

Urgent, breathers: Pee before reading this novel!

by Mathew Paust

I ain't gonna lie. I mean, don't get me wrong, I do lie. I'm just not lying here. This is too important to dance around the truth with. The truth is my doctor has ordered me, on threat of losing my health insurance coverage, not to read the rest of *I've Been Deader*.

I suppose it's my fault I told her I suffered the hernia while reading the first chapter of *I've Been Deader*.

She'd been looking at me funny as she felt around down there. Finally she said, "You have a very serious laugh hernia. What were you doing when this happened?"

I told her. "Gimme the book," she ordered, giving me a squeeze, which, I must admit, felt both stimulating and agonizing simultaneously (try reading that last sentence real fast eight times).

"No!" I shouted. "Why not?" she said, softening her tone just enough that I felt my resistance begin to slip away. Her hand continued to probe, although more gently now. "B-b-b-because it's an ebook," I half-gasped, half-murmured, and quickly added, "b-b-but I can lend you my Kindle!"

She waved the offer off with her other hand and said she would happily download the book herself. I said, "B-but aren't you afraid you might get a laugh hernia, too?"

She laughed, an ugly laugh, and asked, "How old are you?"

"I just turned 71, I said proudly." Her response? "Ewwwwwww...", and she dropped her hand from its professional ministrations. She snapped, "Nothing personal. I have other patients."

At least I got a prescription for Vicodin out of it, with which, wearing a special truss designed just for laugh hernias, I've been able to continue reading *I've Been Deader*. Sure it hurts, at least three times on every page. But I'm a stubborn cuss, and not afraid to click on the Kindle button that says, "No Contretemps for Old Men."

