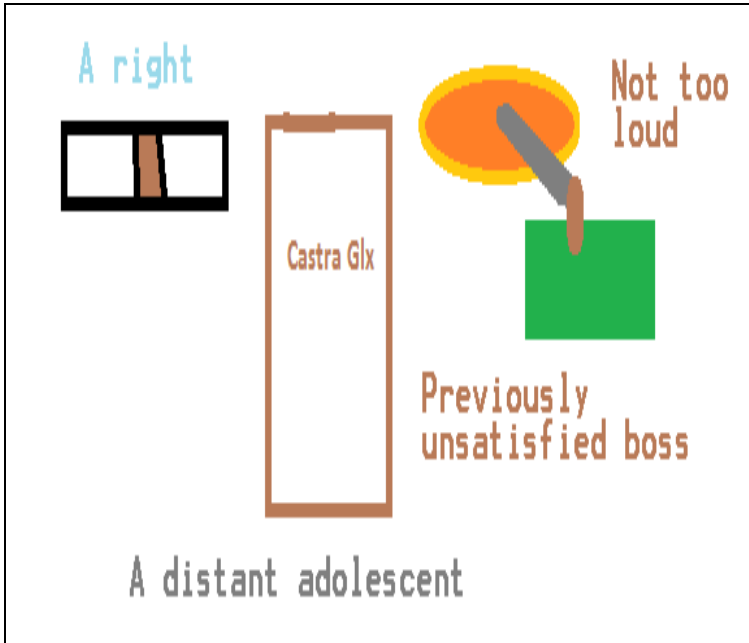


“You can’t swim in these”



by

Simon John James

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Preface

Whether you like science fiction with Tula not dealing well with his parents, crime versus U.I.N. ethics in the first two of the “A.K.A. Ewing” series, a girl we all might know finding herself back at the job centre, the first adventure of Becky Bug, and more, there are very shorts to suit all.

Simon James has received praise for several of his stories. One of the stories in this book had a reviewer on jottify.com “in stitches”, perfect credentials and delight for a writer to hear. Can you guess which one?

So here Simon presents “You can’t swim in these”, his first book containing 10 very short stories. If you’ve got 5 to 10 minute gaps in your life, these stories are for you.

It'll be bigger tomorrow

Tom was in the hospital bed when the doctor spoke to him. "Don't you worry, Tom. We'll have it working for you both very soon. O.K.?"

Tom nodded.

"Good lad," the doctor said, then left the room.

Suddenly a slightly older boy energised in front of him.

"Who are you?" Tom asked, hiding behind the bed clothes.

"I'm Charles, a growing person. I'd like your help to test a new piece of technology. My administrator has viewed the hospital admission database and we think you might be able to help us."

"Oh?"

"You would never have heard of me or the growing people. We hope to be the new evolution of humans called Homo Erectus."

"Homo Erectus?"

"Absolutely. We're superior humans because we're able to induce an erect penis whenever we see beautiful women. This is something I understand you need help with, and the reason for you being here in this rather inadequate and unhelpful hospital."

"That's embarrassing," Tom said.

"Please don't be at all embarrassed. We really would like to help you," Charles said.

"How?"

“We know what you do at night.”

“You do?”

“Certainly. You cry yourself to sleep, wondering why you’re unable to obtain a big one. No one else does. They don’t care. But you do. We’d like to test our product on you.”

“What product?” Tom asked.

“See this belt?”

“Yes.”

“It’s a bigun creation locator. Our H.Q. use it to locate us when we’re struggling with our penis size. Would you like one?”

“Yes please.”

“Very well.” Charles spoke into his wrist radio. “David. Send a bigun creation locator to this location.”

A few seconds later, it appeared.

“Put it on, Tom.”

“Alright.” Tom did so. “It fits.”

“That’s good, Tom. Now when you need a big penis for your girlfriend, try pressing this red button in the middle.” Charles pointed to the red button, encouraging Tom to press it.

“It works,” Tom said, looking down and laughing with joy.

