

Impolite Stories

Sex
& Politics
Religion

Ronald W. Hull

Impolite Stories is Ronald W.Hull's third book of short stories. Eighteen written between 2013-2017. Eclectic: science fiction, satire, drama, religion, sex and politics. Many from dreams with a decided twist or a lesson to be learned. Made to be entertaining to read. Subjects that could cause arguments in polite settings.

Impolite Stories: Sex, Religion & Politics

by Ronald W. Hull

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Brain Dead

“Sometimes I feel blessed to read a piece of work, which on the face of it I cannot relate to, but by the end thought it had happened to me. So simply told, so elegant, intoxicating. I read mostly to be entertained, but here, reading this story, I learned about the art of writing.”

—Harry Hogg, author of nine short stories AuthorsDen.com

I should have been dead or burned alive. Instead, I was sitting in the upper gun turret when my buddies, my squad, were blown apart and incinerated by an IED. I guess I was lucky because all I got was the concussion, contained within my helmet, so that my head didn't explode, although it might as well have.

When I woke up in ICU, I couldn't see or hear anything, just a blurry mess of movement, and tangled sounds more like a busy cafeteria, and then a quiet room with monitors occasionally sounding alarms.

They sectioned my skull like an apple to relieve the pressure and saved my life, while blood and fluid drained away, replaced by aggressive IVs that I had no real awareness of. I had been gone for a long time, they tell me three months, when they were about to pull the plug and saw my fingers twitching along with my eyelids—the first movement since the emergency operation in a makeshift tent by the side of Hell's Highway.

So here I am, hooked up to all these machines keeping me alive. I can see and I can hear, but I can't talk. I can feel that I can't move. And what I feel is not good. Have you ever had an itch you couldn't scratch, a pain you couldn't adjust to? Well it isn't pretty—it's more like torture. The doctors and nurses look in my eyes sympathetically, adjust me a bit and check all the monitors, and then move on, leaving me to contemplate my body and mind—what's left of it. I try to make eye contact to let them know what I need and how I'm feeling, but it's to no avail. They just shake their heads and move on.

I'd like them to pull the plug, but they don't. All of my young organs are in pretty good shape considering the military lifestyle. Could help a lot of

folks if they weren't damaged by the blast. Why don't they pull the plug and let me go in peace? Why do I have to put up with this torture... this nothingness? *Why?*

I can't even dream. I don't have any memories to dream about. Guess they were all blasted away by the concussion. Don't know who I am or who they are except by their nametags, and then I forget right away whether I've seen them before or I haven't; it doesn't matter. All that matters is some relief from this constant torture of having my body manipulated but never eased.

Who is this woman that comes before me and cries. She is vaguely familiar, but she has no nametag so she must be here just to see me. I think she's holding my hand, but I can't see it or feel it. What's the use trying to remember? Why doesn't she tell them that I need to go? I'm through with this life.

Sometime later...

I'm feeling better. But I still can't communicate. This woman, this beautiful woman must be wanting to have me around she spends so much time here. But wait... she's standing by the bed and they are disconnecting everything...the IVs, the monitors... Even pulling back the covers keeping me warm. What's happening? I can see the monitors. They are turned off. They must think that I'm dead. Maybe I am? Then why do I feel all this happening? Now two guys are slipping me into a bag. They are zipping it up. I can hear them talking in low tones, but I can't see them anymore. Everything's gone dark. I can't feel my breath against the inside of the bag... *Help!*... I'm yelling but no sound is leaving my mouth or the bag... *Help!*

I can feel them moving me on a gurney down the hall. They are quite rough with my body, not knowing that I can feel every movement. Now I'm in a truck or ambulance. I can feel the movement and when we turn—we're definitely going someplace. The vehicle has stopped. They have pulled that gurney out hard and are moving me again. This place smells like formaldehyde. I must be in a funeral home. But they haven't taken any of my good organs for transplant like I requested. What's going on? Why aren't they doing what I asked? Haven't they read my directive?

Oh my God! They're draining my blood and replacing it with embalming fluid! Don't they know I wanted to be cremated! And they are dressing me in my dress uniform. Where did they get that? Who are they that are doing this to me? I didn't ask for them or it.

They've closed my eyes but they can't close my ears. I can feel them lifting me into the coffin and then wheeling the coffin out into a large room. They closed the coffin and left me here in this quiet room for I don't know how long. Wait... I hear people coming. They have opened the coffin door and I can feel them coming up to me and muttering words of comfort to themselves, but not for me. Now there are many people in the room. There are so many conversations going on that I can't pick up any of them. I can't tell someone that they've made a terrible mistake by not taking my organs. So sad... I feel sad.

They've intended to help. Taken me to a new place. I hear organ music and they've opened the coffin again. More people are streaming by muttering things to me. I don't know who all these people are or why they're paying so much attention to me. I'd much rather have donated my organs rather than have this funeral service going on and on.

I'm being moved again. I'm getting really tired of all this moving me around. We are outdoors. I can feel the temperature change. At first the sun was warming my casket, but now I heard thunder and can hear the rain beating on it. I can feel myself being lowered down while some minister I don't know is spouting more words like earlier in the chapel or church. It had to be one of those...

But, oh no! I feel dirt hitting the casket. They are burying me alive. But I am dead. I guess the soul does live beyond the body. Trapped in this casket underground. Woe is me. None of my wishes fulfilled. I must be facing this eternity alone here. This must be hell. I believe it is... Damn! Wait till I get out...

3/24/17

Hitch Bitch

“Mesmerizing tale! Told with skill, panache, a little brag, and a little swag. About a subject and a time I know well. And what a surprise ending! This is Ron Hull at his best, a story-teller extraordinaire.”

