

BROKEN
WORLD
STORIES

LANCE MANION

ALSO BY LANCE MANION

Merciful Flush
Results May Vary
The Ball Washer
Homo sayswhaticus
The Trembling Fist
The Song Between Her Legs
What You Don't Understand
neXt
Tales of Adventure With Nap Lapkin
Dizzying Depths

www.lancemanion.com

Copyright 2022 by Lance Manion Enterprises

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

ISBN:

Edited by Andira Dodge worddrummager@gmail.com

Cover Art by James Flaxman <http://www.deviantart.com/jflaxman>

Printed in the United States of America

Forward

So, it's New Year's Day, 2022 and I'm watching a movie called *Always Be My Maybe*. The plot is irrelevant for the purposes of this Forward, but suffice it to say it's a good movie and I'm enjoying it when all of a sudden, Keanu Reeves says something that really captures exactly what the last ten years of posting stories on my website and publishing books has been all about:

“See... that right there... is what it's all about. Laboring in obscurity. Starving and struggling. The man who embraces his mediocre nothingness... shines greater... than any.”

In fairness, I haven't really been starving and struggling implies some sort of effort, which has also been entirely lacking. But the embracing my mediocre nothingness? I defy you to name anyone who has embraced it to the degree I have.

Obviously, if that person does exist, I won't know them. By definition, if they have even the slightest modicum of notoriety, then I win.

If I haven't heard of them, I'm going to assume you're just making up a name to be a naysaying tool. So, I win again.

This book doesn't try to be as funny as some of the others, instead, exploring the odd in an attempt to get a certain part of your brain tingling.

Another attempt to shine.

Contents

.....

squirrel bemusement	1
along came a mobile home.....	3
the cricket	5
tying things up.....	8
fireworksflies	10
a come from behind story	13
Annie.....	16
the ugly American	18
the mole.....	20
what time does.....	22
Monstrous Dick.....	24
Monday mornin (no g)	27
accelerants	29
catfishfisting	31
live fur coats.....	34
the funeral and after.....	36
the tattoo	38
a thinly-veiled commentary on transgender fatigue.....	40
Lady Nono.....	42
forced.....	45
lightning strikes twice.....	47
Still Life with Aerobics.....	49

Broken World Stories

Clive Warren	51
these stairs (a Valentine's Day story)	54
Rose and Poppy	56
for what reason, cause, or purpose?	59
the numismatist	63
why Uncle Todd will never again be allowed to put Mary to bed	65
the behind leading the blind	67
tells	70
the girl who looked at tombstones	73
good will shoveling.	76
7 to 4	78
the Saucer of Philadelphia	80
a Broken Other-World story.	82
The King's Gambit	84
the send-off	86
no good deed	89
slave to love	91
luck and the lady	93
our dance hall days.	95
harbinger	98
Oprophet of God	101
lost moments	104
the night watchman	106
the road to hell	108
slices of bread.	110

the cool college English teacher	112
unrescuable	114
get off your lawn	117
the test	119
Bryllamor Grumblebow	121
missing in action... without all the action	123
the blind date	125
up a tree	128
Heaven	130
assault water taffy	133
leaving the nest	136
a notebook that will never find its way home	138
unsung heroes of WW II	140
leaving the machine	142
Thinksgiving	144
Neil's COVID Update	147
Sarah's COVID Update	149
COVID Update: pie	151
COVID UPDATE: Christmas Lights	154
a simple Xmas wish	156
fuck the Island of Misfit Toys	158
Nap Lapkin doesn't get sympathy pains	160

squirrel bemusement



I need only two things to be happy right now: a few billion dollars and a lifespan of a thousand years or so. Not wine. Not women. Not song.

Allow me to elaborate.

Why the money? I'd like to genetically engineer pygmy redwoods. Like pygmy elephants and hippos, except trees. Mighty redwoods... that stand only four feet tall. Then I'd like to buy a thousand acres and plant an entire pygmy redwood forest.

Why?

Just to see the reaction of the animals.

Squirrels, for instance. The looks on their faces would be priceless. They'd have no idea what they were looking at.

And the deer.

A thousand acres of bewildered animals. Birds and bears alike, bemused down to the last raccoon.

The lifespan part? Necessary to see how forest life changes to adapt to this new environment. Do animals get smaller or more self-confident?

A great thousand-year experiment.

And throughout these thousand years, the forest would be managed by an elite team of rangers.

Midgets.

Just when the squirrels were coming to grips with four-foot tall redwoods, in would charge a bunch of midget rangers.

And if there's a fire that requires firefighters?

Also midgets.

I would call them- in keeping with the theme of the forest - pygmy humans, but I have a feeling they might find this offensive. Also, it sort of infers that they were purposely engineered and I'm sure nothing could be further from the truth.

Although if I had billions to spend, I'm sure I could talk a few of the genetic engineers into poking around and seeing if a pygmy midget would be feasible.

