

Merlin's Flying Time Machine

by [Scot Walker](#) (August 2020)



Helio, Roland Rafael Repczuk, 2002

An homage to Tom Wolfe

Our battery was dead. Our throats were dry. Our pockets were as shallow as the Aral Sea, and my seven rolls of quarters

banged against my balls. It was still daytime, but the smog, the fires, and the gunk in the sky turned it from brown into a matted dullness of a miasma of hellish hues. There was no way to tell what time of day it was, much less which direction was north or south or even if there were any other directions beside backwards and forwards . . . so forward we went.

After a half hour of squinting through the grime covered windshield, which George tried to keep clean with a wet mop dangling from his right arm as he leaned out thumping it against the windshield. I didn't say anything. He tried. He was very trying man and it was best to let him have his leave.

Happily the gunk and the fog and the stuff in the sky lifted and we were still on the two-lane blacktop road that was snaking up into the distance, like one of those Picasso roads that George saw at the Musée Picasso in Paris. I didn't see roads or highways anywhere except in real life, but George was a seer, or so he said, and he seemed to see things no one else could see except for Merlin. Anyway, the road disappeared into twisted pines before snaking up toward some lumpy taupe colored hills before disappearing there, seemingly forever. Before and after I guess were the only cardinal directions after all. It's the mantra Merlin taught us as he propelled George and I as we propelled back and forth through time.

We heard what sounded like a two-stroke chainsaw growing in the distance like a wolverine in heat, but it was impossible to tell whether it was in the forest or down in the lumpy hills, merely the rumbling of my empty stomach . . . or maybe, just maybe perhaps, it was that damned wolverine.

This had been happening more often lately, our excuses were lame and useless now and there was nobody left to blame.

We pulled over for a bush stop as I wondered why everyone seems to think we're as ignorant as hell. Honest to God, we're church going Methodists for Christ's sakes,

innovative, brilliant actually (at least I am) and more self-sufficient than anyone else who's ever lived in these desolate parts of the unfree world.

George, popped out of the car and rummaged through the back seat, jiggling old man Merlin awake, as he gathered a dozen large bottles of water, three dozen finger sandwiches left over from our Friday night get-together, a half dozen packages of beef jerky, a large bag of marshmallows, sixteen bags off Lays potato chips (only a lay will do in times of anxiety), and a half eaten Reese's peanut butter cup.

Then as George lugged a half filled cooler back to me, and I stood staring at our salvation at what I had hidden in my trunk, Merlin hopped out and meandered back, shuffling as he did, if you know him, if you know his walk—half way between a James Dean loll and a John Wayne boot kicking shuffle; but with Merlin it always started with his right foot sliding slowly forward and then a quick look up as we sorrowed in the wizard's blurry brown eyes. Then George and I looked at his right foot, which seemed to take the cue as it slid forward to meet its mate. This continued for another eleven and three quarter inches and both feet and the wizard of half the entire universe waited. No matter what the weather, or road conditions, mud or mire or sand or asphalt, Merlin always moved in exactly the same way, always starting on his right foot.

Years later, on my deathbed at Mona McAllister's Mental Rehabilitation Home for Curable Maniacs, three blocks from downtown Missoula, Montana, where the ants were eating the last of my New York cheese cake, I realized Merlin was right! He had always been right. As I had always been "left." He had the power to transform within seconds because now he was dressed in his favorite loose flowing toga and wore a Roman laurel leaf crown cocked jauntily, meandering in front of me or beside me, it was hard to tell because of the bruise over my left eye caused in that terrible midget wrestling

exposition when I was literally dragged there, Nurse Ronald Ingrasin told me, as my heels dug into the yellow and green striped linoleum tarred to the floor, because I needed socialization because of my illness—but Ron sat me right smack dab in the front row in between stinky Mrs. Dempsey and lanky Mr. Koonce and, within minutes, midget Gail Saunders, who attempted to drop kick her opponent, Happy Harold Prince, missed him and whacked the holy crap out of my left eye. I felt the splinters sliding into my iris—but I digress . . . Merlin will be there with me there in the future, just as I was with him in Camelot, as his chimney boy. That's where I first noticed Merlin's walk . . . his damned right foot, left foot, fearlessly forward, toe in the ground, then next step heel up, slowing sliding it forward . . . over and over again. Repeat with left. Repeat with the right as his bottom wiggled alluringly, too alluringly for my boyish heart back then, I might add, as his thighs glistened in his God-awful sweat, and his armpits oozed with the scent of Yorkshire pudding and fried kippers, co-mingled, in some archaic mysterious way, with gobs of clover honey, rolling no-oozing out of his pit pores, with a stench that made the nurses want to run like lemmings to the nearest cliff and dive into the sea.