“I’m happy for you, Tom. My job is done here. Good luck with your girlfriend tonight. Would you like me to energize you back home?” Charles asked.

”Please. Thank you so much. This is really great.”

Tom climbed out of bed and stood next to Charles.

As Tom and Charles began to disappear, Tom waved away the hospital.

“I’ll never be stuck for a stiffy again,” Tom said.

The same doctor entered the room, looking around for Tom. “I don’t understand the state of youth today. They don’t find things like that important after all,” he said to himself, then left the room to see the next patient.

“Can you help him with his ignorance?” Tom asked.

“I’ll contact another organisation for him.”

Tom was pleased with himself for two reasons now. His problem was solved, and he was contributing to helping an entire organisation. He was sure that would help him in his “middleman” career too, but that could wait until tomorrow. Tonight was for his girlfriend.

Tora, possibly of the Torng people

The spacecraft descended. It landed. The plank carried Tora closer to what appeared to be a human female.

“Oh crikey”, said the female. “I’m Sarah. Who are you?”

“Hello Earthling. I’m Tora. Acting representative of the Torng people, from the planet Tor. We’ve come to observe you.”

“Why is that?”

“We feel there is something we can learn from you.”

“But look at your space ship. It must be a remarkable feat of engineering. What could you possibly learn from us?” she asked.

“How do you go to the toilet?”

“That’s not a nice question.”

“Our scientists tell us we are polluting our environment the way we do it.”

“I see. We sit down,” she replied.

“How many other varieties do you have? We have five hundred and twelve.”

“And you can’t find one safe way to go?”

“I know. Five hundred and twelve ways of going to the toilet.”

“Anyway. We have two.”

“How else do you do it?” asked Tora.

“Some of us sit down. Some of us stand up.”

“I saw a documentary on our planet saying you pull it out of your trousers and stand up. Why do you say you sit down?”

“That depends?”

“This conversation is too complex.” Tora pulled out an object from its side, and pointed it at her.

Zap. Sarah vanished into thin air.

Tora walked back inside its spacecraft.

“I really thought they’d be able to help us,” said Tora.

“They are fools. They cannot fool our toilet spies,” was the reply from another being.

“Why do you say flies?”

“No, Tora. Spies.”

“I see.”

The console buzzed. Tora pushed a button.

“Come in.”

“Your next mission, Tora is to ask earthlings why they don’t eat dog food. Confirm.”

“Confirm. Tora out.” Tora then turned to his companion in the spacecraft. “Although I think it’s because they’re not cats,” he said, worried.

“Oh Tora. You poor genius. You’re closer than ever to proving you are worthy of Planet Tor citizenship,” said his companion, embracing him.

A.K.A. Ewing: May Dup

Also known as Ewing.
Chronicles of the U.I.N.

Episode 1: May Dup

1995. Manchester.

Stock trader Donald Barisfield was about to be told that every cloud has a silver lining.

In another office block, brother and sister private investigator team Steve And Linda Jackson were part of Ewing Private Investigators Limited. The name came from the group at school that Steve created, the U.I.N., the “Unofficial Intelligence Network”. Linda was part of that group. Originally there were six, but career differences drew most of the members of the group away. Steve and Linda were the only ones left.

The name Ewing was a codeword created to be used as the public face of the U.I.N. The name stuck into adulthood, and then employment.

Both Steve and Linda were in their office. Steve found himself overworked.

“I need someone to carry out surveillance at Wilmslow Automotive,” said Steve.

“I can’t think of anybody,” said Linda.

“Contact one of the recruitment agencies, would you? There’s bound to be one that recruits p.i.s.”

“Sure,” replied Linda.

Donald Barisfield went to his doctor saying his responses at work were slow, and he needed to react faster. He was prescribed a course of antidepressants.

Two weeks later, Donald was driving home from work, when he saw the girl of his dreams waiting at a bus stop. He parked up, got out of his sports car, then ran to the girl. "Come on," he said to her, holding out his hand.

