

## **Jib Tale, or How You Can Predict How Far a Man Will Go in Life Simply from the Cut of His Jib**

*“I can tell whether I’m going to marry a man simply by the cut of his jib.”* — Famous movie actress, What’s Her Name

*“What do I like about him? I like the cut of his jib.”* — Conrad Hilton character in the TV show Mad Men referring to Don Draper

*“I don’t care for the cut of your jib.”* — My next door neighbor, during our meeting after I accidentally poisoned her dog

### **1. The Parking Ticket**

With all this fuss about jibs, I decided to pay a visit to the traditional Jib Cutter District on Grand Street on the upper middle part of the lower east side of New York City. There I met a young fellow who called himself Manny the Blade.

“Pardon me young man,” I halloped. “Could you kindly direct me to the nearest jib-cutter?”

“Who wants to know?” the “Blade” replied sourly. By this time a coterie of young toughs had gathered, all glaring at me in clear disapproval.

The old hairy eyeball, I thought.

One of them was an enormous six foot eight giant with a swastika tattooed on his forehead holding what appeared to be a sawed-off pitchfork. He began calling me a series of highly unflattering names.

Rather than reply directly, I decided to text him back. Sticks and stones may break my bones. Typing hurriedly, I misspelled the word “stones” as “scones.”

“The hell’s wrong with you?” thundered the giant, aghast at my error.

A moment later I was running for my life. I finally got away, but only after buying each of them a bento box lunch, revealing the last four digits of my social security number, and copying out the secret ingredient list for my famous “tangy cole slaw” recipe.

When I got to my car I realized three things. The first was I’d gotten a \$120 ticket for parking in a spot that was reserved for Russian dumpling food trucks. The second was that a mother cat had climbed into the back seat of my car and given birth to six adorable, multi-hued kittens. The third was about Manny and his friends.

They were clearly trying to hide something.

## **2. A Very Merganser Kind of Day**

“The old hairy eyeball?” my girlfriend Brenda said to me when I got back.

“No kidding,” I nodded. “Think they were serious?”

“Is the Pope Catholic?” she said.

“Does a Portuguese man ‘o’ war negotiate?” I said.

“Is no man an island?” she said.

We went on like this for some time, then finally air-kissed, somewhat passionately, for about 90 seconds. At which point, when I came up for oxygen, I exclaimed:

“You’re not Brenda!”

To which she replied: “You’re not the Duke of Cornwall!”

I admitted it was true. I was no duke, but then what about her? If she wasn’t the real Brenda, then who was?

As I began to ponder that question I realized the swastika-faced fellow had returned, now having attached himself to the chandelier above and was swinging toward us in a menacing trajectory with a demonic grin on his face that I can only describe as “demonic.”

“Duck!” I cried.

At this point a mallard, merganser, or some similar waterfowl, perhaps a sandhill crane, came hurtling through the open window at frightening speed, dislodging the giant intruder from the chandelier in one spectacular fell-swoop heap, his half-hitch pitchfork clattering on the floor like a six-dollar Fish’n Eddy plastic serving plate.

Instead of continuing to threaten us, the now-chastened Aryan immediately burst into tears.

“I’m so sorry,” he said, peeling off his rubberized Nazi giant costume to reveal a rather modest and pleasant-faced Doody Kravitz of a young man.

## **3. The Jib is Up**

“Care for a kitten?” I asked the former fascist, holding up one of the adorable calicos that had been delivered in the back seat of my sedan.

“Thank you,” sniffed the not-so-giant, holding the feline tenderly to his breast.

We (Brenda, the former giant, and myself) sat at a rather rickety table drinking mud-thick espresso and playing scrabble, communicating via the words we spelled, with double and triple word scores substituting for emotional exuberance.

*JIB\_ERISH?* I tiled, using a bastardized spelling and a blank for the second “B,” scoring a cool 66, including a bonus 50 for using all seven letters.

We all had a good chuckle over that one. But I still had the impression that things here were not on the up and up. If the jib-cutters didn’t care for the cut of a man’s jib, why not just say so? Why force a man to buy them lunch and disclose treasured family recipes? Why give out parking tickets in a No Dumpling Zone?

It just didn’t make sense.

At this point Brenda swung open her dressing gown to reveal (a) an incredibly attractive charmeuse shift in charcoal grey with pleats, a plunging backline and sort of a puffy, flared collar, and (b) she was not the woman I thought she was.

“Brenda?” I croaked.

“You never understood me,” Brenda said, her face the epitome of epitomes, so fierce and focused that I likened it to a rare zirconium crystal. “You never even bothered to find out who the real me was.”

“She’s right,” opined the ex-Nazi, and as I pondered how to respond I temporarily lost consciousness, cold-cocked, so to speak, by the truth itself, aided by a stiff left uppercut from Brenda. I descended down a long black hole at the end of which was another long black hole followed by a series of short black holes intermittently shooting out the sides of the original black hole.

#### **4. When I Awoke**

It all made sense. As she peeled off my rubber mask I realized it was all an elaborate hoax perpetrated upon us by the exigencies of today’s fast-paced digitized world.

I was actually Brenda.

“You mean I’m actually you and you’re actually me?” Brenda said, when she realized that the “Switch” had taken place.

“Is a rose a rose by any other name?” I said.

“I don’t know,” she countered. “Does a bird in the hand count for two in the bush?”

“Possibly,” I maintained, depending on the bird, the bush, who’s buried in Grant’s tomb, and whether a man who defends himself in open court has a fool for a lawyer.

“Duck!” she cried once again, but determined as I was not to fall for same gambit twice in the same election cycle, I nevertheless reflexively dropped to the floor only to intersect with the ongoing flight pattern of a a suspiciously familiar waterfowl with rather devastating results.

“KA-POW!” as they used to say in the Sunday funnies using super-bold 64-point type and a whole bushel load of swirly stars and jagged exclamation points.

When I awoke the bird was gone and I was incoherently mansplaining to Brenda or whoever she now claimed to be the intricacies of the classic *Fool me once, shame on you, Fool me twice, shame on me* framework. She wasn’t buying. In fact, she wasn’t buying anything except a loaf of sourdough rye and some kalamata olives, as we’d now wandered into a nearby gourmet market to buy provisions for brunch.

What can I tell you? Sometimes things in this crazy, cracked-up world just don’t make all that much sense until you realize they actually make sense.

As we approached the check-out line we caught a glimpse of ourselves in a square of reflecting glass.

“There’s something about the cut of that fellow’s jib,” Brenda noted.

Couldn’t have said it better myself.