We’re still looking.

Any ideas?

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Why always me?



The letter got miss-delivered by the postman. It clearly says on the envelope Number 45 and we definitely are not Number 45. I decide to walk up the street and deliver the letter to its rightful owner.

The old lady saw me approaching her house and opened the door.

“Oh, thank you” she said, “come in for a cup of tea!”

“I was just delivering ...” I mumbled.

“Oh do come in ...” she interrupted, “I often see you walking the dog to the park and back again. I’ve just put the kettle on ...”

I looked at my watch and thought, she’s probably lonely, and just a few minutes won’t hurt!

I entered the living room and immediately noticed a large parrot standing on a perch in the corner, and two budgerigars on top of their open cage near the window. An old dog at least one hundred years old sat by the fire and a cat slept on the settee.

The old lady beckoned me to an armchair and went out to make some tea.

As soon as she left, the large blue parrot moved his head left and right, as they do; looked at me and screeched “STUPID!”

I jumped out of the seat, not expecting him to talk.

He repeated again “STUPID ... STUPID ...” over and over every minute or so.

The old lady came in with a tray of tea and biscuits and cakes.

“Ah ... Polly is being friendly” she said, “he often hears me talking to the dog and repeats what I say.”

At that point the parrot screeched “STUPID HAT ... STUPID HAT ...”

Let me tell you there is nothing stupid about my cowboy hat with a feather. It’s sartorial elegance in the extreme as I’ve been told by the man in the pub who sold it to me!

A CHUCKLE A DAY

“I wonder what he means?” said the old lady trying to cover her faux pas. No doubt she’d seen me wearing the hat on my way to the park and had voiced her un-called for opinions to her pets.

She offered me a piece of cake. As soon as I held a small plate in one hand, and a tea cup in another, the geriatric dog got up ever so slowly from his mat, came towards me and started sniffing my groin.

What is it with dogs and sniffing people inappropriately? I’ll add, in case you’re wondering, that I’d just had a shower that morning and had splashed Old Spice after-shave all over, even though I have a beard and don’t shave. So there was no need to sniff there or anywhere else.

“Oh ... he’s being friendly” repeated the old lady, making no attempt whatsoever to take the dog away, “It’s his way of greeting you!”

Well ... I’d rather not be greeted that way, thank you very much.

I mean ... just imagine ... what if we humans greeted each other that way?

I pushed the dog away ... gently ... yes ... gently; although I must admit that was not what was on my mind when he started sniffing his welcome.

As soon as the dog went back on his mat the cat woke up from the settee and jumped on the arm of my armchair; and then started licking my hand.

I moved away slowly whilst the old lady, totally unaware of my discomfort, continued prattling on about her family and her children all grown up and living abroad. No doubt to escape from her lunatic menagerie.

The cat, still sitting next to me, having been denied the taste of my hand proceeded to lick himself in the most private of places.

Yet again ... this is another annoying habit of the feline as well as canine species which, fortunately, we humans do not copy. The mind boggles at the contortions we’d have to make if we were to reach ... OK ... you get the point; let’s move on.

I moved surreptitiously towards the cat and nudged him gently. He dropped to the floor and walked out the room.

I listened to the old lady going on about her lonely life with no one to visit her; and how she often just goes out on the bus so that she can meet people, or stands at the window looking at people pass by and imagine what kind of life they lead. She said she plays a mind-game when she sees people. She looks carefully at what they wear and then guesses the sort of work they do. She also likes to name people in her head according to how they dress, the way they walk, and their general demeanour.

She said she’d been watching me take the dog for a walk for a very long time. “Do you realise” she said, “that whenever you stop by that tree to allow the dog

A CHUCKLE A DAY

to sniff at its roots, you always scratch the back of your head? Why do you do that?"

I'll admit I never noticed that habit. And from being told, I'm sure I'll resist that particular temptation in future. I'll do all my scratching that's needed before I leave home from now on.

She was about to tell me what nickname she had invented for me when suddenly there was a flutter of wings.

The parrot left its perch and made himself comfortable on my shoulder. I did not dare move an inch. Those creatures can be dangerous you know. Once they get hold of your nose in their beaks they will not let go.