—Edward Phillips, author of *The New American Challenge*, many economic articles, stories and poetry AuthorsDen.com

I know I shouldn't have picked her up, but there she was, by the side of the road. Her eyes locked on mine. Her thumb out like a professional. Glistening black hair flowing over her shoulders in the breeze, a blue blouse that stood out electric against the brown background of dried grass that marked Northern California most of the year, a short black leather skirt, and matching black boots almost to her knees. She was striking in that country setting, more like a fashion model on a shoot rather than a country hitchhiker. Out of place. She had a black leather shoulder bag on the ground next to her, but that was it. At 75 miles an hour, I had to pull my Toro into a four-wheel slide, dust flying, so that I could stop within shouting distance of her, overshooting quite a bit.

I had left the City that morning on a three-day jaunt to nowhere in particular. Just had to be back by late Monday night after the holiday and back to the grind. Actually, the grind wasn't too bad since I had some great older guys—engineers without degrees—to work with me on various projects we had moving our company forward. It's just that, as a young single guy, I liked these long weekends to get away and explore parts of the West I hadn't explored before. While others preferred hiking, bicycle riding, car racing, and even golf, I liked long distance runs in my car through virgin country I hadn't seen or experienced before. To me, there was an adventure around every bend, and Northern California was more than accommodating when it came to adventure.

San Francisco was in my rearview mirror when I turned off that north-south 101 for a more rural run through mountains and valleys to an unknown

destination where I would stop for the night. Usually, on my first night out, I'd sleep in the car. So as not to get rank and to get a good night's sleep, I'd pick up a motel every other night. Doing this not only saved money, but also added to the adventure because of the sleeping places I found. I never worried about sleeping off the road in those days. I never bothered anybody and nobody ever bothered me. I'd usually be up and on my way by dawn looking for my first cup of coffee and to top off my gas tank. On those long jaunts, sometimes across country, I wasn't beyond picking up hitchhikers for company.

My rule was: live and let live. So, aside of asking hitchhikers where they were going, I didn't ask any questions... pry into their personal lives. Wasn't any of my business,. Likewise, I didn't tell them about myself, although my big, racy Olds Toronado led them to believe that I had a bit of money. I did, but just enough cash for the trip and to pick up lunch or dinner for my riders because the way they were traveling, most didn't appear to have any real cash. Met some real characters and some real kooks this way. The characters made great traveling companions, and somewhere, back in my memory, I have fond memories of our brief rides together. The kooks were another matter. I usually wanted to get them out of my car as soon as possible after they started hitting me with strange proposals like, "Have you been saved?" And then, there were those who rode only a short distance, got on and got off without saying a word, except maybe, "Thanks," if they even said that. There were some that stunk for lack of a way to clean up. There were those, though, that were downright scary, like the two I suspected were criminals on the run for their furtive behavior. I was so glad to let them off under an overpass in the rain.

But this was something new. Oh, I had picked up pretty girls before. One even flirted with me a bit on one long-distance run when her boyfriend wasn't around. I didn't take the bait. Probably should have. She was very bright and a free spirit.

I hoped I hadn't scared her as I slid to a stop not 2 feet from her, but about 20 feet past, the dust rolling up around her from where I had scuffed it off the shoulder in my haste to stop. She didn't move a muscle. Just stood there like she knew that I wouldn't touch her—like a statue—until I stopped. She reached down and grabbed that bag and wandered over to the right-hand window that I was powering down. She leaned on the open window edge and smiled at me. Her black eyes were wicked and they ran right through me.

"Where ya headed?" I yelled above the radio that was blaring out one of a set of Bob Dylan songs some disc jockey was playing that I'd never heard before. Good though.

She nodded her head in a forward direction and yelled in reply, "That way!"

"Hop in," I yelled. She opened the heavy door, placed her bag on the seat next to me, and got in. She smelled like fresh early morning, belying that she had been standing in the hot sun by that dusty road very long. Well then, any girl looking like her wouldn't have to stay by the roadside very long, would she?

Like I said before, I was never one to pry on any of the hitchhikers I picked up. Found it much better to leave and let live. Didn't even ask their names. If they volunteered their names, that was another matter. I didn't give out mine, either, unless they asked, and then it was usually only my first name, "Jack," rather than tell them any more about me. Occasionally, riders became very comfortable and we talked about a lot of things, shared addresses and names. Not so in this case, though.

I turned the radio down a bit so that it wasn't blaring. Bob Dylan's nasal sound still drifted throughout the car and I could see that she was digging him so I left things alone. We went down narrow straights at speed, crawled around corners like the powerful cat that my Toro was, and overpowered hillocks like they were bumps in the road. All amid striking scenery of wooded areas, grassy hilltops punctuated with live oak, and verdant valleys with crops here and there, animals grazing, making it a very pleasant, scenic drive. I glanced at her briefly and sized her up. From her glances, she was doing the same to me.

Her jet-black hair could have been Native American, Spanish or Mexican, but she didn't seem to have that kind of Hispanic or Asian look. Her skin was quite light for someone out in the sun, but had the olive tinge of someone Greek or Italian. She looked to be about twenty. Her clothes were even more striking than I had seen from the road. Her blouse looked to be silk and fit her thin body perfectly. Likewise, her leather skirt, very short, molded into her body like a glove. She wasn't wearing any stockings, and didn't have any hair on her legs, indicating that she shaved. I couldn't help wondering how far she had gone with shaving. Her only visible jewelry was a simple gold necklace. No rings on any fingers. No tattoos. Her hands had not seen hard work and her nails were remarkably unpainted. Just a simple girl, simply dressed in a way that made her special... striking to have riding in the car next to little ole me.

