

KICKSHAWS

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~ UPPING THE ANTE

Bill Brandt read somewhere that the word “up” is one of the most versatile words in the English language. Here is his write up about it:

“I started thinking about how many ways “up” can be used. Sometimes it comes at the start of a phrase, such as “up and coming”, but in most cases it acts like a suffix, such as “catch up.” Sometimes it acts as a directional modifier, such as in “stand up.” Sometimes it acts an intensifier, such as in “fix up.” (Is fixing up a car any different from just fixing it?) While other times it creates an unrelated meaning, such as in “what have you been up to?” There are even some redundancies, such as “raise up.” For some words it provides different meanings, for example “wind”. To “wind up” a toy is different from to “wind up” a speech. The word “strike” is even more versatile. You can “strike up” a conversation, “strike up” a deal, and “strike up” the band. I began compiling a list of how “up” can be used besides as a direction indicator. When I reached a little over 200 examples I stopped. I am sure the total list could be much longer. Instead, I made up the following story that used as many variations of up as I could squeeze in.”

What’s Up

This morning, since I feel UP to it, I will face UP to it and drop you a line to let you know what I have been UP to so you can catch UP on what has happened.

It clouded UP this morning and started to rain but it is supposed to clear UP and brighten UP this afternoon. After things dry UP I will hurry UP and try to start UP the car so I can be UP and about and get something to eat and maybe a Seven-UP. I seemed to have worked UP quite an appetite. Last week I had it UP to here with my old beat UP pick UP

truck. When I went to warm it UP, I discovered the gas line was stopped UP. The local mechanic did a bang UP job when he fixed UP the truck and gave it a tune UP, but when I saw the bill he wrote UP it raised UP my blood pressure. I was burned UP and thinking of suing him but I don't think my case would hold UP in court.

I do not know if this is the right time to bring it UP, but there is a young upstart here who popped UP out of nowhere and is always dressed UP to the nines. He thinks he is an UP and coming politician but I don't know where he dreamed UP that idea. He is very UP front about it and seems to think that office is UP for grabs. I don't think he is UP to snuff or UP to the task; nevertheless, he is UP for election. UP to now he has been trying build UP his reputation and lock UP the votes by making a lot of speeches. His style is to stand UP, speak UP, speed UP, and then shut UP. It makes some people sit UP and take notice. He seems to have a lot of campaign money, but if you look close UP it doesn't appear to be on the UP and UP. Some people here are UP in arms about it. They plan to team UP and call UP their friends. I don't think they want to stir UP any trouble, they just want people to wise UP and wake UP about what is going on.

I may have messed UP and screwed UP earlier because the last endeavor I cooked UP has gone belly UP. Now I am UP in the air and UP against it as to what to do next. I certainly don't want to give UP. I guess it is UP to me to shape UP and think UP what to do next. One idea I came UP with is if I can line UP a good location and can strike UP a deal I can open UP a small shop. I want to create something that is UP to date, but which does not take UP a lot of time. One idea I came UP with is to sell wind UP toys for one dollar and UP. I think if there is a market for something like that I could rack UP some dough and really clean UP.

Listen UP, I know this is not a long letter, but it is time for me to wrap it UP. Now don't get riled UP and don't start UP with me. I would like to write more but my time is UP and I have to pack it UP. I am off to see the movie "UP".

F.Y.I. – This is a partial list of “up” uses.

And up	The fowers cost one dollar and up.
Brighten up	The weather has started to brighten up.
Back up	Be sure to back up your computer files.
Bang up	he worked hard and did a bang up job
Batter up	You are the next batter up.
Beat up	The car wasn't that old but it sure looked beat up.
Beef up	I think we should beef up the castle's defenses.
Belly up	His auto repair business has gone belly up.
Blow up	When he hears the bad news he is going to blow up.
Break up	They were a nice couple so I don't see why they had to break up.
Bring it up	Why didn't you bring it up during the meeting?
Brush up	My French is a little rusty so I will have to brush up.