"Oh ... Polly likes you too!" said the old lady joyfully, "it must be your gentle and kind personality. Animals know when someone loves them. Do you like birds?" she asked.

I hesitated to tell her that the only birds I like are Kentucky Fried Chickens; although right now I would not mind tasting Kentucky Fried Parrot as well.

She didn't wait for an answer and continued talking ignoring her feathered friend on my shoulder.

The wretched bird, still sitting by my left ear, eyed the big feather in my hat for a few moments, and then, to my horror, jumped at it and attempted to mate with it. I held the hat tightly on my head with my right hand for fear that it might be dislodged and end up matrimonially united with a myopic parrot.

I mean ... how short-sighted can he get? It's only a feather for crying out loud. Who's STUPID now? Can't tell the difference between a beautiful lady parrot and a feather in a cowboy hat!

The old lady laughed, not understanding the situation, and said that he was welcoming me into his domain. Whatever that means!

I had absolutely no wish to be welcomed anywhere belonging to that stupid creature, and my hat and feather certainly shared this opinion.

The parrot struggled vainly with his amorous advances at my hat and started to flutter his wings wildly and squawking loudly, no doubt upset at being snubbed by his new-found lady friend.

Eventually the old lady realised that I was somewhat uneasy, to put it mildly. She got up slowly from her chair and removed the parrot from its clutches on my hat and replaced him back on his perch.

She then turned to me and asked whether I'd like to meet the budgerigars still sitting on their cage preening themselves.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

I made an excuse about having a meeting somewhere or other and left hurriedly.

And that's another cowboy hat with a feather totally ruined!

A CHUCKLE A DAY

A B Duck Ted!!!



I often write about humorous situations which happened to me which I suspect amuse you no end at my expense.

This time however it is different. This is a very serious and true story.

I was yesterday evening abducted by aliens. It happened just like in all the stories you hear and read about alien abductions. Usually you don't believe such stories and you suspect they're all made up. Well. For me reality actually happened. I saw a UFO and I was abducted by its occupants.

I can imagine a few of you sniggering already, but I wish you wouldn't, because I have not quite recovered from this horrendous and frightening experience.

I was out in our garden at about midnight, having finished viewing a movie on TV, and I was there counting the stars as I usually do whilst the dog does his last business for the night. That's if it's not raining of course. It's difficult counting the stars when it's raining because water gets in your eyes.

I had counted up to 976 when suddenly; out of nowhere, there was this huge cigar shaped thing up in the sky, about 30 or so feet above me.

It was glowing red at first, then an orangey color, then it turned green, and then after a while it turned red again. It took me a while before I realized it was the reflection of the traffic lights nearby.

The actual cigar shape was darkish gray and obviously made of shiny metallic material of some kind. It made no noise or humming sound or anything like that. It just stayed still some 30 feet above me.

The dog didn't seem to have seen it and continued sniffing around as he often does.

Then a little white aperture appeared on the underside of the cigar; like some door opening. Then a light from the aperture shone on me, like the spotlight you get in the theatre when it shines on a performer on stage. I was very frightened and I must have cried a little because tears ran down my legs.

Loud music started playing all around me. It was Elvis Presley singing "You're nothing but a hound dog!"

I felt myself rise up from the ground, as if I was being lifted gently by my whole body. Not like having a belt tied to your waist or a harness on your chest and shoulders; there seemed no upward lifting pressure on my body whatsoever. I was just floating gently upwards to the beat of rock music.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

It lasted a few seconds and then I was inside this large room with bright lights everywhere. Just like you see in space movies.

Dark shadows hovered around me and spoke in squeaking high pitched sounds, like mice I suppose.

I was led gently towards a large bed by two humanoid shapes. They must have been females because they looked like wearing earrings and red lipstick and well developed chests.

I moved along, almost gliding, with them and next thing I was tied by these big metal clamps to the bed. Clamps round my arms, wrists, legs, waist, chest and neck. I could not move and a bright light shone above me. Exactly like it happens in spaceship abduction stories.

I heard a voice speak in perfect English. “Ah ... we’re having duck à l’orange for dinner I see!”

Then another voice said “No point in changing him into a duck! He’s a poor specimen anyway, no fat whatsoever, all stringy and wiry and tough as the sole of my shoe!”