This sizing each other up continued for some time. Finally, she broke the silence. "Do you mind if I smoke?"

I had just scraped the nicotine stains off of every part of the interior and scrubbed the seats from the cigar smoking salesman that had owned my beast before, but there was no way I was going to refuse her request. “It's okay, go ahead.”

She cracked the window a little, reached in her black leather bag and pulled out a half used pack of Marlboros and a mother-of-pearl lighter that looked like it may have been pre-World War II... A real antique. She flipped the lid on the lighter, lit up the end of the cigarette, and quickly stashed the lighter back in her bag, popping my ashtray open to her left. I was glad she used her lighter rather than the cigarette lighter in the car, because the flare with which she lit up showed that she was as professional a smoker as she was a hitchhiker. Really cool. I had forgotten what a newly lit cigarette smelled like, and I actually found it quite pleasant.

Although she had been cool all along, the cigarette seemed to relax her more as she leaned back in the seat and blew smoke through her nose and lips at the crack in the window so that little collected in the car. Occasionally, she would bend forward and flick off her ash in the ashtray, inviting me to look down her blouse without going off the road. Soon, the cigarette was gone and she tamped it out in the ashtray. She didn't seem to want to light up again and I was glad for that. It got me thinking about the theory that I developed from the girls I dated. It seemed to me that smoking girls wanted me to see their panties. Invariably, they always did—*and soon*. And also just as inevitably, once I saw their panties, there was much more. Non-smoking girls put out too, but in an entirely different way. Smoking girls were just plain sexier—*and easier*. Why I was having those thoughts, I don't know. Except that they were good thoughts about good times. Maybe happening again.

We drove on for some time, both staring at the scenery and listening to the radio without saying anything to each other. Gradually, I felt the call of nature. While at times like this on country roads, I often pulled over and went up behind a tree, it didn't seem appropriate with the young lady in the car, so I was glad when I saw a corner gas stop up ahead. By the time I pulled up to the little storefront, my urgency to pee had increased considerably, and I threw all politeness aside.

“I need to go.” I uttered through clenched teeth as soon as we came to an abrupt stop by the hitch rail. “I'll be right back!” All the while opening my car door as quickly as I could and heading around the front of the car to the front door of the little store. The door slammed behind me as I asked the startled clerk where the restroom was and he pointed towards the back. Past some dusty aisles of merchandise that looked like it never sold it was so old, I saw a

small door, closed, ahead, and prayed that there was no one in there to impede my progress. The door opened easily to my hand, but suddenly, I was knocked aside as my passenger flew past me into the small restroom. I closed the door behind her and waited, standing first on one leg, and then the other, trying to forestall the inevitable that would've had me running out front and then around to the back of the place had I not heard her call out, "It's okay, come in."

Not being able to stand on circumstance, I rushed in, reaching for the zipper on my Levi's as I went. She was pulling down her skirt with one hand and propping her bag on the little counter by the sink with the other. With no other choice, I whipped it out and let out all that coffee I had before I left that morning. Her bag was partly open and I could see clearly red silk panties where she had stuffed them. She reached in, rummaged around, and came up with some red lipstick matching the panties perfectly that she applied to her lips. I was getting hard just holding it in my hand and she seemed to notice out of the corner of her eye. I shook off the last drops a little more forcefully than normal and stuffed my now engorged member in my briefs with very little room to spare.

I zipped up and decided to wash my hands. Normally I didn't touch anything in those grungy old restrooms, but something told me that I'd better wash my hands even though the faucets looking very grimy. My passenger nudged over a bit so that I could reach the sink—there was no soap—while she ran a comb through her perfect hair looking at her perfect face in the peeling mirror with hardly any reflection left. Still, I could see her eyes shining like two black coals—*hypnotic*.

As I looked down I also noted that that beautiful blue blouse she wore had spaces between the buttons revealing that she wasn't wearing a bra. My closeness to her was getting to me as I reached for some paper towels, wiped my hands, and walked out, trying to adjust my jeans so that nothing abnormal showed. She followed.

I didn't need any gasoline... *a mistake*. But I accommodated the owner by buying some coffee and a hot dog for an early lunch. I asked the girl if she wanted anything, and she said, "I would like a package of Fig Newtons. Good nutrition."

I bought her a package of Fig Newtons, a grape soda and a paper bowl of chicken soup. Once outside, we used my front fender for a temporary table while she ate her soup with a plastic spoon and I downed my hotdog, sipping on my coffee until it wasn't so hot and full. That done, we crawled back in the car and I took off north, the same direction I'd been going before we came to

the crossroad. I was comfortable holding my half-cup of coffee in a Styrofoam cup driving those curvy roads as long as I didn't have to make any sudden stops. My rider proceeded to open up the cellophane on one end of the pack of Newtons, after she had firmly wedged the can of grape pop between her legs. She was either trying to cool off something or warm-up that soda, I'm not sure, but the sight of all that leg made me wish that I was sipping directly from that can. Every once in a while, she would stuff a Newton in my mouth and I would follow it with a warm sip of coffee. Those cookies were quite good. I hadn't tasted them for some time. I stopped after four or five. She consumed about ten and then carefully folded the cellophane inward to keep the rest from drying out and dropped the package in the back seat. She lit up again, enjoying a cigarette after her meal. Before long, she was slumped up against the passenger side door, fast asleep.

