

Anchovies

“Who eats anchovies?” I asked uncle Bill, as I watched him fumble to put his shoes on. The television played in the background, with the news reporting again on the mysterious Blob that had invaded the beach at Santa Monica, only the Blob wasn't a mystery any longer.

The marine biologist scientist guys from Monterey, that came up earlier this morning, identified the anomaly; it wasn't a terrifying sea monster, but instead a titanic sized school of anchovy. They'd never seen anything quite like it, they said, and so close to shore. The news camera panned up and down the length of the beach as a small crowd of gawkers leaned over railing on the pier, pointing at the gigantic black blob that floated just below the surface.

To illustrate that it was actually a swarm tiny of fish, the biologist swam into the blob, trying to penetrate the dark mass, only to see the blob move to avoid any contact. Several of them were doing this as the news cameras were filming from hovering helicopters. It was actually kinda comical.

I thought this had to have something to do with all the radiation from Fukushima in Japan; when that power plant melted down after that tsunami back in 2012. Now, after five years, we were being invaded by deranged radioactive anchovy that somehow figured a way to

group together in a supermassive school. What a lame attempt at world domination I thought to myself. These little Japanese anchovies traveled a thousand miles to invade our beaches. It was like in one of those stupid Godzilla movies.

“Listen, like I told you when I got home from work, if just one in twenty people in San Monica like anchovies on their pizza, then that's a gold mine sitting out there in the water, just waiting to be scooped up.” Uncle Bob winked at aunt Sue as she loaded the dishwasher; a cigarette dangled from her lips precariously. I looked at her, hoping she'd discourage him, but she just smiled and shook her head.

“If you intend to head out to the beach tonight Bill, don't forget to stop at the CVS and pick me up a box of pads.” She chimed in looking for the intended response from uncle Bill. This was her method of retaliation or distraction, it was something, but it always solicited the same response.

“Damn disgusting!” Uncle cried out, grimacing, as if a lemon had been jammed in his kisser.

“Never mind that. Make sure you get the fragrant ones too. You know the ones I like in that flowery pink box.” that sent her into a frenzy of laughter. I stood there, listening to this exchange, thinking that I couldn't really be related to these two, but I am.

Mom and Dad were killed years ago in a car accident, out in Hollywood; I was six years old. A fire engine was speeding down the Blvd, as Mom and Dad ran a stop sign; that's how the report went anyway. It was just lousy timing Uncle Bill had always said. That's how uncle Bill always described it; how he describes most, if not all our misfortune. He says the family's always been plagued by lousy timing. That was the reason he lost so much money in the stock market back in 2008, when he had decided to give day trading a whirl, right before the Market Crash of 2008. Lousy timing was also the reason his video rental business he opened back in

the nineties failed, right before a humongous chain store called Blockbuster opened directly across the street from his little shop. A lotto machine dragged on the agony another few years until he shuttered the store up. Everything in life is timing he'd always say.

And this blob of anchovy, well this was timing too. "It had timing written all over it" he said as he drained the last of his Friday evening martini. "I'm striking while the iron is hot." He said laughing. "Get your hat on. You're coming with me. "

"Oh no," I said, "I'm staying right here. "

"I'm gonna need your help with the net. "

"What net? You don't have a net. You're crazy. "

"We're going to head over to Big 5 sporting goods and we'll pick one up. What'ya think a net will cost? "

"I have no idea. "I laughed, and aunt Sue laughed louder, and uncle Bill got beat red but he laughed the loudest.

"I'll be laughing last." He said with a wide grin. "Go in the garage and warm the car. "

I wasn't sure if he was serious about this but you never could tell anything with uncle Bill. I wasn't kidding when I said he's crazy, he is. Aunt Suzie once told me uncle Bill took dad's death hard, being he was his only brother. He's always been a little batty, was always a joker anyway, and she just went along with the occasional gags which typically coincided with his Friday cocktail.

In the car, we listened to an oldie station that was playing I'll Take You Just The Way You Are. Uncle Bill trapped the tune out on the steering when as if playing a baby grand.

“Maybe we'll drive by the blob first, before the sun sets. This way we'll get a look at it first.”

“You know, I didn't want to break it to you in front of aunt Susie but your plan has a fatal flaw.”

“What would that be?” he asked raising his eyebrows.

“Where did you plan on keeping a million sardine stored while you line up your customers, in aunt Suzie's freezer?”

“Well, I hadn't thought of that. “

“It's any important consideration, wouldn't you say? “

“I'd say it is. Maybe I'll make you in charge of inventory? ”

“I'd say the same thing I said back at the house. “I chuckled loudly.

He laughed at that, lighting a cigarette. “I see. You like your job fixing broken computers? “

“I'm a system engineer. And yes, I'm very happy. “ I said, actually kinda meaning it.

“There goes that timing again.” Uncle Bill said with a chuckle. Here I am, ready to corner the sardine market, and my inventory man wants to keep engineering or whatever it is you do. “How's that little cutie you've been dating? “

“Her name is Diana. And, she's doing good. “

“That's good. You should bring her around the house more often.“ “You like her? “

“I do, but more importantly do you? “

“I do. “

“Well that's good. “ Uncle smiled and flicked his stub out the window. Looking back at me he said “You look more and more like your Father every day. “ he glanced back through the window at the setting sun.

“What'ya say to a cold beer then at the pier? We'll toast the anchovies good timing. “

“That sounds good, “ I said with smile, “but aren't you forgetting something?”

"What's that?" He said shooting me a wry side glance.

"You have a stop to make at CVS.“