“Shall we analyze him all the same?” said another voice, “see what we can learn!”

I felt as if a million eyes were watching every bit of me and I wondered why creatures from outer space always speak in perfect English. Is it for our benefit, do you suppose?

The next thing that happened was truly horrible and really humiliating.

One of the aliens stripped off my cowboy hat with feather. They replaced it with a metallic helmet with lights going on and off and a lot of wires and tubes attached to it.

“Let’s test for signs of intelligence” said a voice which sounded knowledgeable and authoritative.

The process took a second or two and then the lights above me went out and the clamps set me free.

Everyone left what must have been an operating theater or lab and I was alone with just one individual.

He said, “Hello, I’m Ted, the Captain of this space ship. We have just studied you and analyzed every biological, physical, mental, emotional, psychological and every other possible detail about you. Now would you like a tour of the place, old boy?”

A CHUCKLE A DAY

I couldn't refuse such a generous and friendly offer after being invaded so thoroughly.

We walked down a long corridor and then we stood by a door which opened smoothly with a "woosh" sound. We entered a room

"This is my living quarters," he said, showing me into his space cabin, "my little kitchenette is over there in case I get a little hungry or I'm entertaining privately. My bathroom with power shower is over there. And this is where I sit and relax reading the works of Shakespeare. We all have similar accommodation on this spaceship."

He then showed me round the whole spaceship, the engine room, the bridge, the library and finally the bar where he introduced me to his crew. Surprisingly, they served Guinness, my favorite drink, and we had a pint or two with hamburgers and potato chips.

He then suggested we take some souvenir photos together with him and the crew.

"You'll be able to show these to your leaders, back on Earth" he said. "You humans never believe that we exist unless you have well developed photos to prove it. Well this time you'll have all the proof you need."

We said our goodbyes and the next thing, suddenly, I was in my garden and the cigar shape in the sky had disappeared.

I rushed to the authorities and told them what happened. They did not believe me.

I pulled out the photos out of my pocket. Those clever aliens had magically turned them into square pieces of toilet paper.

I have a sneaking suspicion that you don't believe me either!

A CHUCKLE A DAY

At the doctor's



I was sent to see a specialist doctor at the hospital today. He was checking whether my sense of humour was still intact.

I waited in a very large waiting room with a speaker system which plays soft music and every so often it calls patients to their appointed specialist consultant, doctor of psychiatrist. I recognized a doctor friend of mine in the corridor. He is a very short person and has specialized in knee problems.

Anyway, as I was reading a magazine in the waiting room the speaker on the wall said "Would Mr Herbert Pixon please go to Dr Smythe's room please?" and a weedy tall middle-aged man got up and left the waiting room.

Now Dr Smythe may well be the best doctor in the world, but he is certainly not that good at technical matters; because he inadvertently left the microphone open in his room, and this is what we all heard.

"Do sit down Mr Pixon. What seems to be the problem?"

A lady in the waiting room suddenly got up to advise the receptionist that the mike was switched on.

"It is rather very embarrassing!" interrupted Mr Pixon.

The lady sat down again to the relief of everyone in the waiting room.

"There's no need for embarrassment," soothed the doctor, "we're here to help and I'm sure whatever is the matter, we've dealt with it before."

"Well ... I've met this young lady ..." Pixon hesitated.

An elderly lady in the waiting room reading her book suddenly took off her spectacles and started listening with the rest of us.

"I met her on an Internet website ..." continued the hapless man, "she came to my apartment yesterday evening ... for a romantic encounter ..."

A man in the waiting room started tapping his hearing-aid violently to make sure it works all right.

"I understand," said the doctor, "you want to discuss precautions ..."

"Well ... not just that," muttered Pixon, "it's that something actually happened ... I feel awful about it!"

A CHUCKLE A DAY

At this point the receptionist entered the waiting room. Everyone pretended they were reading a book or newspaper and not paying attention to the loudspeaker on the wall. She looked at us suspiciously for a moment or two, and then she stood on a chair and increased the volume on the speaker, and sat down with us to listen.

“The young lady arrived at 7:35 ...” said Pixon, “this put me off a little because she was five minutes late.

“I took off her coat and she was wearing a nice pink blouse and a short blue skirt.

