

Bugsie

A Short Story

by Fleataxi

Dateline December 1, 2368 New Federation of United States Capital, Kansas City, KS

“President Martindale, we’re ready to launch Explorer LXIV. We need you to press this button when the timer reaches zero to launch the spaceship at the precise moment needed to intercept Cygna X-23 in 5 years.”

“Gentlemen, are you sure you know what you’re doing? This is like the 23rd time you’ve tried to enter a Black Hole, and this time with a human pilot.”

“Don’t worry sir, we got the bugs worked out in the first 22 launches.”

“There better not be any more slip-ups, or the Federation will not only have egg on it’s face, they’ll be bankrupt!”

“Sir, you can’t say “egg” it’s against the Health Regulation Law of 2259 - All foods that the FEDA deemed hazardous to your health were not only removed from the stores, but from the language itself.”

“Right, Sam, so what word do I say instead of that now!”

“The preferred word is “Non-fat, non-dairy, free range Tofu.”

“God, I hate that stuff!”

“Sir, you can’t mention that word either!”

“What - Stuff - When did we pass a law that I can’t say STUFF!”

“No the other one - the “G” Word!”

“Oh, yeah right - The Religious Tolerance Law of 2251! No words may be spoken that don’t include all religious beliefs, or express a preference for 1 religion over another!”

“Sir - The Button! Push it!”

“Right - I hope this works.”

Dateline December 1, 2368 Kennedy Space Center - Florida

Commander Bugsie Malone climbed into the cramped capsule of Explorer LXIV 2 hours prior to “Blast-off” and started his preparations. He was a middle-aged, single man with no family since he was an only child, and his parents died years ago in a monorail derailment. He had been breathing pure oxygen in preparation for the 10-g acceleration he would experience as he left

Earth. The brutal acceleration was necessary to clear a small hole in the debris field surrounding the Earth. Once he was outside the debris field, a plasma thruster would engage, and his artificial gravity system would allow him to accelerate to 1.5 light speed for the 5 years needed to reach Cygna X-23, the closest known black hole. The artificial gravity couldn't be engaged in a gravity well, so he had to keep his acceleration to 10g until he got far enough away from the Earth. He was honored to have been chosen to be the first man to attempt navigating and returning through a black hole, but part of him realized that he was in the capsule because he was expendable.

As the countdown approached zero, he braced himself on his acceleration couch, breathed deeply, and prepared for a kick in the seat of his pants. When the countdown reached zero, 4 massive Titan XII solid fuel rockets (they had to get EPA approval for each launch since it released "hazardous materials" - which is why it's taken 200 years to get to Explorer #64) ignited and threw the spacecraft out of sight in the blink of an eye - leaving a trail of chemical smoke. 5 minutes later, the computer engaged the artificial gravity so Bugsie could travel in comfort at 1g while the plasma drive engaged and accelerated the spacecraft to 1.5 light speed. It would take him a little over 4 years to reach Cygna 23, in the Alpha Centauri System. The space physiologists had developed an artificial hibernation system, and once the Explorer was safely on its course, Bugsie reclined his couch to a comfortable sleeping position, took a handful of pills, connected a facemask to his face, and pressed a button. He fell into a deep dreamless sleep.

4 years later, he awoke to a sight no human had seen - Alpha Centauri, up close and personal. The ship was headed right to Alpha Centauri A (AC A) - A G2 Yellow star that first interested astronomers and astrophysicists due to its proximity and similarity to Earth's sun. Later, they discovered the black hole hiding between A and B when they discovered an anomaly in Alpha Proxima (C)'s orbit. This was the closest Black Hole discovered, and he was headed right to it. Explorer LXIV shut off the plasma drive for long enough to flip about its long axis and point the plasma drive right at Cygna X-23. Once it was properly oriented, the plasma drive fired, slowing the spacecraft to near-light speed by the time it reached Cygna. The scientists theorized that something traveling faster than the speed of light couldn't be affected by a Black hole, and in order to travel through it, he had to be caught by its gravity first.

3 weeks later, Alpha Centauri A filled his viewport, and the radiation and light filters were doing their jobs by protecting Bugsie from the high radiation and light levels the outside of Explorer was now experiencing. In order to get captured by Cygna X-23, he had to use the gravity of AC A to slow him down, which meant he needed to get very close to the foreign sun. Once he was within the gravity well of AC A, the computer would shut off the artificial gravity, and he'd slingshot the sun, losing thousands of miles per hour of velocity, and lining up for a direct approach to X-23. Over the next couple of months, his speed slowly reduced, and he was captured by AC A's gravity, lost even more speed, and was on a collision course for Cygna X-23. After a couple more months of boredom interspersed with frantic activity and abject terror as he realized if the scientists were wrong, this would be a one way trip, he realized that the ship would complete its mission regardless of what he did, so he calmed down and decided to accept his fate. The fact that his drinks were laced with Valium helped too. The Scientists guessed that the first Astronaut to attempt transiting a black hole would be freaking out at this point, and decided to slip tranquilizers into his food supply.

Finally he felt the first tugs of X-23 pulling at his ship. The accelerometers confirmed that he

was entering the outer fringes of X-23's gravity well, and would start accelerating toward X-23 until he crossed the Event Horizon, at which point, the theoretical Physicists took over and hoped that instead of being pulled apart, or squished to goo, he'd somehow be transported at an impossibly high velocity to another part of the universe, and pop out of another black hole. Bugsie stood at the viewport fascinated by the scene unfolding before him. He was the first human in the universe to see a black hole up close. He knew the documentary cameras were doing their jobs and recording the images for posterity, that was if he ever got back. That thought no longer bothered him, probably because he was taking near the maximum safe dosage of Valium with his daily fluid intake. The scientists stressed that he couldn't drink more than 1 beverage container per day due to the filter system's capacity. Actually, if he drank too many beverages in one day, he might overdose on Valium and die. After all the money they spent on this project, the last thing they wanted to happen was for Bugsie to die before he transited the black hole and returned to Earth with the priceless data.

