

Plum Loco

Complete story from "Uncommon Notions" Story about a wayward Cowboy fired from the railroad and ends up in a mining town where he gets some bad news and a lesson from a Chinaman deputy. Pike North is really in for it and so is the Town of Mud Flats when he gets there...



Two Days before the hanging:

I hadn't finished moving my shavin' razor from my right cheek to my left, before I done killed two Chinamen out right. Daggone Chinamen more trouble than a pack of Paddies pounding rail at four in the morning. Gotta hand it to those coolies, they sure are a working bunch of little fellas ever there been. Shame, how I hadda kill'em every now and again. Never-you mind any apologies from me, over why I am here today, mind you Doc.

I can't say I feel bad about killin darn near everyone in Mud Flats. If ever a town needed killen Mud Flats was it. Here comes that dang blasted Hangman agin. He keeps just walking by me,

grinning. Back and forth, back and forth. Dangeest thing I ever saw.

Why there's a Hanging' in the first place:

Now I reckon Big Boss man, you're probably wondering why I had to kill those two fellas outright. Didn't give me much choice in the matter, no sir they didn't. I was dipping my straight razor into this here bucket of water the Chinaman over yonder was holding. Fella was shaking so dang blasted much, I nearly cut my own throat. Water pouring over the sides of the bucket like a bath barrel shot full of holes. Got my new boots plum soaked.

I figured I help the fella stop shaking by shooting him in the gullet. I did on both accounts. When I turned back towards my looking tin, there was another Chinaman running to beat all get out, with my looking tin. I had no choice but to killem right on the spot.

I know before you go on, it being illegal to shoot a Chinaman, but this one had my tin looking glass. By gum, that made it real legal like. Now the first one well, Big Boss man, he fell in the gray area of sorts. I'll tell ya this much, when I let loose on the little fella with my lookin' tin, he let out a yell, then rolled over and died right out. Don't take much to kill a Chinaman. That's pretty much how it happened, Big Boss man. Sorry about killin the shaky one, but the other had it comen.

"Well Pike," Big Boss man said, eyeing me real good. He took a big yank off his plug of tobakey. Wallowed it around in his hog jaws, went to spit out a wad of juice like he does. Dang gone whole affair shot

out his mouth about a pinky finger distance, fell plum on his belly. I just looked him over, knew better than to say anything; he was already fit to be tied over the two Chinamen. I just waited until he wiped himself with his sleeve and yanked off another chew.

“Well Pike, I just can’t figure it. I’ve been laying track fur the Union-Pacific since the first spike driven at Omaha. You been with me now a little over three weeks only on account I known your daddy.

Good man, sorry about the whole affair in Ogden, but, well Pike, he kinda had it coming, Preacher wife and all dang Mormons. I am sure if your daddy would have known it was his wife.”

I had to interrupt Big Boss man even though he doesn’t cotton to anyone breaking his wording none.

“Dang Blasted, Big Boss man preacher had five wives.”

“ Now Pike, I was a talkin’, all the same your daddy he was a good man. Now, Pike, in the three weeks you’ve been working fur me, you’ve managed to kill sixteen Chinamen, fur various reasons no less, some questionable like this one here. Well, Pike, some I granted legal like that one there.”

Big Boss man didn’t give me much choice again. I had to sit him straight, on account he had the Chinaman confused. I said. “It was this one here legal. And that one there, questionable, Big Boss man.”

“Well, Pike, I was a talkin’, can’t tell this on from that one no how, but whichever the case may be. Well Pike theres been a whole pickle barrel of talk about you lately. Some are of the opinion that you don’t like

China-men much, granted this opinion is unanimous among the Chinamen.

“ Well, Pike, if there had only been two, maybe four, killed outright I might be inclined to think perhaps your being unfairly judged. I knew your daddy and he seemed get along just fine with the Chinaman.”

Big Boss man was heading in the wrong direction as far as I was concerned. I had to put my two cents in. I said. “I aint got nothin’ agin no Chinamen Big Boss man.”

“Well, Pike, I was a talkin’. I figured you leave me with little choice but to let you go Pike. Besides at the rate you’re going there won’t be any chinamen left in the world outside of a year if I kelp you on. I can’t do that now Pike, railroad needs Chinamen. I knew your daddy and he see it my way. You got five minutes Pike to get your things together and skidaddle. I gotta turn this matter over to the Railroad, but don’t worry, these two aren’t gonna tell on ya. Been nice working with ya Pike.”

“If that don’t beat all.” I said walking away from Big Boss man. He just plum came out and gave me the boot, ain’t never been kicked off no job. I was hotter than a pepper-sprout, by gum.

Big Boss man wasn’t someone you killed very easy and I wasn’t about to killem over no Chinaman. I figured I just saddle up my horse and high tail it towards Caliornye. Didn’t rightfully know what I was gonna do fur work. Maybe bust some broncos or herd some cattle, I’d play by ear.

It was getting along late in the year when I happened upon a mining town called Silver Dog in the high Sierras. Place had seen better days but so had I,

been riding going-on two weeks and my belly was plum empty.

I figured I'd head into the saloon and wash the dust out my gums and the hunger out of my belly, maybe get in a hand or two of Black Jack. I step on up to the bar, and said.