“I offered her a cup of nettles tea. She took one sip and said she didn’t like it. I offered her dandelion tea and she turned it down too. She wanted a gin and tonic but I didn’t have any tonic. And I didn’t have any gin either ...”

“I understand,” interrupted the doctor gently, “what exactly happened which made you come to see me?”

“I’m getting to that ...” answered Pixon, “we sat down for something to eat. We had tofu and nettles salad for starters, and quinoa with broad beans for our main. She didn’t like either and asked for some meat; but I didn’t have any. She just nibbled at a multi-grain bread roll.

“I got up to put some romantic music on. Insect sounds of the forest. Have you got that record?”

“Mr Pixon, please get to the point,” suggested the doctor, “I have other patients to see ...”

“Don’t rush me!” said an upset Pixon, “you’re like my mother. She always says Herbert get to the point.

“Well the point is that when I put the music on, the young lady started running her finger through my quinoa. She had her own plate full, but she ran her finger provocatively in an enticing and beguiling manner through my quinoa moving it around in circles all over the plate. I had difficulty eating from around her fingers because I did not wish to stab her accidentally with my fork.

“Wherever I ate, she followed my fork with her finger.

“I didn’t know what to say ... I asked her ‘Would you like some of my quinoa?’ and she said rather abruptly ‘No ... I’ve dropped my contact lens in your plate!’”

The whole waiting room chuckled and then realized that this was not appropriate in case they missed part of the conversation.

The doctor encouraged Pixon once again, rather sternly but politely, to get to the point.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

“After the meal I showed her my organ pedal collection,” continued Herbert whilst the waiting room filled up with more patients and nurses.

“I don’t actually play the organ, but I collect the pedals from old ones which have been decommissioned. I have some that date back to Napoleonic times. And some from the reign of Queen Victoria, King George, and even as far back as Henry the Eighth. And of course there are pedals from modern electronic organs too ...

“I brought all the pedals which I keep in separate boxes, all properly labeled. Both the boxes as well as the pedals so that each pedal goes back in its proper box. I write carefully in my best hand-writing which organ the pedal appertained to, the date of manufacture of the organ, as well as the date of decommissioning, the price I paid for the pedal when I acquired it, although mostly I got them for free, and the date and place of such acquirement.

“I have six hundred and seventy two pedals. Some are wooden and some are brass or other metallic substance such as cast iron or steel.

“I took each pedal out of the box carefully and explained their history to the young lady.

“I had reached number two hundred and ten when it happened ... the embarrassing thing I came to see you about doctor ... I noticed the young lady had fallen asleep. She had her face in her plate full of quinoa and she was snoring loudly.

“Doctor ... are you OK? Doctor ... why is your head down on the desk? Are you feeling a little tired? Have you not been listening to me?”

A CHUCKLE A DAY

You're feeling sleepy



Sometimes in life one gets drawn into a situation out of which it becomes very difficult to extricate oneself.

Now there's a sentence in perfect grammatical English which took me half-an-hour to compose. I'm so proud of it I feel like re-writing it again; but I'll let you re-read it instead and applaud.

Anyway ... let's get on with this story before I forget it.

A few friends and I went to the theatre the other day. It was one of those variety shows where you have dancing girls in skimpy costumes, a comedian or two, a juggler perhaps, a magician or hypnotist, and of course a big name singer to round off the evening.

The singer was the world famous tenor Ivor Tenor singing Nessun Dorma from Turandot. At one point he sang a duet with a lesser known female opera singer called Lucy.

But I digress once again as is my want.

So let me tell you straightaway that I don't agree with hypnotism. It's something I've always been suspicious of, and although I accept it has been used medically to some effect; I don't consider it a matter for entertainment.

I have never been hypnotized myself because I doubt there's a microscope powerful enough to detect any brain waves of mine; and in any case, if the hypnotist were to dangle a watch on a chain in front of my eyes, the chances are I'd put on my reading glasses and tell him the time every ten seconds. Now that would irritate him no end!

OK ... back to the story once again and this time with no interruptions. Concentrate and don't fall asleep on me.