"What?" she asked.

He repeated his request. Excited, she smiled and grabbed his hand.

He pulled her away from the bus stop, seen by others. One of the onlookers said, "Talk about acting on impulse."

He pulled her into the nearby park. He let go, then looked at her, leering. She willingly fell on the grass. He stooped beside her. They looked at each other. He ran his hand through her hair.

She grabbed his groin. "Come on", she said. He moved his hand to the softness that was the leg of her tight cotton skirt. She leaned toward him, kissing him hard on the lips.

Then Donald, realizing his mid section was not responding the way he wanted, spoke in a panic. "Oh my God. I'm so sorry." He stood up, then started to walk away, backwards.

"You're not dumping me here?" asked the girl.

"I can't apologize enough," replied Donald, then ran off, back to his car.

Two nights later, Donald was watching television. “On the news tonight. At Rover Park in Salford, Tracy Hopkins, aged twenty one, was found dead in the early hours of this morning by a man walking his dog. The police are treating it as suspicious. Any information should be passed on to the incident room at Salford Police Station.” The phone number appeared on the screen. He watched in horror, then picked up the telephone beside him. He dialled the number for Salford Police Station.

Two hours later, he was waiting in a police cell, having given them a statement.

Steve was watching the television news the next night.

“Salford Police say they apologize for stating that Tracy Hopkins had been found dead. They now say an indecent assault took place at the scene. A twenty seven year old man, Donald Barisfield, pictured, has been arrested by police in connection with the incident.”

He pondered for a few seconds, then rang Don’s parent’s home. A few minutes afterwards he put the phone down, then made another phone call.

Five minutes later, Steve opened a spreadsheet on his personal computer, to remind himself of the profit and loss of the company. Then he telephoned his sister, Linda. “Do you remember Don Barisfield?”

“Yes. Didn’t you two fall out at school?”

“That’s right. He was on the t.v. news earlier. He needs our help.”

“Oh.”

“I always wanted to make peace with him. I think I can kill two birds with one stone. He may be the solution to our staffing shortage.”

“Are you asking me for approval?” asked Linda.

“Yes.”

“You have it,” said Linda.

Steve drove to Salford Police Station. There he announced he wanted to speak to Don in his cell.

“He’s been released, Sir,” said the officer at the desk.

Then Don appeared in the hall, staring at Steve.

Steve glared at him for a few seconds, then turned to the man at the desk and said, “What’s the finders name? May Dup?”

The officer gave Steve an ignorant glance.

Then Steve turned to Don.

“If it was serious, they wouldn’t have released you,” said Steve. “I’ve got a proposition.”

“Steve? Steve Jackson?” asked Don.

“Yes.”

Don walked towards him.

“Why would you offer me anything at all?” whispered Don.

“I’ve forgiven you. And I think the girl will as well, eventually.”

“I think we were both disappointed in a most important way. Anyway, why are you prepared to help me?”

“I think Linda’s forgotten about your charms. I was just being the protective brother.”

“What can you offer me? A new life?”

“Yes.”

“Oh. What are you? A recruiter for the secret service?”

“No. Perhaps even more exciting,” replied Steve.

“Explain.”

“We’re private investigators. Interested?”

“What? Poor man’s secret service?” asked Don.

“Don’t be like that,” said Steve.

Don blushed.

“You never heard of my group at school?” asked Steve.

“Not at all.”

“Then we all kept a secret. It’s not quite what I had in mind for the future, but sometimes the company is close.”

“You’re offering me a new life as a p.i.?”

“Yes.”

“I’ll have to think about it.”

“Will you? You previously worked in the finance industry. Your employer won’t touch you now. But I will.” Steve gave Don an assertive look.

“Why would you?”

“You were on antidepressants. A side effect is overreaction. I understand the situation you’re in. I can empathize.”

“Empathize?”

Steve nodded.

“How did you know I was on antidepressants?”

“I spoke to your dad. He gave me the number of your doctor. The rest was pretext.”

“Pretext?”