Buck up	Buck up son, things are not that bad.
Build up	You can't build up your muscles if you don't exercise.
Burn up	The house burned up in less than an hour.
Bust up	The police arrived and busted up the card game.
Butter up	He is trying to butter up the boss and ask for a raise.
Button up	It is cold outside so be sure to button up your coat.
Buy up	They tried to buy up all the surrounding properties.
Call up	Call up your friends and tell them about the party.
Came up	We were just chatting when the topic came up.
Canned up	He was canned up in that room for 48 hours.
Catch up	I have been away and need to catch up on my mail.
Caught up	He was on the run but the law finally caught up with him.
Cheer up	Cheer up, things could be a lot worse.
Chin up	Keep your chin up and don't be discouraged.
Choke up	He became emotional and got all choked up about it.
Clam up	He decided to clam up and not to say anything.
Clean up	When I sold that stock I really cleaned up.
Clear up	We think the weather will clear up tomorrow.
Climb up	You better climb up out of that hole.
Come up with	What did you come up with during your research?
Close up	If you look close up you can see it.
Close up	It's getting late so we better close up the store.
Cloud up	The weather started to cloud up in the afternoon.
Cook up	What kind of crazy idea did he cook up now?
Cooped up	I was cooped up in that house all day.
Cough up	He said I owed him the money so I had to cough up ten dollars.
Crack up	He was driving too fast and he cracked up the car.
Cuddle up	Come a little closer and let's cuddle up.
Cut up	In history class he was a real cut up.
Dig up	Look through the old newspapers and see what you can dig up.
Draw up	I asked the lawyer to draw up a new will.
Dream up	I wish I could dream up a better way to do it.
Dress up	She was all dressed up for the party.
Drive up	I am going to drive up to his place tomorrow.
Dry up	The rain is going to dry up in another hour.
Dry up	You talk too much and I just wish you would dry up.
Dust up	It started as argument and ended up in a dust up.
Ease up	You should ease up on him and not be so hard nosed.
Eat it up	She gets a lot of flattery and she just eats it up.
Face up	Face up to it you have a real problem.
Fed up	I am fed up with all your excuses.
Feeling up	I was feeling sick and was not feeling up to it.
Fess up	It is time to fess up and admit you did it.
Fix up	He said he could fix up my car for less than five hundred dollars.
Flare up	He has quite a temper and it could flare up at anytime.
Fog up	He is just trying to confuse everyone and fog up the issue.

Follow up	You should follow up on that lead for your story.
Frame up	It was a frame up because I didn't take anything.
Gang up	It wasn't a fair fight because they all ganged up on me.
Geared up	We were geared up and ready to go by noon.
Get up	I have to get up at 6 AM.
Get up	Where did that get up she's wearing come from?
Give up	This is not the time to give up.
Ginned up	He ginned it up with spare parts from other cars.
Grow up	Its about time you grow up and start to act like an adult.
Gum up	If he is not careful he is going to gum up the operation.
Ham it up	He was a good actor but he liked to ham it up.
Hard up	I am pretty hard up these days and sure could use a loan.
Head up	She was picked to head up the new office.
Heat up	It didn't take long for the argument to heat up.
High up	His house was located high up in the mountains.
Hoist up	It's time to hoist up the anchor and set sail for Jamica.
Hold up	It was a weak case and it wouldn't hold up in court.
Hold up	There is a hold up going on at the bank right now!
Hopped up	He was acting as if he was hopped up on drugs.
Hurry up	Hurry up or you are going to be late.
Jig is up	If they catch him cheating the jig is up.
Keyed up	He was so keyed up he couldn't eat.
Lay up	We need to lay up some supplies for the winter.
Lift up	Lift up the lid on the pot and see if the water is boiling.
Line up	See if you can line up his vote.
Listen up	Listen up I am only going to tell you once.
Lock up	Before you leave on your trip lock up the door.
Lock up	Start going door to door and see if we can lock up some votes.
Look up	You can look up the word in the dictionary.
Made up	That is the truth and not something I just made up.
Mark up	You can mark up the contract with your comments.
Match up	It was quite a match up since they were both good players.
Meet up	Where did you meet up with Tom?
Mess up	On my first day at work I messed up.
Mix up	There was a big mix up at the stadium and we couldn't find him.
Mount up	Find your horse and mount up.
Move up	He got a promotion and was able to move up.
Offer up	He offered up his resignation.
On the up and up	I don't think his actions are on the up and up.
Open up	What time does your shop open up?
Open up	Let's open up a bakery.
Pack it up	It's time to pack it up and leave.
Paid up	As of today all my bills are paid up.
Pent up	She's harboring a lot of pent up emotions.
Pick up	He wants to buy a new pick up truck.
Pile up	You better pay those bills before they start to pile up.