The hypnotist got on the stage and called for three volunteers. Unsurprisingly there was no shortage of hands that went up. He chose three people supposedly at random. Why do they always choose more women than men? He picked two women and a man; all in their late twenties or early thirties.

He sat them down on three chairs side by side and asked a few questions to introduce them to the audience and to make them feel comfortable and at ease.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Then he started his hypnotic instructions. Without swinging a watch on a chain or anything like that, he just said;

“When I clap my hands you will all turn into a block of cheese! You’ll be an English piece of Stilton,” he said to the man, “and you’ll be a French Camembert, and you an Italian Gorgonzola,” he informed the two women.

“You will wake up when I say ‘Smile please and say cheese!’ and you’ll remember nothing!” he ended his instructions

He tapped his hands and the three of them went to sleep sitting on the chairs. For some reason the audience applauded. I couldn’t see why since they looked like three sleeping people side by side and not like lumps of cheese I buy from the supermarket.

He then moved off stage and came back holding a small mouse in his hands. The audience laughed. He moved close to the three sleeping beauties and told them that he had a mouse loose on the stage.

All three suddenly jumped on the chairs. The man started shouting in a posh English accent “Begone you boulder! This is an indomitable disgrace ... what?”

The two women held their skirts up and one shouted in unintelligible Italian whilst the other one kept repeating “Oh zut alors ... sapristi!” Possibly the only words she’d ever memorized in French.

The audience thought it was all very funny and laughed themselves silly. I felt rather sorry for the three poor people and to be honest, I wondered whether this was all for real or whether they were accomplices and were acting with the so-called hypnotist.

But the next thing that happened tickled my sense of humor, and perhaps convinced me of the reality of what I was seeing.

Somehow, as the hypnotist was walking backwards and forwards in front of the three chairs the mouse fell from his hand and ran towards the edge of the stage and down where the audience is sitting.

The hypnotist ran after it and slipped falling on his back and banging his head so hard that he was out like a light.

The audience up front got up from their seats and started screaming. Most stood on their chairs and started imitating the three sleeping beauties; but they did it in English. Then those in the second row also started screaming on top of their seats; followed by others in the third row. It was as if people suddenly noticed or imagined seeing the mouse, and as one person stood on her seat others followed suit.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

The sight of all those women standing on seats and lifting their long flowing evening dresses was quite amusing as they instructed their men partners not to be wimps and to do something about it.

The comedian host of the show came on stage and tried to calm everyone down; which he eventually did by announcing that the mouse had been captured.

He then tried to wake up the three hypnotized people by saying “It’s OK ... it’s over now ... stop talking and get off your chairs ... wake up!” But it was to no avail as the three of them had been brain-washed to only follow the hypnotist’s instructions.

He of course was still lying flat on the ground being revived with cold water, smelling salts and what have you!

The whole audience remained silent as they watched this whole scenario unfold, although, for some reason, I was the only one laughing silently under my breath at the sudden turn of events.

Eventually the ventriloquist and voice impersonator who had just performed about half-an-hour previously came on stage and in his best accent imitated the hypnotist’s voice by saying “Smile please and say cheese!”

This was enough to fool the three volunteers into believing this was the hypnotist talking. They woke up from their trance, stepped down from their chairs and re-joined the audience, having no recollection of what had just happened.

The hypnotist was carried away on a stretcher. He showed signs of waking up as he left the stage. I bet he too will not remember a thing of what happened!

A CHUCKLE A DAY

My mortal sin



I left the hotel hurriedly in a taxi on my way to the airport. It was then that I realized that I had sinned deeply and severely the night before.

This was in no doubt a mortal sin. I had succumbed to temptation and been led astray by the devil. The horror of the situation filled me with dread and a cold sweat started trickling on my forehead. What if the worst were to happen and I was suddenly face to face with my Maker, my Creator, and my ultimate Judge?

The taxi drew past a church and I asked the driver to stop suddenly. I paid him off and rushed into the building. Suddenly, missing the plane didn't seem to matter any more. It was Saturday and the chances are there would be Confessions in progress.

I was fortunate. A dozen or so people were waiting their turn to enter the old fashioned Confessional.

I waited with them and could only think of one sin. My mortal sin of the night before! The dark blot on my soul leading me to eternal damnation unless it is wiped clean once again.