What the fuck would the squirrels make of them?

You can see why I said a *few* billion instead of just *a* billion. Making dreams come true isn't cheap. And yes, I realize that the height ratio of a midget (even a pygmy midget) to a human compared to a pygmy redwood to a normal redwood is way off, but I believe that will only enhance the confusion of the forest creatures. Use their burgeoning math skills against them.

Plus, we can't have our rangers being carried off by ants, can we?

So you are now free to go on your way, but I hope you'll take a few minutes to imagine this pygmy redwood forest on your own time. In detail. Perhaps at sunrise. How majestic and fucked up this forest would be. How from the right angle, everything would look perfectly normal... until a fox that seemingly stands sixty feet at the shoulder strolls by. How wonderful it all would be and why in a thousand years it would never get old.

The looks on the squirrel's faces.

along came a mobile home



There is a line in the movie *Doom*, delivered masterfully by Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson, that captures Duncan’s passion towards his mobile home. “I need soldiers. I don’t need anybody else but soldiers.” Replace the word “soldiers” with “mobile home” and you’ve got a pretty good grasp on his priorities.

You’d also have a pretty awkward sentence. (You’d also have to switch the word “anybody” to “anything,” but I thought including that information might really bog down the story, so I stuck this observation in parentheses.)

(Just seems slightly less obtrusive.)

Ironically, the movie *Doom* revolves around the consequences of scientists playing with forces beyond their control. The “mad scientist” archetype began shortly after the first man began a systematic study of the structure and behavior of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment. Show me a man with a microscope and I’ll show you another who believes that magnifying things is unnatural.

In the case of Duncan, and for the purposes of this story, the second man might have a point.

Duncan genetically engineered eight giant tarantula legs that he then attached to his mobile home. Not eight mechanical legs that function like a spider’s, but eight giant, hairy, living, forty-foot long tarantula legs that allowed his mobile home to pick up and move anywhere he desired.

With one stipulation.

(Another archetype, whenever breakthroughs occur, there are always mysterious strings attached. Limitations that make any powers or abilities more interesting. Limitations that often require parentheses.)

His mobile home could only come to rest in a mobile home park. His all-terrain mobile home could move swiftly and silently across any landscape

but when he needed a break from his travels, he needed to find a mobile home park to rest.

Every morning, his day would start the same way, hearing the terrified screams of women and/or children seeing his home for the first time. Often, no amount of explanations would suffice and he'd be forced to have his tarantuhome head off to greener pastures.

If you have not already pictured his eight-legged mobile home moving, I would invite you to do so now. It might be the creepiest thing you'll think all day.

He had thought of attaching more whimsical-looking grasshopper legs instead but quickly thought better of it as every time it launched itself skyward, no amount of bubble wrap and packing peanuts would save the dishes and glassware on impact.

(Which goes a long way to explaining why grasshoppers are rarely seen with such items.)

Scientists like Duncan rarely watch movies like *Doom*. They much prefer movies that have a more pro-science bent. This is unfortunate because many scientists, especially those that fall into the "mad" category, of which Duncan is certainly a member in good standing, need the occasional reminder that the road to hell is often paved with good intentions.

You don't need to have seen *Doom* to understand how things turn out in that particular movie. It's right there in the title.

For Duncan, it was unwillingness to accept that the slow growth of hair on the surface of his mobile home, originally localized to the areas where the legs were attached, might be foreshadowing that the need to come to rest in mobile home parks might not be the only unintended consequence of his experimentation.

This was especially true some weeks later when he saw the tiny fangs beginning to grow above the front door.

the cricket

• • • • •

The truth is that during the summer, the windows are closed because the air conditioner is always on, so it's only in the fall that Otto gets to drift off to sleep to the sound of crickets. A pastime he enjoys immensely.

Beginning in mid-September, he will have the windows fully open and he will turn off anything in the house that makes even the slightest noise so he can immerse himself in the relentless come-ons of the male cricket.

Then, starting around mid-October, things start to get a little chilly, which on one hand just makes falling asleep with the windows wide open that much better. Nothing like a little nip in the air to make one snuggle down just a little deeper into the blankets. On the other hand, the number of chirping crickets starts to decrease. Not only that, but their stridulation (the act of producing sound by rubbing body parts together) begins to slow down. By late-October, the cacophony has been replaced by only a few stragglers. Otto wonders how much of the chirping is trying to find a mate and how much is just trying to keep warm. How many female crickets are even in the market for copulation with winter just around the corner?

One day in very-late-October, Otto decided to get off the bench and insert himself into the game. When corduroy pajama bottoms wouldn't do the trick, he bought a secondhand violin and removed the fingerboard, peg box, and strings and duct taped them to his inner thigh. On his other thigh, with the assistance of the aforementioned duct tape, he affixed a bow.

Then he laid in bed and chirped to the best of his ability.