But all that is in the future. Or is it the past. It's impossible to tell with this man, this wizard, this magician, this mysterious magical Merlin.

My mind jumps too much now after so many years as Merlin's left-hand man. He joked about that when he created the position. "You're all that's left, Scot," he said . . . so I guess that makes you my—

I interrupted before he could finish. We'd been together five centuries by then, although the Romans hadn't yet invaded England, Merlin had pre-empted their arrival and adopted the toga as his favorite garb. Again I digress, too many millennial, I guess with the magician.

“Left-hand man,” we spoke simultaneously.

I smiled as broadly as Merlin grinned.

“And if,” Merlin said, “I ever find a right-hand man, be assured only you can be left.”

That took me a moment to digest. Actually I’m still digesting that one. Didn’t you hear me burp?

But let’s get back to the 21st Century. I’m beginning to tell stories like Merlin does—starting thousands of years in the future and working backwards, tossing a few middles into the mix and then starting at the end again . . . so let me breath a moment. Inhale. Exhale. Inhale. Exhale.

We’re back to reality now. Present day. Merlin is naked now, wanting me to take care of his clothes, so many duties for a left-hand man like me . . . so I dumped the Yorkshire pudding kipper scented underwear onto the asphalt figuring he’d not be using it again—even though Merlin had tired of working wonders on our grime, dust and dirt and I figured we could be on or way in a heartbeat when two shimmering gold bars glistened underneath his tighty whities.

I’m so tired of his magic.

I don’t want his magic anymore!

We’ve had that discussion a dozen times and that’s why we decided to work this town by going door-to-door and performing wonders in exchange for gold.

“Want a miracle in your life?” we’d ask when someone answered the door and before they could open their mouths, Merlin would wave his wand and mumble, “Kazaam! Your wish is our command!”

I know it sounds clunky, doesn’t it, but it sure as hell worked and clunky makes money. So let me tell you that in

less than a week, we'd talked our way into the hearts, minds and souls of fifty-six thousand, nine hundred fifteen men, women and children who gave us all their earthly gold watches, earrings, necklaces and coins—Merlin's favorite was a gold Superman pin, a twelve year old handed over. Such is the power of magic and wizardry. Such is the foolishness of mankind. We hired a few local boys to lug the nineteen bags of stuff we'd amassed, and a half dozen girls to rip out all the crap that wasn't gold: things like the works in watches, silver binding, pearls, all of which we tossed into the truck and hauled up to to the Joseph Philander Morgan Valley Reservoir just off SR-10, a few miles north of Castle Dale. They made the most glorious plopping sound and their splashes resembled lost souls writhing in Dante's hell—which is not the real hell, by the way . . . nothing could be that glorious. George joked that he should have been a drummer as he hefted bag after bag and slung them, slung them, I say, slung them like Hefty bags brimming to their G-strings with garbage into the reservoir, listening to the boom-thunka-thunka, boom-thunka-thunka-thunk-thunk-thunk, boom! And Echo responded to what she thought was Narcissus's cry: *boom-thunka-thunka, boom-thunka-thunka-thunk-thunk-thunk, boom!* And as Echo's echo resounded from the canyon walls, it faded into three more *boom-thunka-thunka, boom-thunka-thunka-thunk-thunk-thunk, boom! boom-thunka-thunka, boom-thunka-thunka-thunk-thunk-thunk, boom! boom-thunka-thunka, boom-thunka-thunka-thunk-thunk-thunk, booms!*

George grinned the entire time and tossed each bag in one-by-one so he could get as many booms out of each as possible.

George, by the way, was the first guy I ever loved—well, to be totally truthful, George was the only guy I ever loved. He was as strong as an ox and dumb as one too, but he was sweet and kind, and always put everyone else first—except of course when he listened to echoes—then he was a man possessed.

George's main skill, one that he was sole master of, was the ability to look at a piece of gold and know instinctively how pure it was without having to chew down on it and gnaw it into bits like the novices do. He also knew how to refine and pour it into ingots and his final output were bars that were always 99.999%, just as pure as he was in heart and soul.