How could I succumb to such sin once more? The shame and humiliation of it all played over in my mind time and again. I could see myself sinning vividly at Satan's feet. And now I had to tell the priest all about it.

Eventually my turn came and I knelt down by the thick curtain hiding my Confessor.

I confessed my hideous sin leaving no detail unsaid. I told him exactly what had happened and how I succumbed to temptation and how I needed absolution.

When I finished, somewhat relieved off the heavy weight on my soul, the voice behind the curtain said "Yo no hablo Ingles!"

In my hurry to confess my mortal sin I had forgotten that I was on a business trip to Spain.

This was a Spanish church with a Spanish priest, and he does not speak English, and he has not understood a word I said, how can he possibly forgive me my sin?

How could I mime my sin from behind the curtain? And would he understand me if he saw me re-enact it? Are some sins so international to be easily understood in any language?

A CHUCKLE A DAY

I did what most English people do when abroad and not understood. I repeated every word again slowly and loudly.

Somehow, there's the belief that by speaking loudly the English language is suddenly universally understood.

Eventually, the Spanish priest repeated in an equally loud voice "Yo te perdono! Yo te perdono!"

I said "Muchas Gracias" and left the church before waiting for absolution and penance.

When I arrived back home I thought I'd make doubly sure and I went straight to my English speaking priest, albeit he has a Scottish accent, by I forgive him that.

I told him about my Spanish mortal sin.

I explained that the night before I left Spain, whilst in my hotel room, I was so tempted that I succumbed to temptation itself. I took a chocolate from the little ice box they have in some hotels. I really enjoyed that chocolate.

The following morning, when asked by the receptionist whether I had used the ice box, I had forgotten about the chocolate bar and I said "No!"

It wasn't until I was in the taxi heading for the airport that I realized I had technically stolen from the hotel and committed a mortal sin.

The Scottish priest laughed at my face and did not give me absolution. Luckily, I had a Spanish absolution instead. I think!

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Going to Church with Rain Man



I recently went to church with a young autistic lady aged about twenty and her mother.

The young girl behaves and acts very much like Rain Man (Raymond Babbitt) in the Dustin Hoffman film of that name.

We were not at Mass. This was an evening meeting where we had a visiting speaker going on for hours on end discussing missionary work in various countries around the world.

The young lady's mother left her with me and went to the kitchen just by the Sacristy to help prepare the teas and coffees and other refreshments for after the talk is over.

The talk started and the young lady's mother had not returned, so we sat down and listened to the visiting speaker relating stories from various far off lands.

It was a very hot summer's evening; and after a few minutes of sitting there, the hardness of the wooden church pews combined with the humid stickiness of the atmosphere to create a very uncomfortable feeling in the Southern regions of the human anatomy.

To be fair, my companion stayed quiet throughout the long ordeal although it was obvious she was getting a little uncomfortable and tired with the monotony of it all.

Eventually the visiting speaker stopped and the priest asked us to stand up for final prayers.

As we stood up I noticed that the woman in the pew just in front of me must have been wearing a thong. The reason I say this, apart from its obviousness, is that as she stood up her delicate flowing skirt got caught or wedged within the crack of her voluptuous derriere revealing its ample contours and curvatures.

Now normally one would tend to ignore such a distraction and look the other way; and believe me I tried; even though she was standing only inches in front of me. But what was an unexpected distraction for me became something completely different to my young lady friend. For her this was not right at all.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

To my horror, she lent forward and carefully pulled out the skirt from whence it was caught.

Surprisingly, the woman in front of me did not feel a thing and did not react whatsoever.

I shook my head violently and whispered to my friend to leave it as it is.

To my double horror and near heart-attack she proceeded to lean forward once again and replace the skirt in its previously wedged position.

This time the woman felt someone touching her particular sunset; she turned round suddenly to see me standing right behind her and my companion busily reading the hymn book she'd picked up.

She was about to slap my face when she suddenly remembered where she was.

She sat down promptly and said nothing.

We waited until prayers were over and everyone was leaving. I asked my young friend to go and help her mother in the kitchen, and then I tried to explain to the unfortunate woman what had happened and that it was not really me who tried to do what I did not do.

I doubt she believed me and she left without saying another word.