The Federation wasn't bankrolling this for scientific reasons, it was all about MONEY - if they could use the hyperspatial passageway to trade with other planets, or locate cheap sources of minerals including Gold, Platinum or Diamonds, it would be worth the costs. Otherwise, they faced bankruptcy and starvation since they had exhausted all the resources of the planet, and had already extracted the useful minerals from the Moon, which was 1/10th it's former size, which screwed up the tides, but since the Earth's oceans were hopelessly polluted, and the sea life extinct, it didn't matter. Mars was a bust, they couldn't figure out terra forming, and the asteroid belt wasn't as well populated with valuable minerals as Scientists had hoped. Most of them were useless dirt clods mixed with ice particles.

Rapidly he approached the event horizon, and suddenly he was there. He couldn't see anything around him but absolute blackness, and he never felt so sick in his life. He felt like he was being pulled apart, then suddenly there was a flash of light, and a huge sense of acceleration. When he awoke, he was back out in what he assumed was normal space, but where? The computers couldn't get a star fix, and suddenly, they found 6 guide stars, and plotted his location right outside the Solar System. He couldn't imagine how he got right back to where he started, but he could clearly see the disk of the G2 yellow sun, and using the viewscope, he made out the planets exactly where they should be. The funny thing was he wasn't receiving his automated homing beacon that they were supposed to leave on for 50 years. As he got closer, he noted more apparent inconsistencies. The atmosphere was much cleaner, there wasn't nearly as much space junk, and there were no mining colony spacecraft to avoid. This was all too much for Bugsie's tired mind to take in, so he decided to take a nap. When he awoke, he was inside the orbit of Jupiter, and he had to make a decision. He decided to land on what he hoped was the planet he had just left a little over 4 years ago, and figure out where and when he was when he landed. He programmed the ship for a landing orbit with a touchdown in North America, hopefully somewhere on the Eastern half of the US.

Chapter 2 - Earth, or is it?

Since the landing procedure was totally automated, and he couldn't do anything to influence it because he wasn't qualified to manually land the ship, he took another nap. He'd been doing that a lot lately, then realized that someone might have been spiking his beverages with tranquilizers. He thought that was a good idea when he was about to go through the black hole, but now he had to keep his wits about him. He decided to drink the recycled water, which tasted horrible, that was produced by the fuel cells since he was landing and probably wouldn't need the water for the spaceship anymore. By the next morning he was feeling much better, and his head cleared miraculously. As he entered his final phase of touchdown, he noticed it was dark out, and there were no lights around. Now this was really weird, since the Earth he left used every square inch of the planet to house people or grow food, and an area this dark only meant that there were no people around. He decided to belt on his personal defense kit, which contained a taser pistol and other non-lethal weapons. He remembered the battle he had with the Security Commissioner he had to be able to bring even the limited weapons he had. He had to threaten to resign 2 weeks before the launch to get the Lilly-livered SOB to let him carry even a taser- they hurt people, and were deemed BAD. The Administration-preferred method of capture of violent criminals seemed to be a cop yelling "Stop, or I'll yell STOP again!" He correctly assumed the idiots making the rules didn't have to face the violent felons the cops on the beat had to face on a daily basis.

As he got lower, he recognized the west coast of Lake Michigan, and steered toward an empty field. Moments later, he touched down, and once he shut everything down, he unlocked the cabin door and crawled out. The air was amazingly clear, and suddenly he realized something wasn't right here. This close to Chicago on the Earth he just left, there was no way he could see stars above him due to atmospheric pollution. The daytime sky was grey instead of blue, and the only relief was the occasional rain that fell. Even the rain that fell wasn't fit to drink, and was collected for reprocessing and filtering so they could have some drinkable water. Wherever he was, the sky was clear, he could clearly see the Big Dipper and several other major constellations. Something was not right here. Either he had traveled through time, or he was on the wrong planet. In a way he was glad, because the planet he left sucked! He felt like ET, and realized in a way he was. "Take me to your leader" he thought to himself, laughing hysterically.

Several hours later, as he was walking down the road, a strange vehicle drove up and stopped. A man in a uniform got out, picked something up, threw it in the back, and drove on. Bugsie decided to hitch a ride, and stood in the street. The vehicle's horn blared, but he stopped.

"You Idiot, what are you doing?"

"Trying to hitch a ride."

"On a Garbage Truck, are you Nuts?"

"No, lost. My Name's Bugsie."

"Nice to meet you Bugsie, my name's Al."

“Can you give me a lift to Chicago?”

“Man you’re really lost, that’s over 50 miles south of here.”

“Where’s here?”

“Winthrop Harbor, Illinois.”

“What’s today’s date?”

“It’s December 1st, can’t you tell from the snow?”

“What year?”

“Man you really aren’t from around here, are you - It’s 2373 like it’s been all year.”

“Holy Shit! It’s only been 5 years since I took off, and it’s changed so much!”

“You didn’t escape from the loonie bin did you?”

“You wouldn’t believe me if I told you.”

“Try me!”

“Better yet, I’ll show you, but you have to keep a secret.”

“This ought to be good - ok, which way Mac?”

Turn around and take the next right, it’s back in that field there.”

Bugsie had Al drive back to the field, and when they got out, he showed Al his spaceship.

“I left Earth 5 years ago in this to travel through a black hole, and try to find a hyperspatial passage.”

“Well, Mac I don’t know what to tell you, but you didn’t leave this planet. We haven’t even gone to the moon yet - the 4 Families decided that space exploration was too expensive.”

“What happened to the Federation?”

“Never heard of any family called “The federation” Are you sure you’re OK Mac?”

“Something’s not right here, and I can’t get a handle on it. You said it’s December 1st 2373, and we’re in Winthrop Harbor Illinois, and we’re just about 50 miles north of Chicago, Illinois.”

“Right so far mac.”

“Please stop calling me Mac, my name’s Bugsie!”

“Whatever you say Mac!”