"Whiskey bar keep."

"What's your name fella?"

"Doggonna, a man gotta tell ya his name before he can get a whiskey?" I said I was tired and fit to be tied over getting kicked off the job, ain't never been kicked off a job. The last thing I wanted was a parley with a bar keep.

"Nope, just trying make social mister," he said.

"I don't feel social mister, how about that whiskey?" I said.

That dang blasted talky talk bar keep handed me a half-cooked bottle of old number 9 and I fell into a chair, kicked my feet upon the table, and went to work on my dust and belly.

I made good of about two fingers when I noticed a dapper dressed fella giving me the eye over his playing hand. Looking at me unnoticed like but I noticed him looking and fiddling with his hand, being it's not polite to look at a fella while he's curing himself from a long ride, I got plum set on fire right quickly. I started to pull myself away from the table, when the dapper fella throws his hand down and got up and headed my way.

Being I was in a strange town, natural thing to do was to slide my right hand onto my hog leg, and pull

back the hammer. I waited snake like to see what was on his mind. I gave the place the once over. The piano man was plucking away and everyone else was as cool as cucumbers. I just couldn't figure this dapper fella for a troublemaker, didn't have that look-beady eyes or knife scar running down the side of his face. Nope this fella was prim and proper. Lady like, it didn't matter much no how I was gonna give him all the trouble and then some as soon as he got another foot closer.

He must have seen I was business like on account he stopped dead in his tracks, about four arms from me. The piano man knew something was cooking. They always do. He stopped plucking, and everyone turned my way. Now I have been in a many a saloon ruckus, so I played my hand by eyeing everyone and no one in particular. Then the dapper fella said, "You must be Pike North. Mind if I pull up a chair and join you."

Now when a fella in a town you have never been in knows who you are, then that can't mean anything good, but this dapper fella had my full attention, so I was obliged to say. "Well mister, you got me at an advantage, and I don't cotton to strangers knowing me fur I know them. All things being equal, I'll lend you an ear. Just mind your time right smartly, wouldn't want to fill those fancy duds with holes now."

"Dangest way of saying sit down I ever heard Pike," he said, smiling at me all friendly like. "Don't mind if I call you Pike now do ya."

I could tell this fella wasn't lookin' to get killed outright. You can always tell when a fella trying to get himself killed. He does and that ends that. I nodded to the fella.

"I reckon since you already know who I am no sense in changing this here horse in mid-stream, I said.

"Reckon your right Pike," he said. Then he went on into a parley of sorts. "By the way my name is Tennessee Bill. My friends call me Dr. Bill on account I used to be a barber in Tennessee that is."

"Figures about right, Dr. Bill pleasure, to meet ya," I said.

I extended my hand friendly like. This fella seemed fine by me, being from Tennessee explained his dudes out right and a doctor and all. I never known no back shooting Tennessee doctor, so I slid my hand off my Colt 44, tried to relax a bit. Now being in a strange town chopping away on the bit with a Tennessee doc didn't help matters.

"I hope you don't mind me asking how you'd come about the handle Pike?" he said.

"My daddy named me after a fish, but I wouldn't go spreading that around now Dr. Bill," I said.

I slid my hand back on my hog leg so he gets my meaning real good. He did and that was that for the time being.

I offered Dr. Bill a pull from my Red eye. He declined. Said fella was gonna need some dental work later on, seemed he had to have his wits about him. I reckon being a doctor and all I wouldn't force the issue. Under normal terms, I would have been taken back by a fella not tossing back a shot or two with me, but being a doctor and all I let it go.

"I knowed your Daddy, Pike," he said, smiling at me all friendly like. Seems lately a lot of fella's known my daddy I thought, but I let it pass. He went on. "Good man, sorry about what happen, but he had it coming."

"Well Dr. Bill he didn't know the Preacher was married. Dang blasted Mormons," I said tossing back another shot, eyeing ole Dr. Bill real careful like.

"Yep I reckon Pike." He said. "I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but there's been some trouble in Mud Flats. I can't get into it. That's for the sheriff to go over with ya. Everyone this side of the Continental Divide been looking for ya Pike. I know your daddy. So I kinda knowed you, of sorts."

"Being there ain't no other Pike North that got every Chinaman this side of Chinaman land fit to be tied at him, so as soon as I heard a stranger was in town that got booted off the railroad, I figured."

"You sure have done a lot of figuring, haven't ya Dr. Bill?" I said. I was getting mighty tired of Dr. Bill parleying with his fancy words and dudes and all, but I wasn't fit to be tied yet.

So I said. "You figured right, but I wouldn't be bringing up the railroad now Dr. Bill; that's a sore spot and it ain't gonna heal anytime soon. Let's just stick to higher ground as far as the Chinamen; I ain't got nothing' to say on that subject. What kind of trouble you'd be talking about Dr. Bill?"

Old Dr. Bill figured he may have said a bit much. I could see he was nervy like in his chair. I let him squirm about, eyeing him real good.

“Like I said Pike that’s for the sheriff to feel you in on. Name’s Lawson, Frank Lawson. Ever heard of him Pike?”