Pipe up	Don't be afraid to pipe up if you have something to say.
Pop up	No one knew where he was, he just popped up out of nowhere.
Pull up	Pull up to the curb.
Put up	He didn't put up with it.
Put up	They put up the house in ten days.
Rack up	When I play poker I usually rack up a lot of money.
Raise up	He sure doesn't know how to raise up his children.
Raise up	At sunrise we usually raise up the flag.
Ratchet up	Ratchet up the pressure and see if he will talk.
Read up	You can read up about it in the newspaper.
Rest up	After I rest up I will get started again.
Riled up	He got all upset and riled up about it.
Ring up	See if you can ring him up on the phone.
Ripped up	The newspaper was pretty well ripped up after the dog got it.
Roll up	Be careful when you roll up the ancient scroll.
Round up	I need you to help me round up the horses.
Runner up	He was hoping to win but he was only the runner up.
Scrape up	Do you think you can scrape up that much money?
Scare up	Can you scare up some eggs because I am really hungry.
Scrounge up	See if you can scrounge up some eggs.
Scoop up	Use your mitt to scoop up the ball.
Screwed up	His mistake screwed up everything.
Shake up	Business was bad so there will be a big shake up in the office.
Shape up	If you don't shape up and start working you'll be fired.
Sharpen up	You will have to sharpen up your offer if you want me to sell it.
Shoot up	The cowboy got drunk and then began to shoot up the bar.
Shut up	Shut up before you say something stupid.
Sign up	Where do I sign up to enlist?
Sit up	It's time to sit up and take notice.
Size up	I can size up that guy just by looking at him.
Slip up	Do it right this time and don't slip up.
Snap it up	Snap it up or we are going to be late.
Start up	Be sure to fasten your seat belt before you start up the car.
Start up	I am tired now so don't start up with me.
Speak up	Speak up or you won't be heard.
Speed up	If you don't speed up we won't catch him.
Stack up	I don't know how he will stack up against the competition.
Stand up	It is time to stand up and be counted.
Stick up	I don't know why you always have to stick up for him.
Stir up	He tried to use his speech to stir up the crowd.
Stood up	I went to the church to be married but I was stood up at the alter.
Stopped up	The drain was stopped up all day.
Straighten up	It is time for you to straighten up your room.
Strike up a conversation	It is not easy to strike up a conversation with strangers.
Strike up a deal	If we can come to an agreement we can strike up a deal.
Strike up the band	We are waiting for the conductor to strike up the band.