Finally in desperation, Bugsie took out his Federation ID and showed it to Al.

“That’s a nice picture, but I know some good forgers that could make one of those real easy.”

“Can they do this?”

Bugsie placed his right thumb on the card, and an electronic voice said “ID positive.”

“Neat trick - how’d you do it?”

“You put your thumb over this spot and see what happens. It won’t hurt.”

Al put his thumb over the spot, and the voice immediately said “Imposter!” Al dropped the card like he was holding a hot iron.

“That card shocked me! I thought you said it wouldn’t hurt!”

“If I told you it would shock you, would you believe me, and if you did, would you have taken the card. If you noticed, as soon as you let go of the card the pain stopped.”

“Ok, Bugsie I know for a fact that card couldn’t have been made by our forgers, since we don’t have that technology. Now who the hell are you, and what do you want?”

“Al, I don’t know how much you know about Theoretical Astrophysics, so I’ll try to explain it to you simply. Our scientists theorized that Black Holes, a region of gravity so intense that light can’t escape, were in fact hyperspatial portals that transported objects between points in the universe. 5 years ago, I left a totally different Earth which was totally polluted and run by a 1-world government called the Federation, and took off headed towards a black hole that was 5 light years away. I have no way of explaining it, but I either just traveled 10 light-years in 5 years, or I’m not where I thought I was. Since the Federation isn’t in charge, and you’ve never heard of them, I have to assume that either I’m hallucinating all this, or I’m in a parallel universe, since this is definitely Earth. I obviously didn’t travel through time, since your date indicates I’ve been gone less than 5 years, which would be about right for a hyperspatial jump. Ouch, what did you do that for!”

“My mom told me that if you think you’re dreaming, to pinch yourself, and if you feel it, you’re not dreaming.”

“Yeah, but did you have to pinch so hard?”

“Payback for the card!”

“Ok, Al evidently this isn’t a dream or a hallucination, so I need to be careful. I need clothes and a place to stay, then I need to either get back home, or integrate myself into your society.”

“Well from what you said, the Earth you left sucked, do you really want to go back?”

“I’ve got no one there, and the place is a sty. Frankly this world might be a better place. Why don’t you take me back to your place and tell me about it?”

“I’ve got to finish my rounds first. You stand out like a sore thumb in that Spaceman outfit. Put this coverall on over it, and if you could help me, I’d appreciate it.”

“What do I have to do?”

“You ride on the back, and when I stop near a trash can, you pick it up, toss the contents into the back of the truck, and jump back on.”

“How do you know I’m aboard?”

“I’ve got a spot mirror, and I know you’re aboard when I see your smiling face.”

“Ok, I guess it’s the least I can do to help out.”

“Bugsie, I’m grateful for the help, my assistant just quit and I would have to do the whole route by myself which is a lot of work for a guy my age. If you want a job, the city is hiring new sanitary engineers.”

“I’m not an engineer - how could I get the job?”

“Relax, it’s just a title. We call Secretaries Administrative Assistants, but to me their still dames in skirts! You’re hauling trash just like me.”

“We need to hide my ship. Hand on a second, I’ll be right back.” Suddenly the door to Bugsie’s spaceship closed, the lifting jets fired, and the craft rose, hovered over Lake Michigan, and lowered itself into over 100 feet of water. Bugsie walked back to Al, who was standing there staring at him. Bugsie showed him a little remote control and said “Don’t worry, I remembered where I parked. This will keep anyone else from finding it.”

Al held a pair of orange coveralls. “Here, if you’re coming with me, you’ll need these.”

Bugsie got into the coveralls, and climbed aboard where Al told him to. Every time they stopped, he was right beside a garbage can, and he picked it up and threw the contents into the truck. Al showed him how to operate the compactor when the hopper got full, and soon he was working just fine. Several times he was glad his stomach was empty, because some of the stuff stunk so bad that he would have hurled if he had anything to throw up. Finally they drove into the lot. Al told him to keep his coveralls on, since he was wearing a space suit underneath. Al introduced Bugsie to the boss, who had him fill out some paperwork after talking to Al, and said he was Al’s new partner. He paid him 50 bucks for the day, and they drove home in Al’s car. On the way home, he said he had a 2 bedroom apartment, so he was welcome to stay for a while. When he got home, Al tossed him a beer, and Bugsie looked like he’d seen a ghost!

“What are you drinking this for!”

“It’s a beer, haven’t you ever had one before?”

“Not that I can remember, what is it?”

“It’s a fermented beverage made from wheat and hops. It contains 10% alcohol by volume. Relax, enjoy - it won’t hurt you!”

“This is different, we weren’t allowed to have any alcoholic beverages where I’m from, or eggs or red meat for that matter.”

“Why the Hell not?”

“Near as I can figure, 100 years ago, the Federation decided that eggs and red meat were bad for us, so they were removed from the shelves. They haven’t succeeded in totally removing the words from our vocabulary, but they fine you if you say them in public.”

“Are you sure you’re not from the loonie bin?”

“No, but some of the rules sure seemed insane. Why don’t you tell me about this Earth, start with your government and society first. I need to know this so I can fit in.”

“Years ago, back in the 1920's, the government decided to outlaw all alcoholic beverages. The Volstead Act of 1919 and the Eighteenth Amendment were passed, and the Founding Fathers -Al Capone, Bugsie Moran, Lucky Luciano, Bugsy Siegel, and Meyer Lansky decided to fight back. One of J. Edgar Hoover’s young male lovers decided to come forward and name names. When Hoover heard about this, he brought out his blackmail files he had on everyone to fight back, and a secretary, while supposedly organizing the list, copied it, and sent it to several media outlets, and Al Capone.