“Yep, I heard of him,” I said. “And that dang blasted deputy of his. Both of them two sidewinders use to work for the railroad. Yep I heard of Lawson, Frank Lawson.”

I had to take another swallow of my red eye, calm my nerves a bit.

“Well, Pike, I gotta get on, I’ll be over at the Barber waitin’ for my docterin; fella gonna need some work done on him the way I figure it.”

I kept my eye on Dr. Bill; something just didn’t set right. I couldn’t put my finger on it. He seemed to know too much about me, and that never is a good sign, being in a strange town and all.

I tossed back another shot and tossed four bits at the Keep. No sense in playing nice, since everyone knew who I was.

Lawson, Frank Lawson it was time for me to find out what was airing and I didn’t take kindly to bad news.

I headed straight for the jailhouse, adjusted my hog leg low, butt out so I could cross draw on any man with the a mind to get himself killed outright.

I pulled my Bowie out, wiped the blade across my left chap leg, slid it back in its keep. Low on my right calve like. Comes in handy there when fighting on the ground, can stick a man clean through the gullet before he has a mind to know what happened.

I walked up on the jail porch, took a look around; there wasn't a soul in sight. I had a bad feeling about Lawson, Frank Lawson, but ole Dr. Bill said he needed to see me about some bad news and I don't cotton to no bad news.

I griped my hog leg, pushed in the jailhouse door with the toe of my boot, and walked in slow like. Lawson, Frank Lawson was standing by the potbelly stove with his back to me, his no account Deputy was glaring at me as I walked in snake like.

Lawson, Frank Lawson, turned on his heels, set down the his broken off handle coffee mug, and yelled to beat the devil. "Get um Kim Lee!"

Now you're not ever quite prepared for a four-foot-tall Chinaman deputy doing a back flip straight up in the air and landing on his haunches dead center of a writing table a foot in front of you.

Before I could cross draw on the polecat, he kicked me dead center in my mouth, sending both my front teeth into my belly. I nearly flew right back out the door. I steadied myself and ran in for the charge.

The little polecat leaped over my head as I crashed into the writing table busting the dang blasted thing into a hundred pieces.

I went for my Bowie, figured he'd jump on me like a bronco while I was down. He did, climbing around my neck, chopping me on top of the head and the side of my neck. Like there was no tomorrow.

I got a good hold of him around the pigtail and threw the little fella smack dab into the potbelly stove. He let out a scream, did another flippin' thingamajig,

and kicked me straight in the gullet, so dang blasted hard that both my hands went numb.

I couldn't feel my doggone fingers. The little polecat charged in on me headfirst and started ripping away on my belly with his teeth. Only thing I could do was try and hack him to death with my forearms.

I finally got him lifted up high enough so I could knee him straight in the family jewels, he rolled over, began hollering but still full of fight.

I tried like the dickens to hold him down so I could get my colt out with my forearms which is dang near impossible. I figured I could brace the barrel against his head and slip my boot off and pull the trigger with my big toe. He wasn't having none of that. Somehow he broke lose, and did another one of those flipping things and kicked me clean out the window.

I landed straight on my back in the middle of the horse trough. My whole dang blasted mouth was pouring out blood from my missing two front teeth and my hands were still full asleep.

I tried like the wind to pull myself out of the trough. When I looked up this crazy little Chinaman was standing on the jail house porch with a double barrel shot gun leveled clean on me.

I drove under the water and tried to plaster myself to the bottom of the trough. He let loose both barrels. Water started draining out the blasted thing and I knew the next one would do me in. I stuck my bootless foot out the trough full well expecting to see my leg go flying by. But it was as quite as a horse funeral.

I stuck my head up and Kim Lee was laid out on the porch, with sheriff Lawson, Frank Lawson, standing their holding a hickory club grinning at me. I didn't know what to make of the whole affair but I was fit to be tied.

"You can come out now, Pike," he said

My hands began to work and I wanted to kill that little Chinaman before he woke, but the sheriff wasn't having none of that. I charged the little polecat. I lifted up my foot. I planned on stomping him to death. Before I knowed what hit me that dang blasted Lawson, Frank Lawson, whacked me a good one across my belly. Knocked what wind I had in me clean out, to make matters worse he took my colt and Bowie.

"Now, Pike, we were only having some fun with ya," he said.

I tossed up my two front teeth right there on the porch and wanted to kill them two polecat lawmen dead as ever. I couldn't see the humor in this, but I was beat to pieces, so I sat down beside the sleeping Chinaman and stared at Lawson, Frank Lawson and shook my head.

"Sorry about that Pike," he said. "But you had it comin'. Kim Lee's been waiting to beat the tar out of you for months now. I wouldn't be wanting to do anything about this if I were you Pike; Kim Lee is a lawman at any rate."

"Lawman or not," I said. "I am gonna kill him as soon as I dry off and I might kill you for good measure."

"Now Pike, we were only funnin' you Dr. Bill will fix your teeth fur ya," he said handing me back my colt and Bowie. "Don't do nothing you'll regret." He said, smacking that dang blasted hickory club in his hand.

I knew this was one of them double crossing plans now. That no account Dr. Bill was in on this all along. I was gonna kill him good as soon as he fixed my teeth.