Stuck up	She is both stuck up and arrogant.
Stock up	We are getting low so be better stock up on supplies.
Summon up	Just summon up your courage and jump in.
Sweep up	After you dust the furniture you can sweep up the garage.
Take up	I hope I did not take up too much of your time.
Take up	Take it up with the judge.
Talk up	Try to talk up his good points.
Team up	If we team up we can beat him.
Tear up	I was hoping the policeman would tear up the ticket.
Think up	It is time to think up some new ideas.
Throw up	He was feeling seasick and about to throw up.
Thumbs up	He was OK and gave us the thumbs up.
Tidy up	I think it is about time for you to tidy up your room.
Tie up	That accident is going to tie-up traffic for hours.
Tie up	Can you tie up that package for me?
Time is up	The time is up for you to answer my question.
Toughen up	He will toughen up when he goes to boot camp.
Trumped up	The charges against him were trumped up.
Tune up	My car is in serious need of a tune up.
Turn up	Let's just keep going and see what will turn up.
Up against it	The problem got worse and now I am up against it.
Up ahead	Up ahead there is a fork in the road.
Up and about	It is time for me to be up and about.
Up and coming	He is an up and coming actor.
Up and down	He knew the subject up and down.
Up and quit	He just up and quit his job.
Up and up	His election was not on the up and up.
Up close	If you look up close you cans see it.
Up coming	He will be a candidate in the up coming election.
Up for discussion	That topic is not up for discussion.
Up for election	He is up for election.
Up for it	He is ready and he is up for it.
Up for grabs	There is not much competition so it is up for grabs.
Up front	He was very honest and up front about it.
Up in arms	They are up in arms about the new taxes.
Up in the air	After the accident he was up in the air about what to do.
Up the ante	During the negotiation he decided to up the ante.
Up the creek	After that mistake he was up the creek without a paddle.
Up through the ranks	He was a colonel who came up through the ranks.
Up to	What have you been up to these days?
Up to date	His resume is not up to date.
Up to here	I have had it up to here with his excuses.
Up to his eyeballs	He is up to his eyeballs in trouble.
Up to me	It's up to me to do it.
Up to now	Up to now everything was fine.
Up to scratch	This article is not up to scratch.

Up to snuff	His writing is not up to snuff.
Up to speed	You only have two weeks to come up to speed.
Up to the minute	When you call give me the up to the minute information.
Up to the task	He is new but he is up to the task.
Use up	For the picnic we used up all the paper plates.
Wait up	Don't wait up for me I won't be home until very late.
Wake up	It's time to wake up and smell the roses.
Walk up	I live in a four story walk up apartment.
Warm up	It is cold outside so you better warm up the car.
Wash up	Wash up before you come in for lunch.
Washed up	His career is all washed up.
What's up	Just thought I would call and let you know what's up.
Whip up	Can you whip up a new story for me?
Wind up	After four hours it was time to wind up the speech.
Wind up	Don't wind up the toy too tight.
Wise up	You better wise up because nobody likes a smarty pants.
Worked up	After working all day he worked up an appetite.
Wrap up	The work is done so let's wrap it up and go home
Wrap up	Can you wrap up this package for me?
Write up	Can you write up the report by tomorrow?
Zip up	Zip up your sweater because it is getting cold.

~ ANSWERS THEN QUESTIONS

Bill "saw some new 'Answers then Questions' in the latest Word Ways which got me to thinking about some of the ones I had heard before. If any of these seem "new", please consider them as a Kickshaws submission." [They all seem new to me—DM.]

Answers

Questions

fig-newton	What type of tree is that, Peter?
gingersnaps	If your dog Ginger does not bite, what does she do?
plum-bob	What is that purple fruit your are eating, Harriet?
Toulouse-Lautrec	What caused the Paris subway to derail?
Washington Irving	Who was our first president, Harry?
hornbill	What is more important the horn or the break, Bob?
Eskimo Curley?	What are your two favorite letters in the alphabet,
salt peter	What is your favorite condiment, Paul?

Dr. Livingston I presume.

What is your full name, Dr. Presume?

forensics

What two numbers add up to six?

~ ACCORDIAN WORDS REVISITED

Bill says “I enjoyed Rich Lederer’s article on Accordion Words and have some questions about the concept.