Armed with the confession of Hoover’s underage lover, and Hoover’s files, the entire rotten system collapsed as lurid headline after headline hit the press, naming names and events. Realizing that Congress was too deeply involved to impeach President Harding, Al bid his time. Hoover was forced to resign by Harding to try and stem the bleeding, but the papers kept up the press. Eventually, the entire FBI was dismantled, and with the G-men off their backs, Al and the other Founding Fathers acted. They met, and formed The Association. It was a loose federation of the mafia families in the US and Canada. Once they got their act together, they quickly seized power from the corrupt government officials, who were hung from gallows outside the Capitol Rotunda. Once everyone was tried and executed, they bulldozed the government buildings, and dissolved the Federal Government.

Over the years, each region was controlled by 1 family, and they all met once a year to decide things. Russia was taken over by their Mafia, China and the rest of Asia was controlled by their Triads, and the Sicilians took over the Mediterranean and Western Europe. During the first meeting of the Great Association, the rest of the world was divided among the 4 Great Families, as the Capos were known. The 4 Capos of the 4 Great Families organized everything world wide, brought corruption under control, and the result was a civilized system where you lived a normal secure life unless you crossed one of the Bosses. Instead of a judge and Jury - if you robbed/

murdered/raped without the permission of the Family, you died. If you stole money from the Family, you died. There were independent businesses, that paid Taxes to the Families, and the rest of the businesses were owned by the families. The Families owned huge casinos in every town, where you did all your drinking, gambling, and whoring around. They didn't allow any bars or brothels outside of the casinos, but you could buy beer or wine for consumption at home. Chicago, and most of Illinois is still run by the Capone family. My boss is a direct descendant of Al Capone's great-great granddaughter."

"That's funny, My parents named me Bugsie as kind of an insult against the Federation. Sadly, they died 2 years later in a bizarre monorail accident. The barriers that were designed to keep passengers out from under the monorail failed right as they got to the front of the line, and they fell under the tracks. I was raised by my grandparents."

"Bugsie, around here, we'd call that "accident" a whack job - My guess is someone pushed them. They must have really pissed someone off in the government."

"I always suspected that they were murdered since my Grandparents never talked about it until my Grandmother told me the whole story on her deathbed. She said "What are they going to do -Kill me?" She told me they were working in the Resistance, a shadowy anti-government organization that was trying to stop the Federation from doing something I never found out about. It must have been pretty bad, since Grandma said the government killed everyone involved in the Resistance. The only reason I got the job as an Astronaut was my Grandpa was connected enough to make them overlook the indiscretion of my parents since I was barely 1 year old when they died."

"Basically we're as free as we want to be. There's been no major wars since the first one, and all conflicts are solved by the 4 Great Families. Their word is law, and you ignore them at peril of your life. Everyone who wants to owns guns, but only a Made Man can carry a Tommy gun."

"You carry guns? This is going to take a lot of getting used to! They banned all Civilian Weapons in the year 2150. It started the Great Civil war and killed half the population of what was the US. Some were killed when government agents arrested them, and the resisted arrest, and some died in the re-education camps. The Federation had to step in and take over from the US government and stop the fighting. They left patrols guarding the cities and relocated everyone to huge farms to grow food. I read a smuggled report that said 90% of the food grown in the US was shipped overseas to feed Europe and Asia while people were starving in the US. The US never recovered, and the Federation replaced all forms of government in 2175."

"If I were you, I'd be glad I got out of that nuthouse."

"I'm starting to feel that way."

Chapter 3 - Adjustments

After they drank their beers and took showers, Al made dinner, then he suggested going to Wal-mart to buy Bugsie some new clothes.

“Are you sure I can afford it? All I’ve got on me is the \$50 the boss gave me!”

“Relax, for \$50 bucks, you can get a great pair of Levis, several shirts, underwear, socks and tennis shoes.”

“Are you kidding? All of our clothing comes from China, and a single pair of pants costs \$500!”

“The Bosses keep the cost down, and all our clothing is made in the USA.”

“I remember they used to call our Wal-mart China-Mart because everything was made in China.”

“Everything we buy in the US is made in the US.”

“Wouldn’t that be expensive, what about Unions?”

“We don’t have any, since most of the factories belong to the Families, they decided long ago to fix prices and wages so everyone makes a living wage. It cuts down on the variety though. We only have 2 brands of cars, Ford and Chevy. Each makes 2 style of cars, and 2 trucks. You’ve got a choice of Black, Blue, or white for a paint job. Every appliance we own is made by maybe 1 or 2 manufacturers. We’ve got a little more variety in clothing, there’s maybe a half-dozen manufacturers, and most of them make women’s clothing. Levi Strauss makes all the work and casual clothes, and the cloth for the suit tailors.”

“You buy tailored suits! We didn’t even have tailors. All our clothes were made by industrial robots.”

“We’ve got robots, but they work in the dangerous areas of the automobile manufacturing plant, and other dangerous jobs like smelting. For the last 200 years, our real unemployment never got above 1%. We don’t have Unemployment or Welfare. The bosses find you a job, and you pretty much keep the same job for life. If you’re medically disabled, or injured at work to the point that you can’t work, your insurance takes care of that.”

“Do you know how to shoot a gun?”

“All I’ve ever shot is a taser, why?”

“Everyone carries around here - while the Families keep crime under control, some small time hoods still like to rob people, so everyone goes armed. I’ll have to take you to the range on Saturday, and get you up to speed. I’ll loan you a set of clothes, since you can’t wear that space suit to Wal-mart - people might think it’s Halloween.”

“That reminds me - I need to use your bathroom.”

“Second door on the left.”

Once the door was closed, Al could hear noises coming from inside the bathroom that would indicate that Bugsie was in pain. He knocked on the door “Are you OK in there?”

“I’ll be out in a few, I’ve got to remove some catheters! YEOUCH!!!”

Several minutes later, Bugsie walked out of the bathroom wearing a pair of Al’s boxers and an undershirt.

“If you don’t mind me asking, what was that all about?”

“I’ve been wearing this suit for the last 5 years. Before I took off, they inserted catheters into my bladder and rectum. In order to get the suit off, I had to take out the catheters!”

“I don’t know if I could handle having a tube up my butt for 5 years.”