“Yes. You’ll find out.”

“Are you sure you know what you’re doing, taking me on?” asked Don

“Sure enough,” replied Steve.

“What about training?”

“Home study. About one hundred and twenty hours. I’ll teach you the rest, as will Linda.”

“Alright. Deal.”

“You won’t regret it, Don.”

“I’m glad you’re calling me Don.”

Don offered his hand. Both hands met and shook.

From fibre with love

Becky Bug was in the lounge, snoozing on the armrest of the sofa. Mummy Bug crawled in.

“Hello Becky,” said Mummy Bug.

“Hello Mummy,” said Becky.

“What are you going to do today?”

“I don’t know. I thought maybe I’d take a trip to the farm.”

“Which farm, Becky?”

“There’s a farm down the road. I thought I’d see if I could get something to eat from there.”

“Like what?”

“I really don’t know. But Cyril the Spider at school said I need more fibre. He said the best place to get it was at the farm.”

“Why the farm?” asked Mummy Bug.

“He didn’t say. But he did say he’d meet me there,” replied Becky Bug.

“Sounds like you’re going on a date with Cyril, Becky,” said Mummy Bug.

Becky blushed.

“Stop teasing Becky, Mummy Bug,” said Daddy Bug, who was seated reading the Daily Bugel newspaper.

“Becky doesn’t mind. Do you Becky?” asked Mummy Bug.

“It’s not a date, Mummy. Besides, I fancy Charlie the Cockroach. Cyril’s just a friend.”

“I think Charlie the Cockroach is a bit of a wimp for not asking you out ahead of Cyril the

Spider. What do you think, Daddy Bug?” asked Mummy Bug.

“I’ll reserve my judgement on Charlie the Cockroach. Maybe he’s just shy.”

“Or he doesn’t fancy you,” said Mummy bug.

“He’d be a fool not to fancy our Becky, wouldn’t he Mummy Bug?”

“Mmm,” replied Mummy Bug. Then she turned to Becky. “What time are you meeting Cyril?”

“About eleven,” replied Becky.

Daddy Bug looked at his wristwatch. “By gove. It’s half past ten now.”

“I’ve got half an hour. I can wait a few more minutes.”

“Maybe you should go early. So as not to disappoint him,” said Mummy Bug.

“No Mummy. Being late is fashionable. And they say ‘treat them mean, keep them keen’ don’t they?”

“I suppose so, Becky,” replied Daddy Bug. “But you shouldn’t tease young males. You may end up with no boyfriend and no one after you in the end. You don’t want that do you, Becky?”

Mummy Bug gave Daddy Bug a cold look.

“No. I suppose not. All right. I’ll go now.”

“Have fun,” said Mummy Bug.

“I will,” said Becky. She left the house in the cesspit then walked toward the farm.

Fifteen minutes later, Becky arrived outside the farm gate. She decided to wait for Cyril there.

Ten minutes later, Becky saw a spider crawl along the path. “Cyril?” asked Becky.

The spider waved, but as it approached Becky, she got a shock. “You’re not Cyril.”

“No. Cyril said he couldn’t make it.”

“Who are you?” asked Becky.

“I’m Cedric. A friend of Cyril.”

“What happened to Cyril?”

“Cyril decided to go out with Natalie Nat.”

“Why that two timing arachnid,” said Becky.

“It’s alright. He means well. He wants me to tell you what he meant when he says you need more fibre.”

“I’m not sure I care.”

“I’m sure he’ll make it up to you,” said Cedric.

“Oh alright. What do we do now?” asked Becky.

“Follow me,” said Cedric.

Ten minutes later they were playing in some white fleece.

A non-furred animal said “Bah” as he was pushed aside by the farmer who then pulled the next creature to him.

“What a great idea of Cyril’s, jumping into this,” said Becky. “Don’t you think so, Cedric?”

Becky got no reply.

Then a few seconds later Becky heard, “Hello Becky.”

“Oh. Cyril,” said Becky. “I thought you couldn’t come.”

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