

# I Talk About Sex And Other Stuff

## Telling Jokes

I'm in Cambodia  
I'm the teacher  
I'm supposed to be teaching English  
but mostly I am an actor  
pretending to know what to do  
and how to act and what to say.

But I'm a good actor and I play the part  
and everyone is happy, reasonably so anyway

My student comes to me  
he's carrying a small book,  
he opens the book and begins reading  
a joke in his accented, halting English.  
It's something about a string  
going into a bar.  
It's a pun.  
It's a dad joke.  
It's a decent joke.

The joke ends and I smile a half-smile  
and grunt my appreciation.

"Chur" – the students always shorten "teacher"  
to "Chur."

"Chur. What does it mean?" he asks.

I frown.  
I think.  
I make a "hmmm" noise.  
I crack my knuckles.  
I swallow phlegm.  
I respond.

"Uhh... It's a bad joke." I say.  
"But what does it mean?" he asks again.  
"Nothing. It doesn't mean anything." I lie.

“Nothing?” His eyes stare up into my big nostrils.  
“Nothing.” I repeat. I stare into his eyes. “Bad joke.”

He turns around and goes back to his seat.

Today

I hurt myself today  
mentally.  
I was thinking about my  
life  
and how little it means  
and how little I’ve accomplished  
and how much I hate myself.

“Don’t be alarmed.  
Don’t be alarmed.”

That’s what they say.

“He’s just a *writer*.  
Haha. Haha. yes.  
You know how *they* are!”

Oh, sure. We’re  
plagued with indecision  
and self-hatred,  
but that isn’t something  
relegated to the realm of  
writers.

We invite everyone to  
join us in spastic  
self-loathing,  
repeated and echoing  
screams of

“FUCK”

“FUCK”

“COCKASS”

“SHITWHORE”

“FUCK”

“SHIT”

and other profanities we  
can use to express

our uncomfortability  
with a certain situation.

Writers tend to be uncomfortable a lot.

Well, I don't know.

Or maybe I do know.  
I happen to be a writer.  
Or at least I call myself a writer  
which is worth about as much  
as calling myself Superman  
or the President  
or a person with a 12 inch cock.

(I am none of the three.)

I tend to be awkward,  
don't mind me.  
I don't mind you, but  
I see your eyes judging  
from across the room,  
you wonder why this bearded man  
has the crazy eyes, drunken swagger,  
unsteady movements.  
You don't think it has anything to do  
with the beer in his hand.  
And you'd be right.  
I am simply incongruous to  
this world.  
Can't complete normal activities.  
Can't make normal speech.  
Can't do a whole lot of normal things.  
Can't do a whole lot of things.

But I can meander for a great  
deal of time  
down a long alleyway  
down a long road  
down a desolate city  
in the middle of America  
on the World of worlds  
in the galaxy  
with too many  
stars and lights  
and blinking  
distractions, contractions, and retractions.

(And some would  
say I spend too much  
time down that deserted  
hallway.)

But in the meantime  
you can find me passed out in the  
garbage bin down the way –  
this life is too much for  
beds and such  
and I'm too tired  
to walk home.

The Foreman

We did our  
construction work today.

Me and the other  
un-callused who  
like to pretend  
(but only from time to time)  
that we actually know  
how to work with our hands.

“Oh, this is great fun!”  
We say as we  
spend five minutes hammering  
in a nail and  
destroying the beam  
in the meanwhile.

Our “foreman” stands above,  
blocking out the sun,  
arms crossed,  
bored expression  
thinking about his kids, his wife,  
his next drink, his next job,  
anything but the loon fumbling with  
the nail and the hammer  
below his feet.

“Alright, alright, hurry up, hurry up  
we don't have all day”

He says as he snaps out of his reverie.

The company pays him good money  
to be the “foreman”  
and every handful of minutes he  
has to say something  
“authoritative” to the fools.

“They need instruction” the company told him.  
“They want to feel as though they are really  
contributing.”

He doesn’t care what they need.  
The fools dance around with their  
toys for a couple hours and  
feel satisfied.

They head back to their offices,  
put on their ties,  
shine their nice black shoes,  
plaster smiles on their faces  
greet their secretaries,  
make small talk about the weather,  
and compare their Battle Wounds.

A scrap here, a bruised knee there, a  
splinter, a cut, a strain in the back.

Battle Wounds.

The foreman chuckles to himself.  
“These fuckers.” he thinks as  
his mind wanders back to his  
kids, his wife, his drinks, his jobs, his life.