“I was asleep for most of it. I’ve got 1 more problem, tomorrow I’ll probably pass a movement big enough to think I was giving birth, so be prepared for some more sound effects!”

“Better you than me buddy. OK, here’s a shirt and pants, and some shoes. Let’s get dressed and go there before they close.”

Once Bugsie was dressed, they got into Al’s Ford Sedan and drove to the Wal-mart. Bugsie was in full-blown Culture Shock. The single women dressed in dresses which accentuated their charms without appearing sleazy, and even the married women tried to look attractive. On the Earth he knew, women were encouraged to dress in “unisex” styles, and sometimes if you picked up a stranger, you didn’t know what you were getting until the clothes came off. Dating on this new Earth would be much easier! They walked into the Wal-mart, and Bugsie was going deeper into shock by the second. The store was huge, and had half a store just dedicated to clothes! The other half was hardware, sporting goods, notions, health and beauty, and a large pet section. On the old Earth, pets were prohibited, since they didn’t have enough food. He was checking out the price stickers, and Al was right, he could easily buy enough clothes to last a week for \$50 here.

He waded into the clothing aisle, and came away with a pair of Levis, 5 shirts, socks, and underwear, and a brand-new pair of boots Al recommended for working on the truck with a steel toe and shank made by Wolverine Boots of Wisconsin. The workmanship was excellent, all the seams were perfect, and the sole felt like he could work in it all day without getting tired. Al bought some food, and Bugsie gave him the change out of the \$50 bill to cover his half. On his way out, Al flirted with the cashier, who seemed more interested in Bugsie. She even gave him her phone number. Al mumbled a brief “thank you” before Al hurried him out of the store. They loaded their packages in the car and drove home. Al handed Bugsie another beer when they got home, and sat him down to talk to him.

“Bugsie, I’ve got a few things to explain to you here. Most of the women choose to get injected by their 14th birthday. It’s 100% reversible, but it renders them sterile, with no periods to worry about, and leaves them permanently horny. Even still you might want to use a condom since we

still have gonorrhea and other STD's, but nothing fatal.”

“That’s good to know - on the other Earth, having sex with a stranger meant taking your life in your hands, even if you used a condom. Most of the STD’s were fatal, and really cut down on sex outside of marriage.”

“That’s another thing I gotta tell you - before you pick up a girl, you better be 100% sure she’s not married, because if her husband catches you - he’s legally allowed to shoot both of you!”

“Thanks for the warning, so do you think the cashier was married?”

“Nope - married women can’t work as cashiers, waitresses, or tellers. That’s so that you know it’s safe to hit on a cashier, waitress, or bank teller. Most of them appreciate it, and 99% of the time, it’s just a 1-night stand. I’ll warn you about 1 other thing, marriage is pretty much permanent here - you CAN get a divorce, but unless you can prove your wife was screwing around on you she gets everything, especially if you’ve got kids. So choose wisely.”

“That would probably explain all the single men and women.”

“Exactly - I think the Families did it deliberately to keep the population down. With safe casual sex, unless you’re really in love and want to have kids, there’s no point in marriage.”

“So you think I should call her?”

“I would - I’ve slept with her before, and she’s a tiger in bed - might be just what you need after 5 years of no sex.”

Al showed Bugsie his room, and they went to bed. The next morning, Al heard a scream of agony coming out of the bathroom, then a sigh of relief.

When they were seated at breakfast, Al said “I guess everything came out Ok?”

“That wasn’t even funny! What’s for breakfast, I’m starving.”

“The usual, Bacon, eggs and coffee. There’s toast with jelly if you want it.”

“This is going to take a lot of getting used to - I lived on a horrible tasting goop for almost a year.”

“Enjoy, I eat like this every day. Sometimes I make pancakes or waffles.”

“I could get used to this. Real food, soft beds, and hot women!”

Al and Bugsie finished breakfast, drove to the lot, and climbed aboard the garbage truck. Today they were doing the commercial dumpsters, and they had a different truck with forklifts. Bugsie liked this much better than the residential route. All he did was roll dumpsters to the truck all day, then roll them back into their storage spots. Al drove him home, and after dinner, he called Nancy, and she suggested he come over to her place Friday after she got off work, say 6:00pm.

He said Ok, and she giggled “See you then” and hung up. The rest of the week they hauled trash, and Friday afternoon, the Boss gave Bugsie a check for \$250. It was way less than he was used to, but he realized the cost of living here was maybe 1/5 of what he was used to, so that \$250 would be the equivalent of \$1250 per week, or \$5 thousand per month. That was a living wage in anyone’s book.

He took a long hot shower, got dressed, and drove over to Nancy’s place. She greeted him at the door wearing only a bathrobe, open to reveal her ample cleavage. She pulled him through the door, laid a passionate kiss on him, and dropped the robe. Bugsie stared at her nude body for a second, then realized he was standing there staring at a nude woman, he kissed her, picked her up, and carried her to what he hoped was her bedroom, laid her on the bed, and got undressed in under a minute. When he got undressed, she got 1 look at him, and her sexy grin turned to a lustful smile. She dragged him down to the bed, and they spent the rest of the night having wild sex. He woke up the next morning sore all over, and she tried to jump on top again, and he begged off, that if she did that once more, he swore it would fall off on the floor. She decided that 5 times in 1 night was enough, so she curled up next to him, and they talked for a while.

“Bugsie, where you from, I’ve never seen you around before?”

“I’m from Florida.”

“That explains it. I don’t know how to tell you this, but you’re the best lover I’ve ever had. I’d like to keep seeing you a couple nights a week if you can manage it.”

“Sure, I’m not seeing anyone else, it’s probably safer that way.”

“I think I’m going to stop seeing other guys too, so you don’t have to use a condom anymore.”

“Al told me that there are some STD’s running around town, but nothing that can kill you. If you want to, we can both go get tested, and if the results are negative, I’ll stop using a condom. For now it’s a good idea for both our protection.”

“I know, but you only brought a 6-pack of condoms with you!”

