

ED GOES TO THE DENTIST

NED MUDD

Ed was sitting in a dentist's chair. A girl in a white lab coat had a long tube stuck in one corner of his mouth. The tube made a weird sucking sound that reminded Ed of something he'd like to talk the girl into doing.

"OK?" a voice said.

Ed couldn't see the man on the other end of the voice. The man held a metal drill and was standing behind a row of bright lights.

Ed mumbled a garbled syllable and tried to nod, causing the dentist to grin and reactivate his drilling equipment. Somewhere in the back of his mind, Ed recognized that he was under the influence of nitrous oxide. It occurred to him that laughing gas was probably a lot more fun outside the sterile walls of a dentist's office.

Ed imagined that the surface of his diseased tooth was a grove of old growth trees and the drill was a giant chain saw. He concluded that the dentist was in actuality a demented logger, hell bent on clear-cutting everything with bark on it.

The dentist leaned forward, causing a shadow to glide across Ed's closed eyelids. The shadow reminded Ed that he was deep inside a National Forest and was being attacked by a hostile lumberjack.

"Doesn't this bastard ever get enough?" Ed asked himself. But the frantic sounds inside his jaw obscured the answer. He felt the inside of his cranium rattling.

The screeching sound was jamming Ed's brain waves. He tried putting space between himself and the chain saw's implacable path of destruction, but found the task little more than futile. A distant inner voice suddenly whispered - fight or flight.

Ed reached out and grabbed the logger by the throat. The forest suddenly became a place of repose. He thought he heard someone yelling in the distance. From what he could tell, they were calling his name, perhaps in a foreign language.

As the sucking noise vanished, Ed heard a girl's voice murmur in the background. He found it odd that such a soothing frequency could be out here in the middle of nowhere.

A fierce sun burned Ed's eyes as he focused on the logger that he now held by the throat.

"You son of a bitch," Ed told the man, "one more tree falls and I'm going to shove that saw where it belongs." Ed meant business and appeared to have the upper hand.

The man being strangled was trying desperately to dislodge himself. Ed sensed other people in the area, possibly coming to the logger's defense.

There was only one thing to do - run!

Ed darted through the dense forest in a crouch. Every few steps he ducked behind a log, surveyed his options. If he tried hard, he could see

what might be a path out of the woods. It appeared he was dragging something or someone with him, could hear them breathing next to his ear.

He came around a limb, ran for what looked to be a clearing. He spied the ghostly shape of a bear in the trail and swung a fist. There was a sudden unexpected shriek from the animal and then Ed was standing in an some sort of eerie field.

"Holy shit," he muttered. He noted that the entire left side of his face was made out of rubber.

"Ed!" a man shouted. "Get back in here this minute or I'm calling the Police!"

It was the man with the chain saw.

Ed lunged onto a logging road and flagged down a pick up truck.

"Out of the truck!" Ed shouted to the man behind the wheel.

Whoever Ed had dragged through the forest was still attached to his arm, so he pushed them into the truck. Then he was in the driver's seat, engaging the vehicle's gears, hearing the tires squeal as the truck sped off into the unknown.

Ed was beginning to feel refreshed; an alertness crept into his field of view, not unlike the effect of sobering up after a long drunk. It was a sensation he was all too familiar with.

He noticed there was a song playing on the truck's radio. A lonely voice was singing, "I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired."

"What you need is a drink," Ed told the radio.

Something giggled in the passenger seat.

Ed concentrated with all his might. He was driving a truck down Country Club Road. There was a girl in the opposite seat. He

thought she might be wearing a white lab jacket.

"Sick and tired of being sick and tired," went the radio.

Ed looked over at the girl and gave her his best sheepish grin. "I don't guess things worked out too good at the dentist's office," he said.

