

ZOUKI'S LITERARY CHALLENGE 2.0

The following are more openings of short stories that I thought would (in one way or another) make me famous, perhaps even rich, but unfortunately they never progressed beyond the paragraphs you see before you. Maybe you can do something with them; if so, I get 50 percent (including movie royalties). Deal?

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Brett wheeled around with an angry look Tiffany had never seen before. His eyes flashed like tiny quasars; their intensity almost hurt her. "What do you mean, the speckled grebe 'escaped' from the bathtub?" he growled through teeth that were not only clenched, but grinding. How could she answer him? What could she say to win back his love? What was he intending to do with the jar of Cheez Whiz he clutched in his trembling hand?

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"Perhaps, Doctor Horple, you are not aware of the Blartfenkle Phenomenon," said the Professor. He spoke slowly, as he always did when lost in a cloud of cigar smoke. "I knew Blartfenkle. I liked the man, in spite of . . ." His voice trailed off. "And I laughed like all the others at his so-called discovery . . ." Suddenly a scream split the smoke-filled air of the library. A startled Doctor Horple sprang from his chair - the sound had seemed to come from right outside the study door. "What . . . what was that?" Horple cried out in a shaking voice, but the Professor appeared to be listening to something else. Dear God, thought Horple as he became conscious of an ominous scraping sound - could those be footsteps?

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The Very Tiny Leprechaun sat under a toadstool and waited for the afternoon pumpkin to get a ride to town. The rainbow had appeared right on time - good. And perfectly positioned over the

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Pot o' Gold. Oh, he'd be at the Pot o' Gold, all right, but not alone, and not to protect it: He'd have thirty-seven of his gang there (thirty-eight if Shaky got out of the slammer in time) and a chartered plane waiting on the runway. The bank in the Cayman Islands was expecting them; Club Med had confirmed their reservations. He laughed an obscenity to himself at the idea of the Irish government trying to extradite 38 Very Tiny Leprechauns.

The shower was over, the pumpkin was approaching past the witch's lime-white cottage down the road. The dandelion telephone near his toadstool rang: it was Shaky - he had been released an hour before. Good again!

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Maura glanced out the window, then sighed deeply. Yes, it was still there, grazing contentedly on their small suburban lawn, not quite a pet but certainly not a wild animal, not any more. - *Other people have dogs and cats, Maura thought. - We have a moose.* And in the upstairs bedroom they used to share, Chad practiced endless scales on his trombone . . . where, where had it all gone wrong? Tears filled Maura's eyes: the moose had started drooling on her petunias. The peonies were next, she felt certain. In the bedroom above Chad was badly mangling a B minor scale. No, it couldn't go on this way. . .

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We should have been well past the orbit of Gluteus 7 by now, thought Armbruster. - Biggest payload of the decade and we're going to be late getting it to the client. What the hell is wrong with that proton disorientator? Damn thing worked fine when we bought it from the Trader Entity back on Fraudula 8, previous owner was a little old creptoid from the Dribulus Galaxy, never used it except

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during eclipses of the triple sun of Kleeftreb. . .

Armbruster angrily shoved the throttle, but of course it was already wide open. Still the vehicle limped along at 76% plasmatic thrust. - *All bullshit. That lousy thief cheated us, Armbruster thought sourly. - He swore on his mother's grave that the disorientator was as good as new. After we paid him and took off I remembered that Trader Entities are clones - sumbitch had no mother.* Armbruster looked around for his flask of bourbon, couldn't locate it. Yeah, it was going to be a long voyage.

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Jeff sat at the bar, his drink untouched in front of him, the inviting looks of a pretty redhead unheeded, his head hurting and thought physically painful. He took a quick drink, then another. The liquor tasted awful but he knew he desperately needed its dulling effect: how else could he cope with the discovery that he was the only straight male on his bowling team?

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Good luck! And don't forget those royalties!

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