The dirt road I was on started to peter out and head upward over the mountain range near the coast. I didn't want to go that way, and had thoughts that maybe I would end up in some rancher's yard, but, like the driving fool that I was, kept going, driving through some pretty wild switchbacks on a very narrow track until I crested the range and could see the sparkling Pacific spread out below me as far as I could see from side to side and to infinity where the blue water met the blue sky. It was another fifteen minutes before the winding road got us back down to California 1. I was so glad to get there without having gotten stuck in soft sand or worse. A paved road welcomed. As I stopped there, deciding whether to turn right and head north again or not, sleeping beauty awoke. She got her bearings quickly and turned to me with a great big bright smile on her still sleepy face.

"The beach," she blurted. "*The beach.*"

I looked up and down the highway and couldn't see any beach. "What are you talking about? There isn't any beach here. I thought we'd head up to Mendocino before going back over the mountains again... *inland*. All right with you?"

"There's a little secluded cove and beach down that way about a mile." She gave me a knowing smile like she had one over me.

"How do you know, I don't see anything looking like a beach."

She smiled again and winked. "Trust me. It's just a little ways down there. You'll have to pull over on the right."

Instead of going the direction I wanted, I pulled out on the highway to the left and headed south. Within a mile, she told me to slow up where I could see a spot where a couple of cars could pull off by the side of the highway. "There," she said. "Right up there."

It had been downhill all the way. When we got out of the car, I could smell the ocean and even hear it far below. She grabbed her bag and her Fig Newtons and started down a steep winding trail at breakneck speed. I followed, loping. It took me some time to reach the beach below. I took the time to take in the little cove, less than a quarter-mile across, bounded on each side by steep cliffs and crashing surf. In the middle was a stretch of pristine rocky beach with gentle breakers lapping the shore. Something I totally had no idea of encountering on my little drive through the central part of northern California.

By the time I got to the beach, she was starkers and running away from me, halfway to the surf. There wasn't another soul stirring in that beautiful, pristine place. I found her clothes all draped on a bush and quickly took mine off, placing them alongside hers on the bush to keep them off the ground. She didn't seem to worry about her things, so I didn't mine. But I would keep a watchful eye out on the trail above in case someone else decided to come to this little bit of Eden.

While it had been over 90° on the other side of the mountains, and, perhaps, it was still about 80° at the car, down here by the water the air was about 70° and comfortable in the sun, but I could feel a chill coming off the ocean that got colder as I approached her wading knee-deep in breakers that reached her waist and raised her up with their force. As I got close I could hear her screaming with joy like a child. I ran directly into the water to join her and was shocked to find that it was only about 50°, immediately taking my breath away and giving me a whole new perspective on whether I wanted to swim or not. Whatever hot amorous feelings I may have had chasing her down the path to the beach was rapidly disappearing in the chill of that surf.

She was still riding the waves when I reached her, screaming at the top of her lungs. Her skin was several shades paler and her lips were blue, she was covered with goose bumps and her small breasts were pointed like those cone shaped paper cups in the restroom dispensers. She saw me sizing her up and noticing that she was shaved except for a small landing strip. Her eyes grew sharp and she splashed me with water and dove into the next wave that came along, swimming out into deeper, more treacherous water. It was then that I saw someone in a wetsuit surfing out on the other breakers. As I wondered where he had come from and how he could stand the cold out there, I realized that it was only a seal riding the waves hunting fish and showing us how to do it. I didn't follow her, but waded back to the shore because I was getting deathly cold.

Soon, she was also running back out of the water, spinning and shaking off the cold. She was just standing there in the warm sunlight, her arms crossed across her breasts, shivering and shaking off all the water she had brought with her onto the beach. I wanted to walk over to her and wrap her in my arms, but we weren't that familiar yet, so I just jogged carefully—the rocks were tricky underfoot—up and down the beach to dry off as quickly as possible in the warm sun. She watched me and wrung the water out of her hair. She started walking up the beach toward me looking for colorful rocks and shells, picking some up as she walked. When I jogged back to her, she showed me what she found. Colorful pieces she could make jewelry with.

“Come,” she said. “Let me show you something.” We walked side-by-side to the far end of the cove where the cliff rose abruptly. Before we got there I could see a large cave opening in the side of the cliff, probably caused by wave erosion. As we got near the cave, the area became littered with rusted metal, old tires, barrels and a lot of partially burned driftwood. Up ahead, the cave was quite marked by graffiti and evidence that people had hung out there for a very long time, perhaps fifty years. When we got close, she spoke up again against the sound of the surf. “We used to live here.”

I couldn't believe what I just heard. I had to ask. “You used to live *here*... in this cave?”

“Yes, about ten years ago. We were here for several months.”

“Who is this, ‘we,’ you are talking about?”

“My extended family. We are Gypsies. We travel around the country. Do carpentry and things. The last time we were here, we stayed in this place. I remember it well, that's why I asked you to stop. I had some happy times on this beach when I was a kid.”

“Looks like you had some rough times. It must've been very cold at times in the winter or when storms came in.”

She smiled in a way I had not seen her before... softer, less menacing. “My life has always been hard, my time here was some of the best I've had.” She reached out her hand in a peaceful gesture. “I'm Azure Black. Who do I have the pleasure of meeting naked on the beach? I would call you, “Dick,” from what I see of you, but that would probably be impolite.” She winked. Suddenly talkative, she was as sure of her nakedness as she was of me—knowing I wouldn't touch her without her permission.

I told her my name and what I did in the City. I had to know more. “What brings you back here after so long?”

Azure pushed some rocks around with her big toe as she opened up even more. “Nothing really. We just got back around to this part of the country

about a month ago. Spent most of our time in Napa Valley working with the wine people, fixing tile roofs, you know, working flea markets. We're thieves... con a little here, scam a little there... It's our way of life, our livelihood. It's been that way for maybe two thousand years, even since we came over from the old country."