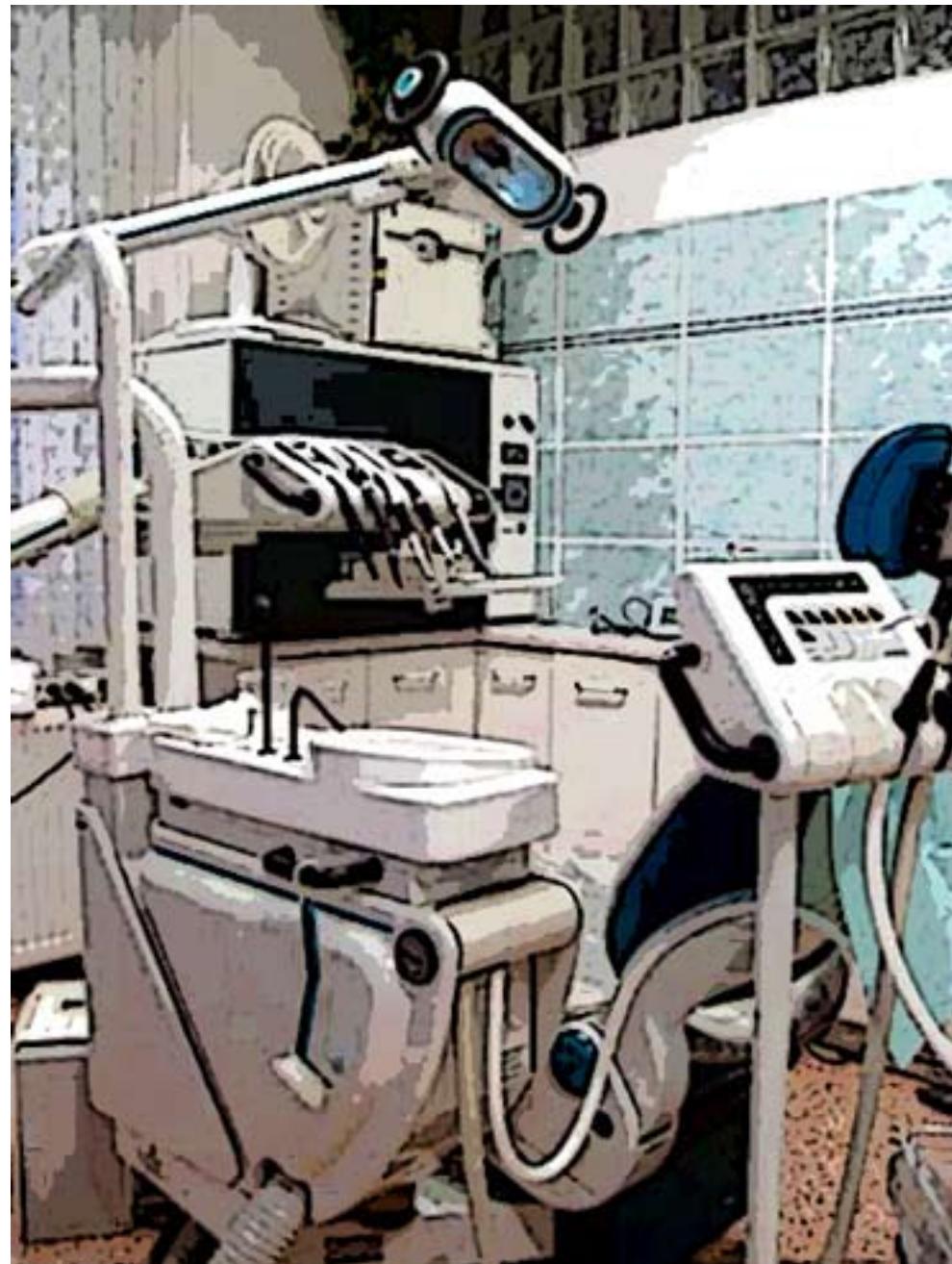
"I don't think anybody ever liked the gas as much as you," the girl laughed.

Ed steered the truck down a long row of fancy houses, past shimmering green lawns on one side and a golf course on the other.

"Reckon it's me needs that drink," Ed said.

"Isn't kidnapping a felony?" the girl said, pushing back her hair. Even in the lab coat, Ed thought the girl looked extremely delectable.

"Not guilty by reason of insanity," Ed smiled as he turned the radio up.



Ned Mudd lives in Stinkingham...er...Birmingham, Alabama

nedmudd@me.com

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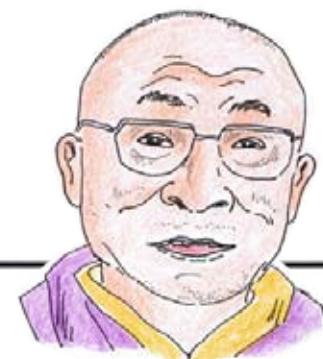
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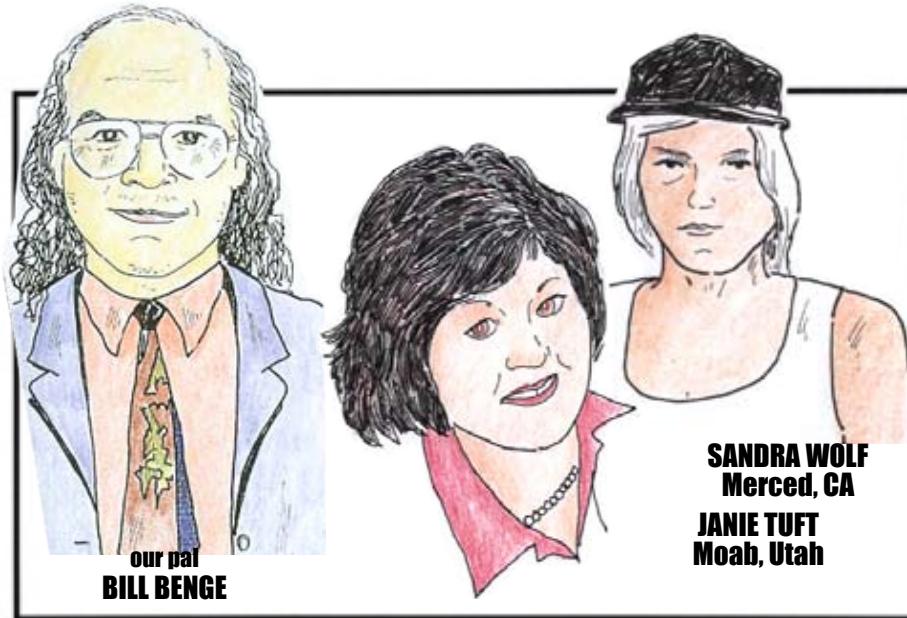
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