“Six times is about my limit, I’m not 18 you know!”

Nancy pouted, but then realized that 6 times with Bugsie was worth a whole night with her other lovers. Bugsie had a lot of stamina for a middle-aged man! She made him breakfast and drove him to work just in time to meet up with Al. Bugsie stepped out of the car, and Nancy gave him a very passionate kiss, then Bugsie realized she didn’t have anything on under her clothes, and she was only wearing sweat pants and a tee shirt. If he wasn’t exhausted from the previous night, he would have had an embarrassing response to her kisses. She finally broke the clinch and said “See you at my place, 6:00 tonight?”

“Sure Nancy, bye - I gotta go to work now.”

Nancy got back into the car and drove away.

“Well Stud, I see you and Nancy hit it off - she almost never invites guys back to her place after the first night.”

“She said she was going to stop seeing other guys, and wants me to stop wearing a condom.”

“You both better get tested. I’ll give you the name of a good clinic where they do all the tests, and they’re 100% anonymous. They issue you a number, and you call in with that number for your results.”

“Can they mail it - I’d like to see Nancy’s results before I stop using a condom.”

“They have an anonymous mail drop for that - you might want to suggest to her you both use the mail drop option.”

They only worked a half-day on Saturday, so they took the rest of the afternoon and goofed off. Once they’d showered and changed into clean clothes, Al drove Bugsie to the neighborhood shooting range, rented a Colt 1911 and Bugsie paid for 100 rounds of practice ammo. They rented 2 lanes, put their eye and ear protection on, and took their targets out to the range. Al explained that this was a 25-yard range, which was about the farthest you wanted to shoot someone with a pistol. Al showed Bugsie how to load and unload the gun, how to operate the controls, and explained aiming and marksmanship to him. This was familiar to Bugsie, who had to go through all this to get a license for his Taser pistol. Finally, he took a firing grip on the gun, raised it to the target, and the sights were perfectly aligned with the bullseye. He squeezed the trigger, and the trigger broke, but nothing happened. Bugsie remembered that Al didn’t give him a loaded mag just yet -he wanted him to do what he called “Dry firing” first. He cocked the hammer just like Al told him, and did it 20 more times. When Al was confident, he handed Bugsie a loaded mag, and Bugsie slammed the mag home, yanked the slide back and let it fly just like a pro, and lowered the muzzle to the low ready position. He turned to Al, said “Ready.” and Al nodded.

Bugsie raised the barrel until the front sight was just below the bullseye, and the sights were aligned. He squeezed the trigger like before, and the gun pushed back like Al said it would. When he checked the target, his first round was in the bullseye. Getting permission from Al, he quickly put the other 6 rounds into the bullseye from 15 feet away. Bugsie had a big grin on his face, and Al told him to try it again, except this time from 15 yards away. Bugsie hit a switch, and the target reel moved the target to the 15-yard line. The bullseye was harder to see now, but he could still see it clearly. He loaded a fresh magazine, stuffed it in the magazine well, cycled the action, and brought the pistol up from low ready, and put 5 rounds in the bullseye, and 2 out, but his group was much bigger. He kept it up until he’d fired all 100 rounds. When they were finished, Al asked Bugsie if he wanted a new gun. Bugsie looked surprised and scared until Al assured him that it was a simple cash transaction, like buying clothes. No permit or ID needed for semiauto pistols. He said he’d like a gun just like the one he shot.

They walked up to the counter, and the proprietor showed him 3 Colt 1911's. They all carried 7 rounds, but they had different barrel lengths and were made from different materials. Bugsie chose the one with the 5 inch barrel and the brushed stainless finish. The proprietor suggested that he get an undercover holster and 2 spare mags for it. Bugsie asked how much, and the

owner said he'd throw in 100 rounds of defensive JHP ammo, 3 spare mags, an undercover holster, 3 mag carriers, and all for \$50. Bugsie looked like a kid in the candy store, and handed the proprietor his paycheck since he didn't have time to cash it. The proprietor showed him where to endorse the check, gave him \$200 in 50's, and the gun, cleaning kit and magazine that came with it, plus 3 spares, the holster and mag carriers. Bugsie thanked him, and his feet barely touched the ground all the way back to Al's car.

Once they got home, Al showed him how to wear the holster and magazines so you weren't obviously carrying. Since he was right handed, Al had him put the holster behind his right hip, and the mags behind his left hip, inside his waistband. When he tightened the belt, he could feel the holster locking in place. He reached back with his right hand, and it naturally rested on the butt of his gun. He took everything out, loaded all 4 mags, stuck the mag in the gun, loaded the chamber, then topped off the magazine. Al told him the best way to carry a 1911 was cocked and locked.

That night, Al dropped him off a Nancy's, and said he'd see him Monday at 0800 for work, then drove off. Nancy greeted him in her bathrobe just like before, and he took it from there. By Sunday afternoon, he was as tired and sore as he had ever been. Nancy was glowing, seems someone had finally managed to satisfy her sexually. She thought that it would be even better if Bugsie didn't have to wear a condom, so she suggested it to him. He told her about the clinic Al recommended, and the mail drop. She said she'd do it Monday afternoon after work.

Bugsie turned to her and said "Nancy, I love making love to you, but there's no way I can do what I did last night and work the next day - you're going to have to calm down and enjoy it instead of demanding more and more - I can't keep up that pace - I'll be 42 next year."

Nancy told him that she'd just turned 21, which was the minimum legal age for everything in Illinois, and she wanted to make up for lost time.

"Dear, you have your whole life ahead of you to experience sex - you don't have to get it all in 1 day."

Nancy cried and said she was sorry, but she also never wanted Bugsie to leave her.

"I'm not going anywhere."

"That's not what I meant. I don't want to get married, but I want to live with you and have sex every night."

"Ok, as long as it's only once or twice a night."

"And 3 times on Saturday?"

"Maybe if you're a good little girl! Guess this means I'll have to buy a car - Al was giving me a ride everywhere."