"Must be difficult at times. Why are you alone? How come you aren't with your family?"

"It's my man. They forced me to marry him at 15. He hasn't been good to me; you know... beat me and cheated on me. Finally, I got fed up and ran off. That's where you came in. Jack," a big smile erupted from the corners of her wicked eyes, "you're going to save me."

With that, I was getting cold even in the sun, and getting a little sun and wind burned to boot. Together, we walked back to our clothes and put them on. It was even more exciting watching her slip into what little she had, knowing that Azure wasn't wearing any panties or bra that made her "follow me" and climb up to the car quite interesting. By the time we got to the car, I had fully warmed up and had a significant bulge in my jeans again.

I took a U-turn and headed north for Mendocino. As we crested the first rise, a black car came into view, and Azure quickly ducked below the dash. "Shit!" I heard her loudly exclaim.

"What's going on?" I queried, wondering what was happening.

"It's him. I know it's him! If he catches me, he'll kill me. I know he'll kill me. You've got to do something, and do it quick." She cowered under the dash on the floor, even though the car was long gone, she was afraid to stick her head up.

I saw the road we had come on, slammed on the brakes, and made the best right angle turn all four wheels of my Toro could make. No wonder this model had won the Pike's Peak Hill climb two years in a row! I was tearing up the mountain at twice the speed I had come down. After many twists and turns, a large cloud of dust flying in our wake, she finally crawled up from the floor and hung on for dear life as I straightened every curve and made for the best road to safety.

It wasn't very long before we came to the corner stop where we had stopped before. This time I didn't stop, but took a road to the east, insuring that we'd leave the coast behind and any evil that the guy conjuring up in my mind would lay upon us—if he caught us. At least we had a few more Fig Newtons to sustain us in our heroic escape. Believe me, I was sweating bullets from both the heat and fear. With nothing to drink, I got as dry as the California summer we were experiencing. But that wasn't the only thing. One

look at my gas gauge, and I had only 30 miles to oblivion. Why didn't I stop back there? Why was I such a fool for this beautiful stranger? You had me. And she had me 100% now. It was now or never. Either I got gasoline or I didn't... I hoped for the best.

Lo and behold, as we crossed the next range, I saw a village far below, about 10 miles distant. We would make it about the time the late afternoon sun dipped below the range and put the entire valley in shade. There were a lot of vacant houses in what may have once been a prosperous community. But now there wasn't a single business in sight and I began to worry if there was any gasoline in such a forsaken place. Finally, I saw an old man sitting on a chair out front of a broken down, abandoned business with his dog. I rolled up and ran down my window. Called out, "Hi, is there any gasoline in town?"

The old gent perked up from what looked like an afternoon nap, stood up and shakily walked over to the car. I could smell chewing tobacco on his breath as he spoke slowly right in my face with his rotten teeth. "Why yes, there is. Go down two blocks, and turn right. You'll see a barber pole right away and a sign for the US Post Office. You can get gas there." I could see him eyeing Azure with some suspicion.

I thanked the old guy and drove down two blocks and turned right. There, on the right, was a barber pole and a sign that said, "US Post Office," above a garage. I pulled up to in front of a picket fence, we got out, and walked up to the front of a nice, rather new, or newly renovated, ranch-style house. A woman in her mid fifties answered the door. "Do you have any gasoline?" I inquired.

The lady smiled a broad smile and said, "You must be lost. Why, yes, I've got gasoline. I've even got a bite to eat, a haircut, can mail your letters, and my husband can even fix your car, if needed. There are only three families here, so we all have to do whatever we can to keep this little village running. Come on in. You look like you could use a cool drink."

She invited us into her little kitchen dining area. And gave us a small menu. After gallons of lemonade and some very fine sandwiches made with homemade sausage and fresh garden sides, we were both full and rested for less than five bucks. Azure excused herself and the woman showed her to the bathroom. We then went out to where my car was and she opened the garage door, revealing two gas pumps inside. I was sure grateful that one of them was premium. The lady explained that their children were all grown and gone and that her husband was out cutting wood and would return later. She invited us to stay in her little bed and breakfast, but I thought it best that we continue on and got directions how we could still take these back roads to the Oregon

border. It was strange that she didn't question why we were off the main roads. I guess she was just glad to have people come through and not one to question their motives, like me.

When Azure returned from the restroom, we said our goodbyes and were on our way. I didn't feel so hurried anymore, because I couldn't believe that he would be on our tail way out here in the middle of nowhere. As soon as we got underway, Azure was fast asleep, this time up against my shoulder and I didn't mind a bit. What a way to have a three-day weekend? Rescuing a damsel in distress.

Once again, as we drove up through the valleys northward, the roads were much straighter and we made good time. Finally, it started to get dark, and not wanting to drive off in the dark and get lost, I began to look for a place where we could pull over for the night. Knowing the way she was, I didn't think that Azure would mind, given the circumstances, sleeping in the car. Before long, we were driving through redwood trees. My headlights were shining off massive trunks in every direction. It was as though we had been transported to some primeval place, the deep forest, it looked like a beautiful place to stop for the night. Finally, I saw a little drive off the road to the right and took it for about 50 yards until it came to a little area amid giants and stopped, dropping off sharply.

Azure woke up. We got out and looked around. We could clearly hear the sound of a stream just below where we were. Azure got excited and climbed down the bank to the rocky stream, shouting and screaming, and generally, disturbing the peace of the place. I followed her on down the bank, and watched her, once again, strip naked and take a little bath in the water that was a bit too cold for me. I was content to leave the dust of the day on me, although I wished I had a bucket so that I could wash all that dust off my car.