"I know you Pike," Sheriff Lawson, Frank Lawson said. "I know what you're thinking. Dr. Bill stopped by, told us you were in town. He didn't have nothin' to do with Kim Lee here going plum loco on you."

"He sure knew someone was gonna get his teeth fixed and that's all the proof I need," I said back wiping my mouth on my sleeve.

"Everybody in Silver Dog needs their teeth fixed Pike. But I got some bad news fur ya," he said.

"Well out with it sheriff," I said, picking up my two teeth off Kim Lee's chest where they flew out to. I wiped them on Kim Lee's shirt and put um in my upper pocket for safe keeping as I eyed that dang blasted Sheriff.

"There's been a lynching in Mud Flats Pike," he said, shaking his head back and forth. "Seems the town went plum loco and hanged your brother and sister and all their farm animals. Sorry Pike."

"All their farm animals? What they gonna do that fur?" I said.

Man never quite prepared to hear no news like that. I didn't know what to make of it. Hanging a man is one-thing-but farm animals.

“Well Pike being a Morman town I figure they figured the farm animals where guilty and needed hanging.”

“Guilty of what? I said.

“Pike, speaking in tongues. Yep dang blasted Mormons hung the whole lot of um fur speaking in tongues,” he said shaking his head back and forth.

I was fit to be tied, first my daddy now my brother and sister and all their farm animals hung. There was only one thing left to be done, and that was to kill everyone dead as ever in Mud Flats and that’s what I was gonna do as soon as I got my teeth fixed.

Dr. Bill fixed me up real good; he shoved my two choppers back in my head. Said they would just fall out but he did the best he could do. I saddled my horse and headed fur Mud Flats. There was a whole barrel full of Mormons there, and I was gonna Kill’em all.

Mud Flats were a day’s ride out of Silver Dog, down in the low lands. Two big ponderosa pine hills looked down on the town. I made camp on the north side of town with a good view of the place. From my lookout I could count half a dozen houses and a general store.

Those hanging rascals lawed themselves. Hanging people and farm animals alike. If ever there was a town that needed Killin’ then Mud Flats were it.

I camped out till it come around Sunday morning. I figured these rascals would have a big social. That way I could get everyone at one time.

I just couldn't figure on how, I couldn't just ride in there and start blasting away without one of them getting away. I had more figuring to do.

I rode on down the hillside until I spotted me a ranch. Seems the rancher was in town socializing with everyone else, that made him fair game.

Being the cowpoke I am, drivng cattle ain't that much of a chore. Once you get them all going in the same direction, that is.

I rounded up two-hundred-head maybe more, not sure. I had a whole dang blasted lot of them I know that much.

I started driving them towards the town. The closer I got the more I drove um hard, getting them worked up good. Being only one road into town and they had set up a long eaten table, just in the center of town.

That's where I aimed my herd-straight on dead center of the whole pack of Mormons and their eaten social.

Now Mormons ain't use to seeing a herd of cattle bearing down on them. They ain't used to anything that ain't of their own making. So for the most part they just stood there dumb-like, watching this stampeding herd barreling in on them.

It didn't take long before two hundred cattle, being driven all out, to make good on pretty much wiping out every cotton picking thing in their way. Women and children don't matter much to cattle.

Within a matter of seconds, the whole cotton picking town was leveled. Whoever had the misfortune of not being stampeded to death, I made

quick work of. Like shooting fish in a barrel, everybody running around whopping and hollering, smashing into each other; it was the dangest thing I ever saw.

The whole ruckus didn't take no more than five minutes. Doggone Mormons didn't know how to react to being stampeded to death and then shot outright. They had it comin, can't just hang a man and his sister and all their farm animals and expect to go on social like.

I let a few live-those that were half trampled to death any way. Somehow word got out that it was me that wiped out Mud Flats, and they sent down the new sheriff from Silver Dog to oversee the hanging.

Seems Lawson, Frank Lawson done got himself killed outright. Stepped in front of a runaway freight wagon filled with hollering Chinamen. Fitten' end for that sidewinder of a sheriff if ever was.

He just stood there holdin' that dang blasted broken off handle coffee mug, that's what I was told at any rate. Guess a man don't know how to react to a wagon filled with screaming Chinamen barreling down on him.

I ain't one to mince words; after all I am guilty as sin. So Dr. Bill I am thankful and all that, you havin' a mind to come on down and sit with me a spell. Needed to parley with someone before the hanging man has his way. Dang blasted shame who'll be dropping the floor on me. Well Dr. Bill there's not much I can do about all that, now is there, but wait for that plum loco hangman to do his hanging. For the life of me I just wish that crazy polecat Sheriff Kim Lee puts a cork in all that dang blasted grinning and gets

on with it. Can't say I didn't have it comin'. Dang
blasted Mormons. I'll see ya around Dr. Bill.

The End

A Golfing I will go

I married my wife because she was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen. She married me to get even with her family. Now if I would have known that at the time, I still would have married; her, after all, love had nothing to do with it.

All anyone would have to do is take a look at me, then my wife, and you'd figure something was rotten in Denmark.