“Can nouns where the plural and singular forms are the same be considered as Accordion Words (similar to the Accordion Word “man”)? Examples would be “sheep” and “fish.” As in (1) all sheep have wool, (2) those sheep are blocking the road, (3) my pet sheep “Hamlet” won first prize at the county fair.

Can “law” be considered as an Accordion Word? For example (1) the law of the land, and (2) what law did he break.

How about the word “Yankee”?

In the world, a Yankee is someone from the United States.

In the United States, a Yankee is someone north of the Mason Dixon Line.

North of the Mason Dixon Line, a Yankee is someone from New England.

In New England, a Yankee is someone from Vermont.

In Vermont, a Yankee is someone who has apple pie for breakfast.

And in Cooperstown, New York, a Yankee is someone who pays for the American League.”

~ THREE’S A CROWD

Anil wants to know if you can solve this timely rebus:

Eee!

~ BINGO LINGO

Susan Thorpe has come up with a form of poetry based on one of the most well-known and widely-played games of all. As she describes it, “Here is a collection of Bingo calls pasted together in verse form.. The Bingo numbers they represent are shown in brackets.”

Two fat ladies (88), over weight (28),
Knock at the door (4). Make them wait! (58)

Dirty Gertie (30), clean the floor (54).
Dirty knee (33) – red raw (64).

Two little ducks (22) up to tricks (46)

Get up and run (31) between the sticks (86).

Tickle me (63) one more time (79).

Cup of tea (3), rise and shine (29).

Man alive (5), stuck in the tree! (53)

Time for fun (41), thee and me (23).

Clickety click (66), garden gate (8).

Gateway to heaven (27), heaven's gate (78).

Coming of age (18), young and keen (15),

Goodbye teens (19), dancing queen (17).

Down on your knees (43), strive and strive (75).

Old age pension? (65) Staying alive! (85)

Heinz varieties (57), more than eleven (37).

Half a century (50) + lucky seven (7).

~ WALKING

"I do a lot of walking here in the rolling Chiltern hills near Chequers, the Prime Minister's residence," Susan writes, "and this prompted a thought... when is a walk not a walk? The answer, of course, is when you do it two days running, on the trot!"

~ MORE PHONETIC VOWEL ROTATIONS

Jeremy Morse comments on Susan's "Phonetic Vowel Rotations" on p155 of the previous Word Ways:

"The classic example without spelling variance is MATE-METE-MITE-MOTE-MUTE. Equivalent examples for short vowels include the 3-letter BAG-BEG-BIG-BOG-BUG and 7-letter PATTING-PETTING-PITTING-POTTING-PUTTING (golf). At the opposite extreme BAIT-BEET-BIGHT-BOAT-BEAUT-BYTE has six varieties of spelling. I can't find a complete matching example with short vowels, but... -WHEN-WIN-WAN-WON has four varieties. Standing the exercise on its head, MORTAR - TIMER-TAPIR-TUTOR-MURMUR-MARTYR shows all six vowels producing the same (unstressed) sound."

~ ANOTHER SILLY LOVE SONG?

I've made up fewer than 10 jokes in my life. Recently, I came up with the 10th, which is slightly off-color:

Singer Paul Simon was lying in bed waiting for his wife to join him. She surprised him by dressing in a very skimpy pair of red panties with a white ruffle around them, which she'd bought from Victoria's Secret. "How do you like my new nighty, honey?" she asked seductively. Paul replied, "Oh, that's just another frilly love thong."

~ WORD WAYS WRITER SCAMMED

I received a strange email from the email address of a regular Word Ways writer. The email was obviously a scam by someone who'd gotten a hold of the writer's address book. I haven't heard from the writer since the email exchange below (and thus I'm keeping the writer's name anonymous). Meanwhile, here is how the correspondence went between the scammer and me.