I asked her if she wanted to sleep in the car in the back seat. I would take the front. Azure replied, "No, I think I'll sleep out under these trees."

I opened my trunk and gave her the old army blanket I used for ground cover and the flannel blanket I used to keep the chill off whenever I slept either in the car or on the ground. Never felt comfortable in a sleeping bag. She took them both, and after piling up needles from the trees to a height of about 5 inches to make a very nice, soft bed, she was ready to fall off to sleep some more. I never saw someone who could sleep so much. By that time, I was dog tired, slipped off my jeans and my shirt, and spread myself out on the front seat of the car with my jacket over my bare chest, and tilted the steering wheel up out of the way—a cramped place I was very familiar with. I cracked

the windows a bit. It was quite warm, so I wasn't worried about not having any cover except the jacket, and soon fell off to sleep.

Suddenly, I was awakened to pounding on the window glass. It was Azure. She was shouting, "Let me in. *Let me in!*"

Through the fog of waking up, I heard rain on the roof of my car and some was spitting in through the crack in the driver side window. The passenger side door was open, but in her rush to get inside the car, she must've thought it was locked. I yelled for her to open the door and reached for it myself. Azure got the door open and came rushing in, only slightly wet for her quick action. She was fully clothed, right down to her boots. I think she purposely stayed dressed because she felt she might need to run. As we sat there on the front seat with the overhead light on, I noticed something shining in her bag.

"What's that," I inquired.

"Oh, just a little something I picked up back there."

I asked Azure to show me what it was and she pulled it out—a pearl necklace, a couple of watches, two gold necklaces like the one she wore and three rings. One appeared to be a diamond. "Where did you get those?" I asked, starting to get agitated.

"You know... from that lady back there. I checked out their bedroom when I went to the bathroom."

Suddenly, I felt like a criminal. "You know what, I won't stand for you stealing when I'm trying to help you. I want you to give me everything you took, and after I drop you off someplace safe up in Oregon, I'm going to take those things back to that kind woman who you just took advantage of because you could." By the time I ended I was shouting.

For the first time, I saw a crack in her defenses. Azure started to cry and she dumped everything out of her bag and I picked up the items that she pointed out she had stolen. With no place else to put them, I put them in my jacket pocket and zipped it up. I would keep a close eye on that jacket for the rest of the trip and make sure the jewelry was in it when Azure left my sight. I told her to get in the back seat where she would be comfortable sleeping in the rain.

"No," Azure whimpered, "I'll sleep up here with you on the floor." She pulled off her boots, spread the army blanket on the flat floor and crawled down there, the lower bunk, if you will.

The rain beat hard on the car for a while, keeping me awake. And then it quit, with only occasional drops tattooing the rooftop. I could hear her breathing beneath me, heavily, as though she were sleeping. As I turned, my

hand and arm slid off the edge of the seat. A hand grabbed mine and moved it to a warm breast wanting to be fondled. My fingers obliged as she moved to accept the massage. Suddenly, she was on top of me and pulling my briefs off. We made love like teenagers on the front seat of that car and steamed the windows up. But Azure was no teenager, and skillfully made sure that I brought her to orgasm after orgasm before I lost my load—*twice*. Finally exhausted, we held each other and kissed gently like longtime lovers. It was the most exciting and fulfilling experience I ever had. Gradually, she slipped away and returned to the floor below the seat. I was asleep before I even knew she had left my arms.

I woke from a deep sleep with the pale of dawn creeping through the windows. I never stayed long in places like this for fear that I was trespassing, and usually on the road before this time. But I had slept far deeper than usual, probably because of all the sexual activity and the tension of the drive with someone chasing us. I reached down to touch her and she wasn't there!

That realization woke me up and I looked around. Azure wasn't in sight. I slipped on my briefs and found my jeans in the back seat and pulled them on, difficult inside the car. I cracked the car door and slipped outside, barefoot. The needles felt good under my feet and the ground was much drier than I would have expected with all that rain. Above, the trees thrust to infinity overhead, while the sun came peeking through the heavy canopy in shafts of light reflecting off of the dust of ages floating in this magnificent cathedral of nature. A place like this made me feel alive knowing that nature was alive and well and would provide. Instead of calling out for her, I headed down the bank towards the stream again and the sound of calling birds where I knew I would find Azure.

But she wasn't there. I called out for her. "*Azure! Azure! Are you there? Where are you?*" But my calls were unanswered except by the birds and the rush of water over the rocks. I took the opportunity to wash the sleep out of my eyes with the fresh cold water and returned to the car. I honked the horn and called out some more, but Azure was nowhere to be found. I saw only one set of tracks coming to the place I parked—mine. There was no evidence that another car had driven into the clearing. Or that anyone had walked out. I decided to look for Azure on the road.

As I started the car and begin to drive out to the road, I noticed that my gas gauge read empty! A terrible thought came over me. I stopped the car at the road and reached over the seat to get my jacket. I felt the jacket pocket, and there was nothing in it! "*Damn,*" I thought, "She took the jewelry and somebody must have siphoned all my gas, too! How could this be?"

I knew I couldn't get far, but I turned right on the highway and headed north, slowly, in hope of catching up with her and somehow, getting some gasoline. The road followed the stream and, within a mile, there was a little roadside fishing resort, just what I was hoping for. I ran out of gas before I got to the pump, but coasted right up to it with the power steering off. I couldn't believe my luck. I walked into the rustic place that was vacant except for the man behind the counter. I told him I needed some gasoline and he came out around the counter and we both went outside so that he could pump the gas. While I waited, I decided that it was time to ask him.

“Say... Did you see a young girl this morning come through here? I'm sure you would've remembered her. She had long black hair, an electric blue blouse, a black leather skirt and black boots to her knees?”