Not that I am an ugly fella, I'm not. Then again who in the dickens would refer to themselves as ugly anyway? Even the ugliest person in the world is somehow convinced that they're not ugly. However, anyone standing within a mile of an ugly person could say "that is one ugly person." I've said it, not about myself of course, about other people, I am sure you have to.

I am sure, no make that positive a lot of people have said that about me. Well before I commit myself to an ugly farm, let me get back to my story.

I have two buddies I grew up with. They enjoy patting me on the back and telling me I am the luckiest fella in the world, grinning at me, then my wife, mostly at my wife. After all, that's what buddies do. I just wish they'd go home every now and then.

I can't blame them for patting me on the back or grinning at my wife or not wanting to go home. After all, I've seen their wives. My colleagues at work are naturally of the opinion that my marriage is all about money. Unfortunately, to the casual observer and those I work with, that money theory doesn't apply to me. Actually, I have a hard enough time paying attention, much less my bills. That has never been the case as far as my wife is concerned. She has the uncanny ability to pay too much attention and spend too much money, but as long as it's hers, I've learned it's better that I don't pay any attention to her money.

People still think it's all about money. Why else would a beautiful woman marry you know someone ugly? Not that I am ugly.

Where was I? As I was about to say, I met my wife on a company business trip as a sales rep

for the John Deere Tractor Works in Waterloo, Iowa. I get to travel around to various places, some absolutely fascinating and mind boggling, and others you barely can escape with your life from. El Segundo comes in mind, in the latter category.

About ten years ago, I was at a convention in Boston, Massachusetts, which falls into the fascinating place category. Duck boats and bake beans go pretty well as far as I am concerned. I am sure a few vacationers sitting next to me in the duck boat would disagree, but this isn't about them.

As I was saying, this beautiful young lady introduced herself to me, at the Boston Convention Center, where the convention was being held, which makes perfectly good sense. I've tried to explain this convention thing to my two buddies, but all they seem to be interested in is grinning at my wife.

As I was saying, this beautiful lady told me her father owned about a million acres in Scotland, and they wanted to purchase some farming machinery.

A million-acre farm is rather large, even by Iowa standards. I figured we weren't talking about one tractor and a used backhoe. This was what every sales rep calls the big deal. Literally The Big Deal!

I did the whole spiel and impressed her to no end. We went to dinner and got married, before the convention ended and without her family knowing about it. Nevertheless, what is done is done. There really wasn't a whole lot they could do about it but accept the fact they had a new son-in-law.

Over the last ten years I have received about a dozen threatening phone calls, all in Scottish, which is extremely nerve racking for someone in Iowa. Her father didn't buy any farming equipment from me or anyone working for John Deere. The Big Deal got away. In addition, I am no longer a sale Rep. But I am still married, funny how things work out.

For our tenth, wedding Anniversary my father in-law invited us to spend some time in Scotland at their million-acre farm. He sent two airline tickets to us.

In addition, he arranged for my wife and I stay at a golfing Hotel in Gullane, Scotland called Greywalls.

I had never heard of Greywalls or Gullane. Moreover, I had never picked up a golf club in my life. Nevertheless, he was trying to reach out, and after ten years of threatening phone calls in Scottish, I wanted to reach out as well- to strangle him, but, of course my wife would have none of that, funny how love just seems to work its way into everything. My father in-law sent some rather strict rules to go along with the airline tickets. How he figured I'd follow them is anyone's guess. I was supposed to master the game of Golf and learn the History of Greywalls and a place called Muirfield links just over the grey stone walls of the place.

My father in-law referred to this Muirfield as the Honorable Company of Edinburgh Golfers, of which he was an honorable golfer. The first thing that came to my mind was la de da, you Scottish weirdo. Nevertheless, I wanted to check out his million-acre farm. I could care less about Muirfield or Edinburgh. I figured you could put a whole mess of crap on a million acres, and I wanted to see what was on the place. If I

had to learn how to play golf-, so be it. How hard could it be, to hit a little ball around a big field with someone driving you from hole to hole, in a cart no less?

After all, golf was for rich and snobby people; everyone knows that. Rich people don't do anything that requires much work. They hire other people to do all the work for them. As far as learning the history of Greywalls, no one is going to ask me about the history of a place I am visiting.

When was the last time someone asked you about the history of a RV park you were staying at? Never. Moreover, if they do, I'll cross that bridge when I come to it.

"Greywalls and Muirfield links can't possible have more history then Pokey's Red Carpet Club, one of the finest golfing and eating' place in Waterloo. How's that for history," I said to my wife. I think she called me an idiot, I'm not, it sounded like idiot.

I looked at my wife, she looked at me. We both looked at the airline tickets and she looked at me again and told me I had one week to master

this game of golf and learn how to act like I had some sense. It wasn't going to be easy on either account, and I'm sure she called me an idiot now. She stopped smiling at me and handed me the phone.

"Call Dr. Richards, he plays out at Pokey's every Sunday. He'll show you how to play dear," she said.

The last person I wanted to talk to was my wife's shrink. Not that my is nuts or anything. I think she goes to see him to get away from me.

My wife had been after me for years to go see her shrink, and her shrink has been after her for years to leave me. I really didn't want to call him, but if anyone knew how to play golf, a shrink would so I made the call.