Anything but the actors  
at his feet, playing at a role  
that he knows only too well.

That role is no farce to him.  
The blood is no joke.  
The pain is nothing to laugh about.  
The sweat is nothing but routine  
and expected and dirty.

“Oh, sir!” a voice rings out  
across the site.

The "foreman" throws on a smile:  
"You're doing just fine. Just fine." he says.

So, I have to believe him.

The Hobo

I want to write a story  
but I don't  
know the beginning  
middle  
or end.

Can you help me?

"Well sure" the hobo says  
"what do you want to write about."

I don't know.  
something powerful  
something that can make  
people cry.

"Okay sure" the hobo says.  
"I can help with that. I  
have a great story for you."

Well, actually I  
like making people laugh more.  
How about something funny?

"Okay sure" the hobo says.  
"I got a couple good jokes you  
can use."

Well, actually I'm  
quite lonely and  
I want something that  
makes me attractive to women.

"Okay, okay" the hobo says.  
"I got something that will  
make every woman  
drool over you."

Why, why, oh why  
if your stories are  
so powerful  
so funny  
so attractive to women  
why are you  
a hobo?

The hobo just stood  
up and stretched and smiled and  
froze.

I stared at him for one  
two  
ten minutes  
before realizing he had  
transformed into a lamppost  
and I had pissed my pants.

#### Glad To Be Of Service

Dirty laundry, decaying newspapers,  
Chinese take-out boxes, and stained sheets.  
Plates stacked under the bed, glasses perched on the nearby table  
teetering, waiting to tip and spill and tumble and crunch into the floorboards.  
“Don’t take them off,” she tells me.  
She means my shoes  
and I take her advice.

We slide into bed,  
cocoon inside the mess  
and push the trash against the wall.  
There’s something poking sharply into my back -  
a self-improvement book. “Stupid,” I think.  
She takes off her skirt and her blouse and her bra  
and drops her panties down past her knees and around the  
rainbow painted hiking boots still laced and snug around her little feet.

She smells like cigarettes and magazine perfume and curry, but her lips are soft  
and her eyes smile and dance and I can see my own goofy  
face staring back: a dirty beard, sunken eyes, greasy hair  
and a foolish grin and reasonably straight

whitish-yellow teeth that chatter incessantly  
when I'm nervous or when I'm trying  
to impress someone.  
(They often chatter.)

She lays on my chest  
and twists her fingers  
through my tangled brown locks,  
whispering in my ear about the incredibly  
dirty, disgusting, and marvelous things she will do to me.  
Her fingers tip toe the contours of my body raising goosebumps  
and removing my shirt and, after some difficulty, my jeans and my underwear.  
Her tongue slits in and out, a serpentine slither across my chest,  
a moist trail left behind.

Two small breasts leap in unison as she rocks on top:  
eyes to the sky, hands clawing the bed,  
spit sweating and sweat spitting and screams spilling  
from the room and out the window and out the building and into  
the ears of the Chinese family sitting for dinner two floors down  
with red faces and giggles from the twin 16-year-old boys and a  
stern frozen countenance from Father and an oblivious  
conversation about springtime flowers from Mother.

And she rides and rides and rides.  
"I'm close, I'm close, I'm close," I gasp.  
She grabs the self-help book and  
smashes my skull – THUNK – two handed and certain of target  
And still she rides and rides and rides.

I'm dazed.  
My head splits like a cantaloupe.  
-Crack-  
Two halves smooshed and oozing and certain to attract the fruit flies.  
There's a volcano somewhere behind my forehead,  
the lava flows in spurts, stinging, salty from my eyeballs.  
A kindergarten marching band joyously  
imitating an avalanche, the parents grimace  
at each other, trying to focus on last night's football game  
or their favorite TV show or the latest problem at work  
or the chance of an asteroid colliding into the field and freeing  
them all from the Devil's Cacophony.

She grabs something from the table, a pill, medicine, drug, here's water – drink.  
I sink into the bed, down, down, down, deeper and deeper,  
swallowed into her cocoon,  
paralyzed in her grasp,  
lost in her embrace.



My head screams, my head bleeds,  
the water rolls, the kettle boils,  
The whistle pierces, the Lioness roars:  
explosion, toes curl, fingers stretch, body shakes.  
Woozy and exhausted, stares into my eyes  
Thanks me, calls me "Fred."  
My name isn't Fred.