The man scratched his head a minute and replied. “Yes, I remember her well. She came in with a big guy—tough, mean looking—had a nasty scar across his cheek and wore a black fedora, dressed all in black. There was also an old woman, black hair all streaked with gray. Could've been the girl's mother. Had some missing teeth. No, I'll never forget them. Came in here about ten years or so ago on the Fourth of July in the morning, just like this. Robbed me blind. While that cute chick distracted me looking for something in the back, that woman hid a bunch of merchandise and that mean looking son of a bitch took the cash out of my cash drawer and even had the audacity to take my pistol from under the counter. Like a fool, I waved goodbye to them and their old black car as they drove off. Didn't even think to get the license plate. I called the state police both here and in Oregon, but it was like they vanished into thin air. Was told later that they were probably Gypsies.”

“Did you say, ten years ago?”

“Yes, now that I think of it, it was exactly 10 years ago. I remember it was hard to get enough money together so that my son could get back to school that fall.”

I reached for my billfold, to pull out my credit card to pay him. To my surprise, my two credit cards and all my cash were gone. I had my billfold and my identification, but nothing to pay for the gasoline! I cursed her. “*Dammit, she took my money and my credit cards!*”

“Who did?” The storeowner inquired.

“That girl I told you about... The one with the blue blouse. She called herself, Azure.”

I thought for a moment. “I've got absolutely nothing to pay for this gas or anything else. Maybe I can call my friend, Glenn, in the City and he can wire

you the money. But I don't know what I'll do until the money gets here." I was definitely in a tight spot—*deep shit*.

The guy got a sly smile on his face and shook his head. "I can see the quandary you're in. Look here, I can see by your expensive car that you're no jerk, that you've got a good job. What if I spot you \$100 until you can pay it back? *Okay?*"

"That's really nice of you. If you could give me some information, your name and address, I'll send you a check as soon as I get home." We went back into the store where the owner made me some bacon and eggs and some snacks to take along for the trip. I was really grateful and getting a bit guilty about what had happened to that nice woman in that little town. I decided right there to retrace my steps and see if there was some way I could help pay back what she had lost.

I got his business card and said goodbye to my new friend near the Oregon border. I promised him that I'd stop back and do some fishing on my next trip through. This time, I retraced my path back to that little town. I arrived there about noon and pulled up in front of the house. A middle-aged gentleman I didn't recognize came out and greeted me. "Hi, can I help you?"

"Yes, I got some gas here yesterday from a woman... Is she here?"

"That would be Martha, my wife. Yes she is, she's in the kitchen. *Martha!* Martha, there's a young man out here wants to speak to you!"

I watched as Martha came out of the house. She was in no particular hurry and didn't seem angry over what had happened the day before. She greeted me. "Hi, back for gasoline again? My husband is here and can help you if that's all you need." Martha continued, smiling.

I couldn't figure out why she wasn't angry. I spoke up. "Do you remember that girl I had with me yesterday, the one with the blue blouse?"

"No, you were alone yesterday. I remember that I made you some soup and sandwiches, and you were on your way—*alone*."

"Was anything taken from your house... any jewelry? She was a Gypsy—a *thief*."

"No, nothing missing here. The last time there was any Gypsies in this town was about ten years ago, wasn't it George? I remember there were more people in town then. Those Gypsies ripped them off bad. A couple of the families never recovered from the money they lost and left town. Come to think of it, one of them was a young and beautiful girl. Didn't seem to fit in with the rest—*real scum*."

"Was she wearing a black leather skirt and blue blouse?"

“Why yes, she was well dressed. Looked more like a model than what she turned out to be. I remember now, she stole some things out of my jewelry box in the bedroom. Almost forgot about that.”

I told the couple that I didn't need any gasoline and had some snacks for lunch so I accepted some lemonade and was on my way. By late afternoon, I came to that crossroad where that corner store was. I pulled in and filled up with premium, enough to get back to the City. I walked inside and the clerk, the same one that I had seen the day before, was behind the counter. I didn't bother to ask him about the girl, because I expected that he would say the same thing as the woman had said back in the town. Instead, I asked if he had any Fig Newtons.

The clerk replied, “Why no, we haven't had that brand of cookies in here for years.” He had the kind of look on his face that said that he wondered if I had all my marbles. I checked the shelves where we had got the Newtons the day before, and while the shelves were full, it was all new merchandise, not the dusty old stuff that I'd seen the day before. Finally, I used the restroom. It was clean and neat, not like country restrooms I'd seen in my travels at all. The mirror was new and reflected my sunburn well.

I left the store and walked over to my car. Just before I got in, I saw an old black car coming down the road that led to the beach—*fast!* I jumped in my Toro, stuck the key in with shaking fingers and started it. I slammed it in gear and tore out of that gas pump like there was no tomorrow. It was just in time, because by the time I was reaching speed on my way south, that old black car, the same one I'd seen pass me by on California 1, was on my back bumper, about to push me off the road!

I never straightened curves or made hills into bumps before like I did after that. Somehow, I managed to get ahead of that persistent, evil black car. After a few miles, it was way behind in the dust, but I didn't let up because I didn't want that car following me home. I was thankful that I bought such a gas guzzling big engine for my trips. Gradually, I was winning the race. Highway 101 was an invitation to do 100 and I passed everything in sight. When I got to the City, I took some devious routes and the high ground, looking back to see if that car was still following me. It wasn't. I slept for two days after that and didn't leave my apartment for a week, feigning illness. When the guys at work asked me how my holiday weekend was, I just shrugged and said, “*Okay.*” They wouldn't have ever believed what happened

Ronald W. Hull

to me if I'd told them. But I swear it's the gospel truth. Black cars scare me every time I see one ever since.