"If we live together, between our incomes we can afford a nicer apartment too!"

“Ok, let’s wait for the tests first - I’m not in any hurry, besides I’ve got to save my money to buy a car.”

“Why, the car lot takes payments. They only charge 2% interest. You can pay them weekly or monthly depending on how you get paid.”

“I gotta see how much all this is going to cost me - I’m only bringing in \$250 per week.”

“I’m lucky if I bring home \$200, must be nice to be a sanitary engineer?”

“Don’t know - Al got me the job.”

“That’s how it always works. My ex-roommate got me the job and the apartment when she moved out. I can barely afford it myself, but as you can see - it makes entertaining easier.”

“How much you paying for this apartment?”

“The landlord’s charging \$50 per month, but we can get a much nicer 2 bedroom 2 bath unit with built-ins for \$75 per month.”

Nancy finally decided she was hungry, and got out of bed. Seeing her nude body made Bugsie wish he could do it again, but he was too pooped to pop. She slipped back into her robe, and made brunch. Bugsie decided that now would be a good time for a shower, and he better make it a cold shower! After brunch they sat on the couch and talked. Bugsie was having a hard time keeping track of the conversation because Nancy wasn’t wearing anything besides her bathrobe. Finally he told Nancy that as much as he liked ogling her body, if she put some clothes on, he might be able to carry on an intelligent conversation. She leaned forward seductively, letting her robe fall open, and gave him a passionate kiss. Finally she climbed off and went into the bedroom to put on some sweats. When she came back, he was drinking ice water and mopping sweat off his brow. Bugsie thought “This girl’s gonna kill me - but what a way to go!”

Chapter 4 - The Adventure Begins

Nancy dropped Bugsie off at work Monday morning, and after work, Al took him to the clinic where Bugsie peed into a bottle and they took a blood test. He requested the mail drop service, and they said he'd have his results in the mail within a week.

Bugsie told Al he wanted a new car, he was thinking of moving in with Nancy. Al told him he needed some phoney ID's to get into the system, and he knew the people who could do it, for \$100. He would get an out-of-state Driver's license so he could get an Illinois Driver's license, and a baptismal certificate, which would be easier to fake than a birth certificate. He asked about a Social Security Card or a National ID card. Al said they never heard of those, and the Driver's license served as his ID card. He handed Al 2 50's, and Al said he'd get them in a couple of days. The next day after work, Al took Bugsie to a nondescript location, where someone took his picture, and 5 minutes later, he had a false Florida Driver's license good enough to get an Illinois Driver's License, and a phony baptismal certificate in his real name to back it up. The forger stayed behind the bright lights, so Bugsie wisely said "thanks" and left. They drove over to the DMV, and he surrendered his Florida license, and they gave him a Illinois Driver's license without a test. They didn't even ask for the baptismal certificate. Once they were outside, he asked Al why they got the baptismal certificate if they didn't need it.

"If you want to get married in a church, you'll need one. Better to have 1 now while I knew a good forger, instead of waiting until later and not being able to locate 1. Next we go to the bank and open an account for you, then the post office to get a PO box for your mail."

"I don't have any mail, what do I need a PO Box for?"

"If you're getting an apartment, you'll have bills. Besides it's part of the process of building up a fictitious ID. Now you'll have the Driver's License, Bank account, PO Box, and an apartment all in the same name."

"Except this is my real name!"

"You weren't born here, so you needed a good false ID to start the paper chase. If you need to establish credit, and they don't have any on you, you can show them the baptismal certificate as proof of residence in Florida. No one checks too closely, because if you don't pay your bills, the least that will happen to you is they'll kneecap you."

"Why would they do that, what about bankruptcy laws?"

"They don't exist. The Families own all the banks, so if you loan money, you're borrowing it from the Families, and they either get paid, or you go to the hospital."

"I'll keep that in mind."

On the way home, Bugsie opened an account using his new driver's license and baptismal certificate, and made a \$50 deposit to open the account. They stopped off at the Post Office on the way home and opened a PO Box. Bugsie was tired from all the running around, and called

Nancy, and asked for a raincheck. When he told her all he did that day, she reluctantly agreed, but told him to make sure he was at her place tomorrow at 6:00. Al fixed dinner, and Bugsie was asleep an hour after dinner. The next day he was in better shape for work, good thing because they were running Al's residential route. On the way home after work, Al took him to a used car lot, where he bought a 4 year old Ford Sedan for \$1000.00. Since he worked for the city, and received \$250 per week, they arranged 12 monthly payments of 92 dollars that he could pay weekly or monthly. He told the owner of the lot where he worked, and he said he'd work it out with his boss at work to deduct the payment from his weekly paycheck. They shook hands, and Al drove off with a new car. He drove to Nancy's at 6:00 that night, and she was more than eager. He told her he got a new car, and she said it would have to wait for morning.

Bugsie drove himself to work the next morning, and checked the PO Box on his way home. There was a letter from the clinic in his box. He opened it, and he read that he was 100% clean. He hoped Nancy's report would come back the same as his. That night she showed him her report, and he celebrated by tossing the remaining condoms in her drawer before she tore his clothes off. The next morning she told him that she hated it when guys wore condoms with her, it didn't feel right. Later, she said that the landlord had said that there was an apartment in the building for rent for \$75 per month. It was a 2-room, 2-bath apartment with washer and dryer. All you had to pay for was phone, gas and electricity. Heat and hot water were provided in the rent. He told Nancy to ask the landlord if they could see it Saturday morning. On Friday, he got another check and it was for \$227, with a note that \$23 went to Luigi's Auto Sales.

He had just enough time after quitting time to make it to the bank, where they cashed his check since it would take 2 weeks to get his new checks in. He drove over to Nancy's, who for once instead of greeting him in her bathrobe announced that dinner was ready. He thought "This is a switch!" and sat down to eat. She brought a plate of lasagne, a loaf of garlic bread, and a tossed Italian Salad to share. On the table was a straw-wrapped bottle of an Italian red wine. After his first bite of the lasagne, he realized that Nancy was a great cook too. He was glad of that, because he was going to need his energy around her. After dinner, they showered together, and laid in bed. "What's up? Not that I'm complaining, but every other time you met me at the door and attacked me."