He agreed to set a tee time at Pokey's and pay the green fee. I had no idea I would have to pay to play golf. I thought it was free, just walk out there and start whacking a ball around, turns out is little more to this golf thing then meets the eye.

I arrived early to check the place out. In addition, I asked to leave by some kid in a beanie cap pointing a nine iron at me. I knew this because he took it from me. I tried to explain to him that all I wanted to do was check out his sticks.

I learned quickly that you don't refer to golf clubs as sticks. And you don't touch someone else's clubs. Touchy these golfers to be. I explained I was meeting Dr. Richards after all. "it is a golfing I will go young man," I said. He smiled and did apologize just said, "In that case you can stay Mr. golfer you will go." I had a bad feeling about this kid, but I let it pass.

Dr. Richards shot one hole with me and said, I learned enough that I would do just fine at Greywalls, but there was no way in hell they would let me near Muirfield Links. He began laughing hysterically as he drove off in his cart with me holding my bag of clubs.

I figured this was how it was done so I walked back gave my clubs to the kid in the beanie hat. He took them and called a security guard to escort me to my truck. I figured that was how it was done; after all, rich people like to feel

important and all that. I was ready as far as the golf part was concerned: I knew the difference between a Putter and 9- Iron. I knew what a sand trap was and a par. I stopped at the 7-11 figured I'd buy a golf magazine and do a little research. From there I stopped off at the video rental store and rented Caddie Shack. I figured with a movie and magazine and five minutes' worth of golfing I would be ready for Greywalls and the Honorable Company of Edinburgh Golfers La de da. My wife wasn't surprised to see me as soon as I walked in she said." Gus Dr. Richards called he wants to see you in his office as soon as we get back from Scotland."

"I must have impressed him honey," I said.

"He didn't say but he was mumbling something about losing his membership at Porkey's."

Frist thing that came to my mind was the kid in the beanie hat. The owners kid I figured. You know how these rich kids can-be don't take much to get them all butt hurt. I let it pass and slipped in the movie. I figured I'd read the magazine later. My wife woke me up about half way through the movie. I couldn't quite figure out the gofer angle but it was funny.

I paid close attention to the way Bill Murray was swinging at the ball, you know holding his club. After dinner I read the magazine and headed for the bowling alley. Not that I would learn anything about golf there I had to give this golf thing a break for a while can't have too much of a good thing I figured.

It doesn't take long for a week to fly by. My wife began packing our things early. She arranged for our flight out of Waterloo, Iowa to Chicago and from there to New York where we caught our overseas flight to Edinburgh, Scotland.

I brought along the golfing magazine and my wife made two calls to Dr. Richards. Before we landed in New York. During the rest of the flight to Edinburgh she slept, and I got drunk. However, I did manage to memorize the whole magazine from cover to cover. I woke my wife and told her. "I know more about golf than golf knew about me I would dazzle those Scots and beat them at their own game." I think my wife called me an idiot again and fell back to sleep. Not sure it sounded like idiot. I let it pass.

I had never met my wife's father in person but I knew his voice well. He greeted us at the airport

in a limousine. I guess he wanted to impress me. It did, and he didn't.

We hadn't gone two blocks from the airport before he started giving me the third degree in Scottish. Puffing away like there was no tomorrow on a Sherlock Holmes pipe, blowing the awfulest smelling tobacco right into my face.

He said. "Twill it yer laddie in a noreastern blinten ears pined 280 meters no way laddie yer be running ni 80 meters blind, yer Iron won't fix yer right. 'Tis yer mum's arse be blinten like doodles she goat, Ni laddie."

"What did he say!" I asked my wife, waving a cloud of smoke out of my face?

"Daddy wants to know what club, would you use to hit your ball 280 meters in a wind coming out of the Northeast dear to leave yourself with 80 meters to the hole and you must have a nice mom."

"That's not what he said! Nevertheless, tell daddy I use my 8-Iron on the ball and my 5-Iron on him if he's not careful,"

“Daddy understand American English really well dear.”

“Blinten piggy nip yer ears up, ’tis shank right laddie!”

“What did he say?” I asked.

“Daddy wanted to know if you liked farm animals.”

“That’s not what he said and you know it!”

“Twill be a lassie niggling yer goo laddie T’day rumpling yer arse Twill ye bloody cup rings.”

“What did he say?”

“Daddy wants to know how you feel about women.”

“You’re kidding right.”

“Daddy never kids Gus.”

“Ask Daddy if there’s any Scotch in this bucket; after all, I’ve had about enough of daddy.”

That pretty much ended my conversation with Vera's father. We traveled on along the ocean through some rather impressive country side. I think he called this part of Scotland East Lothian and these hills were Lammermuir something or other, it was impossible to understand a word he said. Daddy just puffed away on his pipe and gave me the evil eye as we traveled toward this Greywalls

I didn't care anymore about his million-acre farm. He said that the next we came to Scotland; we would be staying with them on the farm. At least that's what my wife said he said. It sounded more like when pig fly and he wanted me to get run over by a cement mixer. I tried to ignore him but my wife was having the time of her life.