7/5/13

Dust in the Wind

"Very well written, but sad. So unnecessary that people should die for lack of water or food. We can pipe oil, why not build desalinization plants at the ocean's edge and pipe water to grow food and drink?"

—Patricia F. Hilliard, author of *One Pledge Unspoken*, two other novels, many short stories and a bird watching guide.

A father and son are walking the dusty streets of an arid town grown far beyond its limits, sprawling for miles of endless dwellings, most temporary and few substantial enough to last very long in this climate. Everywhere, there are crowds in the narrow streets and street vendors with very limited stock, eking out a losing living.

They are looking for water. They got water and food yesterday at an NGO. The food was bland but filling and the water was pure—unlike most of the muddy and insect laden that was their usual drink. They had three days... probably less, before they would dry up and blow away with the desert wind. Overeating was being felt, too. Their shrunken stomachs just couldn't take it.

The NGO ran out of food and water and pulled out with their trucks just after the hungry had eaten and promised that they would be back in a month. But promises were like the dust that blew through this perilous land. Just as fleeting.

The boy, maybe eight years old, vaguely remembered his mother. She had been trying to give birth to his sister in their village many kilometers from this place, but died. They had no midwife and his father could not help his mother as he watched her bleed to death, crying. Perhaps the boy was putting it out of his mind. Perhaps it was just the heat, the exhaustion, and the lack of water.

The father remembered more. But he was trying to forget, too. He had been a farmer. His father gave him one fourth of his land. The other three fourths going to his three brothers... now gone. In the good years that small

patch of ground with three fruit trees was enough to sustain them. In the bad years, it was not.

Each year got drier and the monsoon came later with less rain. The father's crops failed along with all the others in the village. People began leaving. All began starving. As long as he had food for his wife and his son, the father thought he could hold out—hope for a better year—next year. Three years earlier, the monsoon came with a flood. Many in the village drowned. The stinking muddy mess that was left quickly evaporated and the longest, driest period yet was upon them. The crops failed once again. Even the fruit trees died. They ate the seeds for planting, snakes, lizards, locusts and termites—all that was left—just to survive. Farming had driven all the wild game far away. There was nothing to hunt anymore.

Mother was weak from lack of food and water. That's why she died giving birth to a sister that never lived. Reality set in. So many had died from disease, hunger and thirst. They were the last to leave. All of the mud homes were abandoned, left to disintegrate into the desert that was forming with each day, each month, and each year. It was as relentless as the Sahara. They had to leave or die.

They wandered for many days, father and son. Lost all they carried bartering for food or water and finally, the father's watch to robbers. The robbers not only took everything they had, they beat them both bloody. It was senseless, but that's the way things were. Brutal.

Finally, coming to this great city of humanity and not much else, they stayed with nowhere else to go. There were riches here. Some people knew how to gain the upper hand and take from everyone else. The rich lived in fine houses in special, walled communities, growing richer and more ruthless as more people arrived.

But most lived in the ramshackle mosaic of brick, mud, metal, cardboard and canvas that constituted most of housing for a city of refugees from the relentless drying of the continent. Those that had, sold or bartered what they had in order to continue to live. But starvation was everywhere. Even among those who had homes, humble as they were, and businesses, meager as they were. Most of this teeming city was slowly dying.

But the father and son had nothing and could only beg. They continued on until nightfall when the blistering heat of the day no longer sucked the lifeblood from them. Their skin was now blackened by the sun and stretched thin over their bony bodies. The son had the distinct signs of marasmus with no cure in sight. They had to find a place to lay their heads for the night.

They ended up on the side of a mud building out of the wind but not out of the cold. All they had was what they wore. The father's cut off pants they took from a dead man on their way to the city tied off with a rope and the son's shorts. Fine for the heat of the day, but no protection after the sun went down. They huddled together and shivered until dawn. Tried to sleep for a while in the morning sun until someone kicked dirt on them and told them to leave.

And dirt they were. They only got washed when it rained. Water was just too precious. They spent the rest of that day looking for water and food but were turned down by everyone; most almost as desperate as they. Things were looking bleak when they crawled up under a cart for the night. The son cried softly from hunger. The father, in pain himself, could do nothing. Without water, the next day would be their last.

Weak and dehydrated, they both managed to get up that morning and continue on. Just as the sun began to take its toll on them, the father saw a water vendor up ahead and they approached him. Unfortunately, the father noticed that it was the same vendor that had denied them two days earlier. His heart fell. But, they had to try.

The water vendor saw that they were dying and decided to act. He gave them water from a tank of distilled urine that his wife gathered from makeshift toilets in his neighborhood. Even though it was distilled, the drink was filled with vermin of indistinct origin. Father and son gladly drank it and felt energized enough to move forward and find some scraps or bones to chew on for another night and into another day.

Each day the rich sent out wagons throughout the sprawling city to pick up the dead and take them to a place where they were burned. Father and son would be picked up soon. And take their place among the ashes blown in the dusty wind.

3/15/17

In sub-Saharan Africa and other parts of the world, drought, deforestation and desertification are happening rapidly in some of the most fertile and populated areas, forcing people to flee and become climate refugees.

Impolite Stories

Sex
& Politics
Religion

Ronald W. Hull

Impolite Stories is Ronald W.Hull's third book of short stories. Eighteen written between 2013-2017. Eclectic: science fiction, satire, drama, religion, sex and politics. Many from dreams with a decided twist or a lesson to be learned. Made to be entertaining to read. Subjects that could cause arguments in polite settings.

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