"I decided if we were going to live together, we should act like a normal couple, instead of a lovers looking for a 1-night stand. I'll have plenty of opportunities to make love to you. I just felt that if you were well fed you wouldn't pass out on me!"

"Good point, what time are we supposed to see the apartment tomorrow?"

"He said 9 o'clock. Since I'm already a tenant, all he needs is the first month's rent, or \$75.00. I want to pay for half of everything. 50/50 right down the middle. If I wasn't paying my way, I'd feel like a whore instead of a lover."

"You won't get any arguments from me. I'm paying for the car myself, since it's in my name."

"Sure, I was talking about the rent and household expenses. Since we work different schedules, we needed 2 cars anyways."

They held each other, and made love slowly and deliberately that night. Bugsie actually preferred the slower more relaxed pace, and judging by her response, Nancy did too.

The next morning at 9 o'clock, they met the landlord, who opened the apartment to show them. It had brand-new carpet and a fresh coat of paint. Like Nancy told him, it was a two bedroom, two bath apartment with a huge master suite and a smaller 2nd bedroom. The kitchen was large and well-appointed with a gas range/oven combination, a frost-free refrigerator/freezer, microwave, and dishwasher. In an alcove behind a pocket door was a full-size washer and gas dryer. He checked, and the range was gas, which he preferred. In the Master Bedroom, there was a window-mount AC unit mounted high into the wall, but low enough to reach the controls. Realizing cold air sinks, Bugsie thought that was a smart move. The shower stall was easily big enough for the both of them, and the fixtures were clean and in good condition. The landlord handed them a walk-through form to note any deficiencies, since anything over normal wear and tear not noted on this form would be their responsibility, and deducted from their security deposit.

Bugsie asked him if the rent was month to month, or lease. He said that it was \$75 per month on a month to month basis. Bugsie asked him how much of a discount he'd give them for a 6-month lease with the first month paid in advance. The landlord said he didn't do 6-month leases, but if he was willing to sign a year lease, he'd reduce the rent to \$65 per month. He looked at Nancy, who was vigorously nodding her head. Bugsie told the landlord that they were interested in the 1-year lease for \$65/month. The landlord opened his briefcase, pulled out some different forms, and filled them out on the kitchen table while they checked the apartment over with a fine-tooth comb. Since it was still winter, there was no way to check if the air conditioning worked, and noted that on the form. He found a few other things, and noted them as well. They were minor, but stuff added up.

When they were finished, Bugsie asked about heating during the winter. The landlord explained he had a boiler in the basement and they had floor registers in all the rooms that they shouldn't block. The heat during the winter, and the hot water year round were free. They needed to make their own arrangements for electricity, gas and phone. They were all connected right now, but if they weren't transferred within a week, they would be automatically disconnected. The landlord handed them a list of the utilities, and their contact numbers. Bugsie and Nancy signed the lease, and Bugsie gave the landlord \$65 cash, and got a receipt. He gave them 2 sets of keys, and 2 parking spaces in front of their building. Nancy hugged Bugsie right in front of the landlord, so he took that as his cue to leave. Bugsie reached over and shook his hand, and asked when the next month's rent was due. "It's due by the first of every month, unless the first is a Sunday, then it's due the next business day. You can pay in person, or mail the payment to the address on the form I gave you for the property management company. If there's anything else?"

"Nope, thanks."

They spent the rest of the day moving Nancy's furniture from her apartment downstairs to their upstairs apartment. Bugsie was glad he had a strong back. After they finished, Nancy gave him a back massage, and a little more. Dinner would have to wait.

The next morning, Nancy was cleaning up, and putting his pants on the dresser when she discovered his gun. She shrugged her head since almost everyone went armed around Illinois, and

folded his pants over a chair. Bugsie said they needed to go shopping since there wasn't a lot of food in the house. Nancy agreed, and they took Bugsie's car to the grocery store. For a little over \$100, they got several months worth of food, since they both liked to have food in reserve, and they had the money. She told Bugsie to pay her \$31.00, and she'd pay the balance, since she owed him \$37.50 for half the rent. When they got home, they stocked the shelves and Nancy made dinner while Bugsie cleaned the apartment. Since they had dragged in so much stuff, the place needed vacuuming, so he did a quick vacuum and dust while she made another pan of lasagne.

After Dinner, they took showers, and Nancy told Bugsie to wait in bed with the lights on, she had a surprise for him. 10 minutes later, she strutted into the bedroom, hit Play on the CD player, and started doing a strip tease. Bugsie was definitely enjoying the show.

STIMPY....STIMPY JONES - WAKE YOUR LAZY BUTT UP. YOU'RE LATE FOR SCHOOL!!!

“Whaaaa? Oh Jeese Mom, you ruined a perfectly good dream!”

“IF YOU'RE LATE AGAIN, IT WILL BE THE 4TH TIME THIS WEEK. IF YOU FLUNK ENGLISH AGAIN, YOU'LL NEVER GET OUT OF 10TH GRADE.”

“Alright already, I'm up. Where's my clothes?”

“On the pile next to your bed. I made your lunch for you.”

Stimpy got up, dressed in ripped jeans a dirty tee shirt and a baseball cap. Glancing in the mirror, he remembered why the kids called him “Pizza Face”. He sighed grabbed his books, keys, and his lunch, and trudged out to his 15-year old two-tone Vega Hatchback. After a brief struggle, he got the door open, pushed aside some McDonald's wrappers, and sat in the seat. After cranking for what seemed an eternity, the car started. He reached over, and pushed in his 8-track player, and turned up the volume. He drove down the street to school followed by a cloud of blue smoke, with “Bohemian Rhapsody” blaring from the speakers as his head bobbed to the music.

The End