I implore you to picture this before moving on.

For the next few nights, he sat in bed rubbing his legs together, doing his best to keep warm and perhaps attract a mate. The latter part being something that Otto had been exceptionally bad at up until those very-late-October evenings. It's not that he's particularly unattractive; it's just that he's the kind of guy who would buy a violin so that he could tape

various parts of it to his thighs in order to chirp. You can see how this act would not get much play outside of the cricket community.

Especially if you took the time, as advised, to imagine how he looked sitting in bed rubbing his legs together.

And then one very-very-late-October evening, there were no crickets chirping whatsoever. The last of them had decided to call it a day and expire. This caused Otto no small amount of heartache. It did not, however, cause his stridulations to cease. In fact, in his grief, he was chirping much louder and longer than he'd ever chirped before.

And that's when his doorbell rang. One of his neighbors had complained to the local authorities and outside his front door stood an officer of the law.

A female officer of the law.

He opened the door, the violin parts and bow still taped to his thighs, and inquired as to the reason for her visit. She looked at his thighs as if putting the last piece in a very odd puzzle, only to find it didn't fit.

He broke the awkward silence. "The crickets stopped chirping tonight. Not even one of them left," he said. He looked forlorn.

"And so you were..." She could not finish the sentence herself. It was the kind of sentence that invited further explanation, but Otto just looked too sad for her to continue her enquiry.

"Can I ask you to stop?" she asked politely.

"Got it. It's just that I feel less lonely when I know other things are out there calling out for companionship." He paused and then added, "Going to be a long winter."

The officer smiled and nodded.

Otto, his thighs rattling together quietly, turned and closed the door.

Upstairs, he closed the windows, removed the violin parts and bow, and got into bed. Sleep was hard to come by and an hour later Otto, wide awake and climbing out of bed to make himself a cup of warm milk, heard his phone chirp, alerting him to the fact that he had a text.

The text read, “Hi. It’s the police officer from earlier tonight. Still up?” followed by a winking face emoticon.

It was his turn to smile.

So it came to pass that Otto, on a very-very-late-October evening, with no stridulation or hesitation, chirped back.

tying things up



When she is busy, she always says she is tied up. When she can't affect an outcome, she always says her hands are tied. When she can't find the right words, she always says she is tongue-tied.

You would then assume that her favorite laundry detergent would be Tide but you'd be wrong. It's Cheer, because in high school she used to be a cheerleader.

Typically, high school cheerleaders go on to be either captains of industry or prostitutes.

April went down the path of the latter. Her specialty was B&D (bondage and discipline). What I find somewhat disturbing is that such a large percentage of you did not need B&D defined. You read B&D and said to yourself "B&D... got it."

Freaks.

Her financial advisor was one of her regular clients so he wasn't particularly surprised at her unwillingness to invest in anything but bonds. "I like my money like I like my evenings: restrained," she would say. His efforts to get her to diversify fell on deaf ears. Even when she was on the clock, be it a box-tie, over-arm tie or reverse prayer, his various precious metals presentations were all for naught.

And then one night, when April found herself in a particularly erotic frog-tie, he tried a different tact.

She was fit to be tied. "Not again. Not now!" she snapped dismissively.

"A stock," he began, "is a share of a public company which entitles the holder to a fixed dividend, whose payment takes priority over that of common-stock dividends."

She struggled helplessly and for a moment, he wished that he'd left some of her clothes on so he could concentrate. Trying to remain as composed as possible, he pressed on. He felt obligated.

“With the right information at your disposal and a complete understanding of how much risk you are willing to expose yourself to, stocks are an outstanding investment.”

“*This* is how you want to squander your time? I’m on the clock you know,” she said. “... and *you* want to counsel *me* on how I spend my money?”

“I’m sure you know this April, but perhaps it’s not occurred to you in this context. Stock has another meaning.”

She looked up at him.

“Stocks are also medieval restraining devices that were used as a form of corporal punishment and public humiliation.”

At the word punishment, he saw a small shiver run down her. All the way down, from head to toe. Not an inch escaped it. Barely noticeable and yet worth every dime. One shudder worth a thousand words.

He approached her and whispered in her ear, “I want you...” and then finally, “to diversify.”

She looked away and her breathing began to get ragged.

“Bonds are good April. We both love bonds. But it’s time to broaden our horizons. I need you April... to take a look at stocks.”

His face was inches from her. She began to writhe.

“Is that a yes?”

She nodded.

“Say it. I need you to say it. Say yes.”

Eventually she looked up at him and said, “Yes.”

“Great!” he said, clapped once and casually strolled away from her. “I will send over some suggestions for your portfolio in the morning. Mostly blue chips with a few potential growth stocks. I think you’ll be happy.”

She sighed a sigh that was equal part whimper and said “I am.”

He looked back at her. “Good. Now, where were we?”

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