SCAMMER:

I'm writing this with tears in my eyes,my fam and I came down here to London,England for a short vacation unfortunately we were mugged at the park of the hotel where we stayed,all cash,credit card and cell were stolen off us but luckily for us we still have our passports with us.

We've been to the embassy and the Police here but they're not helping issues at all and our flight leaves in less than 3hrs from now but we're having problems settling the hotel bills and the hotel manager won't let us leave until we settle the bills.

DAVE:

This is terrible. Was anyone hurt? It's a good thing you still have your passports. Things would be much worse without them. The last time I was jumped, I got punched in the face three times, and my jaw hurt for a month. I hope you get your flight.

Ironically, when I read your email, I kept waiting for a punch line that would tie everything together, as you do sometimes in your writing. But this time, it was for real!

Best of luck to you, and let me know what happens.

SCAMMER:

Am freaked out at the moment. Glad you replied back,I have nothing left on me right now and am lucky to have my life and passport with me it would have been worse if they had made away with my passport.

Well all i need now is just \$2,350 you can have it wired to my name via Western Union i'll have to show my passport as ID to pick it up here and i promise to pay you back as soon as i get back home. Here's my info below. [Scammer included the address of a hotel in London.]

DAVE:

I'll wire you \$3000. I'm going to the local Hy-Vee, which has Western Union, and get it off to you. I'll come back here and let you know after we wire it.

SCAMMER:

As soon as it has been done, kindly get back to me with the confirmation number. Let me know if you are heading to the Western Union outlet now??.

I owe you a lot

DAVE:

(I waited 20 minutes and then continued the conversation.) We're going in two minutes. The WU is 5 blocks away! It's next to my bank. Which makes everything very convenient. The next email you get from me will be the Western Union confirm #.

SCAMMER

Omg, So sad Coming to read your mail now and getting to find out the transfer have not yet been made across to us. Am really full of panic right now that i can't think of any thing presently but to save my family. Please call the Hotel manager and tell him to stop treating my family like a slave. (Scammer sent a phone number to a hotel in London.)

DAVE:

Don't really be full of panic right now. We'll save your family. I'm going down to Western Union and get that money, and I might even call the Hotel manager and I'll tell him, "Hey, Mr Hotel Manager, stop treating family like slave. Don't be mean. This man is good man. He no like be in danger. He want help. so help. so sad no help isn't there yet. I will get \$5,000 and send to you. I hope it gets fast there.

I do want to help. I have a jar of silver dollars, but I have to get it down to the bank. It is very heavy. I have to get help from someone to lift it and take it to the bank. Maybe I might have to put it in a wheelbarrow and get my landlord to help me push it to the bank. I would push, and he would pick up any dollars that fell off. I think we could make it to my bank in an hour. Is that good enough time for you? I could try calling a cab, but I don't trust cabs. Plus I might find more money on the sidewalk. If you could give me your address, I'll have the bank send the silver dollars to you. They're worth a lot more than face value. So what is your home address?

SCAMMER:

(The scammer sent an address.)

DAVE:

The police are going to be checking out the address you gave. Here's some advice you might wish to have before pulling a stupid scam like this again. First of all, use good English, dumbshit.

SYNONYM TRANSELETION PYRAMID

Anil constructed a complicated piece of wordplay, which is “a transeletion pyramid of all synonyms (loosely speaking), real, coined, or slurred. Quite forced in part, but has anything like it ever been attempted before?”

Here's a transeletion pyramid of all synonyms (loosely speaking), real, coined or slurred. Quite forced in part, but has anything like it ever been attempted before?

BEING (ABSENT) AND NOTHINGNESS

an ill "no sum"
lo, a nil sum
minus all
nullism
nil sum
minus (ie, missing)
mis'n (or, "is un-")
isn'
i'n
'n

The last three lines are dialect, increasingly slurred or lazy renderings of "isn't". Can readers extend it upwards or otherwise improve it? Or find another pyramid of all synonyms or affinities?

