

Fly n' Jelly

by Kevin John Phillips

I thought I invented the ultimate profound question: would you rather be invisible, or be able to fly? About a month ago, I heard a radio broadcast of a special they did on that very thing; guess I didn't invent the question after all.

More people chose to be invisible by something like ten to one, and when pressed, most of their motives were embarrassingly sinful. The whole thing is silly, I know, but telling at the same time. Perhaps it's simply a semi-mystery, like Mixed Fruit Jelly. Have you ever seen Mixed Fruit Jelly anywhere but at those independent restaurants off the highway? Is Mixed Fruit Jelly the hot dog of jellies?

But I'm getting off track...not altogether unusual I know...so let's move on. Believe it or not, we'll tie this all together. Pretty sure, anyway.

Last time I took a trip into East Texas, I stopped at a gas station in a little town we'll call...oh, let's call it Petticoat Junction. Just for fun.

The gas station in PJ is halfway to where I regularly visit and a convenient place to stop. They never acknowledge me as a regular - guess my accent still sounds Yankee enough that I don't rank - but it's one easy exit shy of halfway to where I go, so I stop there. It is a funny little town; one that would make a great setting for a slasher movie. I figure they trap tourists, take 'em to a barn where they do unspeakable things with a Husqvarna 3120 XP magnesium crankcase, LowVib, Smart Start chainsaw. I count myself fortunate, so far.

Well, sir, on this last visit — and as soon as I walk in the gas station - I sense something is not right. Todd has this sour look on his face as does the State Trooper standing there.

I say howdy, and that I just need to use the restroom. Todd nods me over to it; I go in and lock the door behind me.

This restroom at Petticoat Junction Gas and Groceries is *the* smallest restroom ever. Keep that in mind, it's important to the story. It's chilly outside but inside the station and bathroom, I'm thinking

it's 84 degrees. Celsius. Think sweating, sticky, clothes. I hear the two men talking about something and then, in a loud voice John Law says...

"Todd you gotta come with me."

"I aint a-gonna, and that's all there is to that." Todd says even louder, and then it's deathly quiet.

Do you enjoy moments like that? Moments that are not funny but if you last through them, you know they'll make a fine story. Profound doesn't have to mean deep, right? Maybe you just learn a lesson — obscure but worth remembering. Perhaps a question that's recently bugged you finally finds its answer. Well...

Listening for a chain saw with one ear and to Todd and the trooper with the other, I'm trying to hustle up and finish my business - sweating in my coat and sweatshirt - and I think this: not so silly now, is it, this invisible or being able to fly choice? Pretty flippin' profound *and* apropos, actually.

Either would be fine, I decide, but unfortunately with my life hanging in the balance, I choose fly. Rather, as I stand up and try to quietly and quickly zip up, my fly chooses me. I learn of a third option for the profound question — the ability to scream until your face turns red, all without making a sound.

Well it's funny and it hurts and that makes it even funnier. Gathering myself up, I fling the door open and - sweaty, a bit hunched over and sporting a funny smile - make for the front door. Keeping a close eye on Todd and the Trooper, I don't see the wire stand and knock it over. A stand of...can you believe it...jars of Mixed Fruit Jelly!

Todd and the Trooper were not quite finished with their business; I'd like to think my adventure actually put their dilemma on pause for a moment. It did long enough for me to head out the door, anyway, and do so while darn well hoping I was a little bit invisible.