My wife and her father, however went on and on about this thing or that. How much the family missed her, and how wonderful it would be if she moved back to Scotland. It was Vi this and Vi that finally I had to ask who in the hell is Vi.

They both looked at me, and my wife said its short for Vera. I said I knew that and I tried to ignore them. I think her father called me a pig

sucking idiot, at least it sounded like that; it's hard to say, not even a Scotchman can understand another Scotchman from what I'm told.

They went about how much she was going to enjoy her weekend at Greywalls, how daddy had arranged for a private butler to see to our every need. I wondered if his name was James, but I didn't say anything. Her father was turning a deep purple every time he looked at me.

I just stared back at him to let him know I wasn't very happy about not seeing the million-acre farm; I could care less Greywalls and the butler.

I fiddled around in the compartments of the Limousine until I found a bottle of Scotch and went to work on it. Her father glared at me and packed his pipe full, I guess it was time for round two.

After about an hour we pulled up in front of Crescent Moon shaped building. If I had to describe the place, it was covered in a honey colored stone, and Ivy climbing up along the walls. Our driver pulled around in front of a door in the center of the building, next to what looked

like a baseball cut in half in the center of the drive, just two large half round pieces of lawn with a stone walkway down the middle.

The driveway was some kind of red crushed gravel and every inch of the place was as clean and well-kept as a whistle, this was not your average motel 6 by any means, this place had class.

I was impressed to say the least; this was not at all what I had expected, I wasn't sure what to expect, but this wasn't it. Daddy decided to have one more go at me.

"Laddie yer be blinten Suzy sun bonnet 'Twill give yer a hour 'Twill Muirfield fans yer arse up a giblet Ni history yer be learn fast laddie sakes yer good totting about!"

"What did he say?"

"Daddy said he hopes you know the history of Muirfield and for us to have a wonderful time."

"That's not what he said!"

Our driver must have read the same book of manners as daddy did. The little shot-off

Scottish weirdo tossed our bags onto the gravel driveway and hopped back in the car like it was the thing to do.

I climbed out and gave the place the once over, then put a handful of gravel in my pocket.

Our driver stared at me. My wife whispered something in her father's ear. He got back in the limousine, tapped on his window, and called me over to blow a cloud of smoke in my face.

I figured this was one of those welcome- to - Scotland things. Then again I knew he was just being daddy.

My wife, being the kind of person that wants to be in control, suggested I let her do all the talking, after all, these were here kind of folks; she spoke the language and all that. After Daddy I really didn't want anything to do with her kind of folks, so I agreed and followed her into the Inn. I was to refer to the place as Greywalls Inn not motel 6.

Two over bearing senior citizens rushed us as if we had pudding on our luggage, grabbing up our bags and disappearing before I knew what

had happened. For a minute there I thought for sure we were just robbed by two geriatric Scottish fellas in skirts. I started to chase after one of them when my wife grabbed my arm and said it's their job.

Job or not when two ninety-year-old fellas in skirts grabs your luggage and takes off without a word, you naturally want to defend yourself-never know what might happen next.

Our personal butler showed up, introduced himself to my wife, and ignored me. Instead of offering me his hand, he suggested I wait in the library until our room was ready. Considering Daddy hired the fella, I let his rudeness pass.

The Library of Greywalls. Try saying that with a straight face. Was a bit much, to say the least? First thing I noticed was a big fat gray cat curled up in front of the fireplace and another one sitting in a red velvet high back chair looking at me. There must have been a thousand books of various sizes along the walls and just as many framed pictures of golfers and clubs and balls and all sorts of golfing do-das all over the place. I walked around checking out the joint like any vacationer would. Picking up books, pretending

I knew what the devil they were about. I checked out the old farts in the photos with their silly little hats and knickers or plus-4, I couldn't remember exactly. Just when I enough of the Library of Greywalls, I hear this squeaky little voice behind me.

"Twill take three damn fine shots ta git in two T'day laddie"

I turned around and three old farts was sitting on a sofa looking at me; where they came from is beyond me. I can't believe I didn't see them there.

"Sorry I don't speak Scottish," I said looking at them looking at me.

"Laddie you do speak English now don't you?"

I figured this one must be the ring leader, considering the other two was grinning

"Of course I speak English you old fart!" I said.

This brought on a round of laughter from the trio; the ringleader stood and offered his hand." I be Colonel McGreger, and this gentleman here be Sir McBeady of Edinburgh, this here be

the right honorable lordship McDonnell. And whom you be laddie?" And nodding their heads.

"My friends call me Gus fellas, good to meet you."

"Pleasures all ours. Gus it be? Now Gus what brings you to Greywalls summering, are you not?"

"My wife father set the thing up."

"That be Sir Johnston if I am right."

"That's the one, Mister McGreger, he likes to be called daddy."

Again the three old farts started up with the laughing. Seemed like these three where having way too much fun considering the youngest one McBeady had to be pushing eighty.

"Plan on playing the Links at Muirfield laddie" the fella called McDonnell, said

Before I could answer him, all three broke out laughing again rolling back and forth on the sofa.

“What the hell is with you three?” I said.

“Now laddie, we be pulling your leg; don’t take his lordship to heart. You do play the links, now don’t you laddie?” McGreger said.