~ SHORT VERSE

Jeff Grant sent a three-word poem—“a variant on the old 'Hired. Tired? Fired?' short verse. In this one the internal letters are changed rather than those at the start of the words. No Google hits, so it may be original!”

Visiting the Clinic

Inspection
Infection
Injection.

~ **NEW NEW YORK PALINDROME**

“Strange how the brain works,” Jeff comments. “I was lying in bed listening to the rain this morning when this popped into my head. It may be original this time too! No hits on Google anyway.”

Back Roy went; safe, fast - NEW YORK cab!

~ **OSAMA’S LAST PALINDROME**

~ When 9-11 occurred, I was with my son and a friend of his, and we were watching the continual videos of the planes hitting the buildings. The announcers kept referring to "terrorist" and "retaliation," and in the midst of it all, I made up a palindrome in my head. It appears in an issue of Word Ways that came out after the tragedy. When Osama was killed, I thought about that palindrome again, and I realized I could extend it to include his name. Here is the original, written on 9-11, followed by the new one.

NO, I TAIL A TERRORIST, SIR, OR RETALIATION.

A MASON? O, I TAIL A TERRORIST, SIR, OR RETALIATION: OSAMA.

~ **RHYME TIME**

Here are a few rhymed poems to conclude this Kickshaws. I need more material, gang! For some reason, there weren't many submissions this time.

*

TREASURE HUNTER

I'd like to travel
Around the world
From pathways of gravel
To roads that are pearled,

From highways of silver
To cities of gold,
Where sunlight bedazzled
In days of old.

Yet here I stand
On an asphalt street
With broken bottles
Under my feet.

*

HOW TO COOK A BOOK

Skin the book, remove the spine.
You'll hear a brittle crack.
Pluck the pages line by line
Proceeding front to back.

Grate the cover, salt it up,
Baste the paper in ink.
Butter the words in a measuring cup,
And set it down on the sink.

Peel a ripened ballpoint pen,
A Bic Banana will do.
Slice a pencil, dice the lead,
And sprinkle it over the stew.

Spice erasers with paper clips,
Powder them on a roll.
Pour liquid paper onion dips
Upon the casserole.

Preheat the oven, grease the pan,
Cook at a thousand degrees.
Brown and serve to all your critics:
It's guaranteed to please.

*

THE LINE AT THE BANK

'Twas at the silent, solemn bank
Where cash and credit meet:
I stood in line for half an hour
Upon my own two feet.

And then the line inched up a bit.
The teller, Mrs. Quext,
Was telling tales to Miss O'Toole
Before me. I was next.

But Miss O'Toole, who toiled on tile

All day to earn her dough,
Was telling tales in single file
While standing on my toe.

Then Mrs. Quext commenced to tell
Another tale or two,
While I was trying not to scream
About my flattened shoe.

And Miss O'Toole (upon my toe)
Was toying with her tie.
"Excuse me, Miss," I said to her,
And she said to me: "Why?"

"Because," I gasped and wheezed a bit
And gestured to the floor,
"Because your weight is on my foot:
It's quite hard to ignore."

She ground her shoe into my toe
And turned to tell a tale
To Mrs. Quext about the time
Her husband went to jail.

Although my toe was fully numb
And I was getting vexed,
Dear Miss O'Toole told two more tales
To dear old Mrs. Quext.

And so it seemed that hours passed
Until sweet Mrs. Quext
Said, "Good-bye, Miss O'Toole, good-day.
Young man, I think you're next."

When Miss O'Toole removed her heel
From my poor throbbing toe,
I tried to walk, I tried to kneel:
My foot just wouldn't go.

I tumbled to the floor, that's right,
And I began to whine,
And Mrs. Quext said, "Sorry, sir,
You've lost your place in line."