And that's another confession I'll have to explain to my priest. He said once he looks forward to my confessions as he's never laughed so much in his life.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Art et Moi



Being intellectual and educated can be very hard work you know.

We had some overseas clients from Paris visiting our Headquarters and guess who was assigned to entertain them? Just because I can speak French does not necessarily mean I enjoy such assignments.

I had to accompany them to a pre-arranged expedition to a famous art gallery to admire the latest exhibition they had on; as well as the other works of art which are on display there all year round.

My heart was all a flutter with boredom.

I really don't know how someone has to behave in such circumstances. As we arrived we were all given fancy brochures, all pre-paid by my organization, detailing the displays of the art exhibition and featuring miniature photos of the various paintings on show. I couldn't help but wonder why they didn't give us the brochures in advance and we could have looked at the photos in the comfort of our homes or offices, instead of having to come all the way here.

Our guide started talking as soon as I lost interest in what he was saying.

He mentioned words like pre-Raphaelite period, Impressionism and Cubism; and I remember well he kept talking about Robert Delaunay which for some reason seemed to impress my French guests. I remember the name well because Jack Delaney is the landlord of my local pub, and perhaps Robert's brother.

Anyway, we got moving under the expert leadership of our guide from large room to even larger rooms.

I can never work out how long you're supposed to stand in front of a painting and admire it.

Is it five minutes? A little more? Or what?

I mean ... I can see a whole room with thirty or so paintings hanging on the walls in as many seconds.

That's it ... seen it. Let's move to another room.

But the guide stood there by some masterpieces and talked for ages about brush strokes, lighting and shading, the use of color and various other words whose meaning I did not know.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

The French guests seemed to enjoy it and murmured amongst themselves “C’est magnifique ... Oh oui bien sure ... Merveilleux ...” which I suppose was the whole intention of this expedition in the world of total monotonous tedium.

Now please don’t consider me a total Philistine only interested in the beauty of the balance sheet and the profitability of the bottom line. I’ll admit that these are figures to quicken my heartbeat and the more profitable the balance sheet the more excited I become. But there are some other bottom lines which do interest me.

For example, when we were beside some paintings of nudes I tried to show interest and stood there admiring them for more than the obligatory five minutes or so. I attempted to start a conversation about the various shadings and the clever use of the palette to its full extent but our guide quickly moved us on to something quite boring like a painting of a bowl of fruits.

“Now come on!!!” I thought, “I’m trying to be educated and intellectual here! I too can appreciate great art when I see it. Let’s wait here a bit longer.”

It was too late. The snobbish know-all guide had moved on to another room with his party and left me all alone amongst the bathing beauties. I looked at the inscription underneath the painting by an unknown modern artist and it said that it was inspired by “Le déjeuner sur l’herbe” by Edouard Manet.

In order to educate myself I quickly Googled Manet’s painting on my pocket sized computer gadget and I was somewhat confused by the brush strokes and the use of color. But hey ... it’s French so it must be good. As good as croissant and baguette with Boursin!

But alas the moment had gone as were our guide and my overseas clients.

I quickly hurried from room to room and finally found them admiring a plastic sculpture of Mickey Mouse.

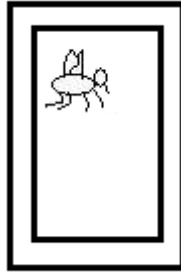
At last ... we’d arrived at contemporary art and the end of our tour of the gallery. I looked forward to taking my French guests to sample some real British culture.

A pub lunch with a pint or three of Guinness!

Now do you still dare to call me a Philistine?

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Technology and I (Me)



We were at our friend's house the other day enjoying a lovely barbecue in the garden with his family. It was warm and sunny and all was well and wonderful.

Until ...

I asked my friend if he had a newspaper.

"Join the 21st Century" he laughed, "we don't have newspapers in this house. Here have my Kindle!"

Well ... that wasp certainly did not know what hit it as it went to meet its maker.

For some reason my friend became furiously angry as bits of plastic broke off from his Kindle and started flying all over the place. He started calling me all sort of unrepeatable names ... some of which I'd never heard before nor knew their meaning!

Everyone stopped what they were doing in shock and amazement.