“Doesn’t everyone? Why else would I be here ready to play at Muirfield? You think I came here for the women?”

Again the three old farts started up with the laughing. I was beginning to think that everything I said would set them off.

“Laddie, mind if we ask you a few questions?” McGreger said, elbowing his comrade in the side, nearly knocking the old fella off the sofa.

“Fire away, Greger, old boy.”

“Who won the 1895 British Open and what course was it played at laddie?”

“You’re kidding right.” I said eyeing the three musketeers. Eyeing me.

“Standard question laddie they’ll ask at Muirfield, if you don’t know, you can’t play.”

I thought for a second. Trying to remember if I read about the British Open in my magazine. Yes, I had it.

“St. Andrews, J.H Taylor, you old fart,” I said walking around like a peacock.

My turn McGreger, “McBeady said, pulling himself up out of a hole worn in the sofa, probably from him sitting in the same spot for the last fifty years.

“Name Great Golfing Triumvirate laddie, one of them you already did laddie.”

I thought for a minute, walking back and forth with my hands behind my back. Stopping on my heels, spinning around and looking at the three old geezers. Shaking my head back and forth, continuing to pace, I could hear them whispering, “he doesn’t know, we got him.” I turned on them and said with great speed and confidence since I had just read who they were two hours before, but they didn’t need to know that. “Harry Vardon, James Briad, and J.H Taylor you old geezers. How’s that pay up.”

I had them on the ropes now, all three collapsed back on the sofa. They weren't laughing now, but I could see they were planning another attack.

I slowly walked over and began petting the cat by the fireplace. Looking over my shoulder at the three whispering, between themselves I could see they were breaking, slowly breaking. I had the old farts right where I wanted them.

"What's the cat name," I said

I startled them; they weren't expecting a direct question from me.

"Laddie that be Puss you been stoking like a virgin, and the other be Boots," Beady said.

"Now ain't that original?" I said. "I thought for sure you have some kind of Scottish name for Pete's sake, Puss and Boots, that what I call my cats."

"Laddie McGreger chimed." I have another question for you."

I was getting tired of their questions; it was time to bring some life to this party. I could see McDonnell dosing off.

“Fire away Pops.”

“Do you prefer the St. Andrews swing or the Vardon?”

“Neither, I prefer the Fling swing.” I said stepping away from Puss.

“The Fling swing you don’t say. Have you ever heard of the Fling Swing, McDonnell?”

“What was that you say McGreger, swing fling?”

“Not swing fling, governor, Fling swing.”

“Never heard of a fling swing. Perhaps laddie will give us a go of it.”

“I’ll need a club for this fellas.” I said walking around the room until I spotted the perfect victim. I pulled a wooden driver off the wall the old boys nearly craped their skirts when I walked back to them. McDonnell tried to pull himself off the sofa, reaching for the club.

“Laddie, put that back. Laddie that belonged to Bobby Jones, old boy. It’s priceless, you can’t play with that. Return it to its caddie laddie; we be all paying the devil if you break it.”

“Settle down before you have a stroke, old boy.” I said. Waving the club at him.” I won’t break the thing. Just a demonstration. Watching and learn fellas how a real golfer golfs.”

I got myself into the perfect Bill Murray stance, lifted the wooden club over my head, bringing down the head of the club slowly, balancing it out in front of me. The old fellas were on the edge of the sofa, starring at the club as if it was made of gold. I checked the wind direction with my index finger. They looked at each other.

I brought the club up again, moving it slowly around. They were on the edge of the sofa, three really old men straining to get a good look at what I was doing; the suspense was more than they could take.

With a quick backwards motion, I produced the perfect Fling swing. It was mesmerizing watching the three collapse in absolute shock as the wooden driver left my hands. Flying

through the air across the library like an arrow, it found it's mark quite unintentionally.

The wooden driver sailed right into Puss lying by the fireplace; she let out a scream, leaped about ten feet straight up in the air, and fell flat on her back in the middle of the room with her feet sticking straight up. McBeady passed out.

McGreger fell off the sofa, and his lordship let out a cry for mercy, jumped to his feet and ran towards the cat.

"You've killed our pussy with Bobby Jones woody," McDonnell yelled.

I started slapping McBeady back to life, after I helped McGreger off the floor.

His lordship was bent over the cat giving it mouth to mouth resuscitation. Finally, Puss came to life, jumped up, and raced out the room with Boots hot on its trail. That's when my wife walked in.

"Our room is ready," she said looking at the four of us and the broken driver stuck in the bust of Bobby Locke. The wooden head hung out his mouth and swung back and forth.

The airplane ride back to the states was a quiet one; my wife spent the whole time on the phone with Dr. Richards, and I wasn't allowed to get drunk. Funny how love works its way into everything.

No matter how many times you apologize for ruining your wife's vacation, it will never be enough. I'll always remember the five minutes I spent at Greywalls, and I am sure daddy and Greywalls will never forget me.

Some folks were created to play along with the Masters; other to stay as far away from the British Open as possible. Fall in with the latter. Except in my case, my wife has made it perfectly clear she'll go home to daddy, if I ever so much as utter these words again. "A golfing I will go"