*

DOUBLE TROUBLE

Tom-Tom Smith Smith, double agent,
Double-crossed the street

Where Bill-Bill Jones-Jones, double agent,
Waited there to meet

Their double-talking lady friend
The gorgeous Lulu Lou,

Who double-dated both of them,
Then double-dumped them, too.

*

YOUNG CLOCKS IN LOVE

At the antique store
I bought a box.
Within it were
Two bedroom clocks
Asleep upon
A bed of socks.

The first one woke
And chimed to say,
“We’re married, sir,
We’d like to stay
Alone in here.
Please go away.”

The second tolled
In bolder tones:
“If you don’t leave,
I’ll break your bones
And make them into
Telephones!”

I said, “Don’t be
Alarmed, young clocks.
I’ll close the lid
And put on locks.”
Then all I heard
Were ticks and tocks.

*

THE HAND

The hand
Is the land
Where a finger
May linger
And a thumb
Can come.

*

FISHY LOVE STORY

A little piranha,
Whose name was Donna,
Swam in a lake
Near a copperhead snake.

The copperhead snake,
Whose name was Jake,
Adored little Donna
And said, "Do you wanna

Be my dear wife
For the rest of your life?"
And Donna Piranha
Said, "Yes I wanna."

So Jake the Snake
Decided to take
The plunge from the tree
Where he hung peacefully.

"I love you, dear Donna,"
He sighed, "and we're gonna
Be married today
By the manta ray

Who lives down the shore
Just a mile or more."
Then Donna cried, "Dear,
We can't, I fear!"

“I really do wanna,”
Said sweet little Donna,
“But only last night
I took a small bite

Of the manta ray—well,
There’s not much to tell.
Oh, don’t think me vicious,
But he was delicious.”

Then swiftly, wise Jake,
The Copperhead Snake,
Slithered to shore
And saw Donna no more.

*

~ THE PET AMOEBEA

I had a tame amoeba,
A single cell at that!
I called her “Little Sheba.”
She slept inside my hat.

I got her at the pet shop.
The price was pretty fair.
She didn’t cost a cent to feed—
She ate what’s in my hair.

She frolicked like a collie
And barked—that’s why I bought her.
She learned to sit and fetch, play dead,
And other tricks I taught her.

She ran away last weekend.
I almost gave up hope,
But found her in my laboratory
Under the microscope.

Then yesterday, guess what?
Little Sheba split in two!
I named the one half Phoebe,
And the other Amy Lou.

Now if they keep on splitting,

You know what I might do?
I'll open up a germ shop
Or start a microbe zoo.

*

COSMIC NIGHT AT THE BAR

My life seemed a little unreal
And my world was out of place,
So I found my way to the local bar
Where I sat down face to face
With a robot, an android, a clone,
And an alien from deep space.

The android was talking genetics
With the clone, who had three lips.
The alien mumbled excitedly
About the lunar eclipse,
The robot was oiling his joints
And scratching his microchips.

I showed them a trick I learned
From my mutant neighbor's son:
I made a quarter disappear
From the napkin it was on.
The clone and the android smiled.
The alien said, "How's it done?"

The robot was coming the wires
In the cabinet in his chest.
From the look he gave me I could tell
He wasn't very impressed.
I said, "Want to see it again?"
He answered, "Surely you jest."

At that remark, I slugged him
And just about busted my fist.
He laughed a harsh metallic laugh
And said, "I think you missed."
The clone asked, "Why did you punch him?"
I said, "I'm a humorist."

"A humorist?" said the robot;
"So that was one of your pranks?
I wish I'd laughed as loud as I could

And given you many thanks.
I, too, have lots of jokes:
They're stored in my humor banks.”

I shouldn't have opened my mouth.
I should've just walked out the door.
Instead, I stayed there at the tavern
Listening to that bore.
He spent the night reciting
A thousand jokes or more.

The clone took off by midnight,
The android left at one,
And the alien flew away at two,
Saying, “Hope you're having fun.”
By three o'clock, I passed out
From some mechanical pun.