He calmed down a little when his 4 year old child asked innocently what some of the words meant.

But he went mad again when I tried to explain the meanings of the words I'd heard before.

When he'd calmed down once again he explained what a Kindle was and its purpose.

"Oh ..." I said, "I thought it was a mouse mat for the computer, or a fly swatter. It looks the right size to be both!"

He thought I was being funny ... which I wasn't, I assure you.

I calmed him down before he started boiling over again by offering to buy him another Kindle ... whatever that is.

He then went on about the number of books on his Kindle and other documents and pictures which were now lost forever and had to be "downloaded" again.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Is there a techy character out there who can tell me whether you can transfer books from a broken Kindle to a new one?

Failing that, can you tell me where one can obtain newspapers or magazines which can be rolled up and used to swat flies and other insects?

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Interesting facts about nature



Scientists have counted the number of heartbeats a mouse has in a lifetime and found a direct relationship with its size and weight. They then did the same with an elephant and found the relationship/ratio between the number of heartbeats and the size of the elephant to be the same as that of a mouse.

This means that all creatures have a number of given heartbeats in a lifetime commensurate with their weight and size.

A mouse being small and fast-running has a very fast heart beat. He therefore uses his allotted number of heartbeats quickly and dies in a matter of a few months.

The elephant on the other hand has a slower heartbeat per minute and lives much longer.

From this we deduce that humans too have a given number of heartbeats allocated to them at birth; give or take a few heartbeats either way.

And the faster we use our heartbeats the shorter our life would be.

This is a good reason why we should all be fat and sit in front of a TV with a large pizza rather than waste our heartbeats jogging, playing football or other sporting pursuits.

Another interesting fact about animals, or insects, involves crickets. You know, those little creatures who chirp incessantly throughout the night in summer.

Well, apparently the number of chirps they make per minute varies depending on the weather. The hotter it is the more chirps per minute; as many as forty or so chirps a minute in really hot steamy nights. But as the weather gets a little cooler the number of chirps a minute is less.

At a temperature of zero degrees centigrade the insect does not chirp at all because he is frozen solid out in the cold.

In England every year people gather for a worm catching contest. They go out in a field and tap the ground with sticks imitating the sound of rain. This excites the worms which come out of the ground and are quickly caught and put in a bucket. The winner is the person who catches most worms in a given period of time.

A CHUCKLE A DAY

Last year no one caught any worms in the contest.

It rained all day and they held the contest in the local church hall and the worms could not dig through the concrete floor.

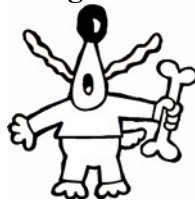
Women who wear perfume are more likely to be bitten by mosquitoes than those who do not. That's because mosquitoes are attracted to the gentle scent of perfume.

The same does not apply however for men who wear after-shave. This is because men tend to use too much after-shave lotion and they smell like mature manure thus attracting flies instead.

Men who drink a lot, especially liquor such as whisky, rum, vodka and so on, tend to turn mosquitoes into alcoholics when they suck their blood.

An old friend of mine used to drink at least a half-bottle of whisky or rum a day. He lived to age 92 and when he died he was cremated. It took the fire brigade a week to put the flames out.

Dog Tunes



Just bought a CD for my dog. It's a special recording in ultrasonic sound. Only dogs can hear it. You put the CD in the player and you hear nothing, but the dog can enjoy music and songs.

The CD has songs such as "How much is that doggie in the window?", "Puppy love", "Shep", "You're nothing but a hound dog" and my dog's favorite "Who let the dogs out".

There's a cat version with "I thought I saw a pussy cat", "Top Cat", "What's new pussycat?" and all the songs from the musical Cats as well as Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.

The CDs make a great gift for your pets birthday. You can play them as loud as you want and the neighbors will never complain - but their pets might if you have not invited them to the party !!!

A CHUCKLE A DAY

AND FINALLY

The fruit fly lesson

The fruit fly lives for just one day. Just 24 hours.

It wakes up in the morning, brushes its teeth, and by the end of the day it is brown bread ... totally dead.

It's hardly worth it buying a tube of toothpaste and using it just once!

So remember this next time you brush your teeth. Thank God for yet another day and enjoy what it brings!