George and I had met, by the way, actually all three of us had met, at a Teens for Christ revival meeting sponsored by the Wheaton Bible Church, in the borough of Wheaton, (not related to Will) Maryland, in a tent with strewn sawdust a few inches deep on the ground and hard backless benches to sit on. We were all thirteen years old—well, George and I were thirteen. I'm not sure about Merlin. Merlin, the inquisitive had visited every form of magic and voodoo and religious service and carny show and burlesque performance and that was his sole reason for attending the Teens for Christ revival . . . so he joined us, sitting there on that bench on August 24, 1957 as Pastor Kirk droned on and on about us being as pure as gold and children of God and after standing for three hours and singing Come, Come, Come to the Church in the Wildwood for all three hundred ninety-eight verses (including the choruses), and wishing there was a toilet nearby, or a pile of Twinkies or even Hostess cream filled cupcakes or that delicious cheese cake the damned ants would ultimately devour, and remembering how hard those benches were, and how sore two of our three asses were, we were just about ready to do anything—including selling our souls to the hock shop man who did business out of his garage behind Wheeler's Auto Repair and Recap Specialists, when Kirk (and this is not the famous captain—that character was created long after the character who saved us all, even Merlin, and sent us down that golden pathway to riches and glory) asked us who wanted to come forward.

And Merlin touched our thighs and winked at us and

said, "This is so cool. We can learn more magic than you can shake a wand at. Come on down—Kirk is standing in front of curtain number one, which do you two chose?"

"There's only one curtain," I said.

"Is there just one, my left-man man?"

My past, present and future merged meshed amalgamated into one as we three raced down that sawdust trail to the three shimmering curtains we now all saw on the stage, and I hope you remember Merlin's walk, there is none other like it in the history of man so I have to admit I did stumble once or twice. Later I blamed it on the woodchips in the sawdust trail but I confess, it was Merlin's ass that set my heart aflame.

Okay, I know you're asking how I met Merlin the first time here in Wheaton, Maryland when I already explained that I met Merlin thousands of years ago at the Magician Union's Job Fair, but I'm a kid, okay, a kid at heart anyway and I don't always get my timeline straight. If there's one thing Merlin ingrained in my soul, it's that all timelines are in motion—I bet you've had that feeling several times yourself, haven't you? You felt you were someplace before when you knew you hadn't? You felt you were re-living something you'd never yet lived? That's the fluid timeline, folks. We've all experienced it. Most of us try to laugh to laugh it off or we ignore it—but you've felt it. You know it if you know it or not. You definitely know it.

So, Merlin put his right sneaker down into that sawdust, then lifted his heel up then pressed his full sneak weight down, but Oh My God! His ass is what George and I looked at, salivated over actually, as drool seeped from our hot boy lips.

If you know anything about Merlin, it's that his entire existence is magic. And he was now wearing the tightest pair of white see-through nylon shorts known to man and how his ass

jiggled and wiggled and tiggled and taggled and waggled and zagged. Jell-O had nothing on Merlin. Nothing. God, how that ass jiggled, tight and smooth and beautiful to behold. And I looked at George and George looked at me and without saying a word, we followed Merlin down that aisle, wiggling our hot little asses, too.

And we knelt and let me tell you, if you ever decide to get saved, as you look up admiringly at the three gigantic curtains with Bob Barker dressed in black slacks and a blue blazer with matching tie and pointing from one door to the other to the other, take a thick blanket with you because that sawdust crap can eat right straight through your kneecaps pretty damned fast and stick to your thighs and your legs and fester and itch like fire ants are doing the mambo in your pants. But Merlin didn't seem to care. I remember reading someplace at some distant time or future time or present time or magical time or one damned time or another on my fluid timeline that Merlin had been persecuted throughout the ages. I don't know how because, well I didn't read much back then, other than Scrooge comic books, and yes, to dispel all myths, Uncle Scrooge was my favorite and I pictured myself floating in his huge vault filled with hundred dollar bills, and that for a boy barely out of puberty, was enough to make my you-know-what hard, but back to George and my take on Merlin. George and I had heard Merlin was maligned throughout history—that's why he just pops up from time to time. 1957 in Bimini at the Miss Caribbean Seafood Festival, 1978 in Rehoboth Beach Delaware at Dolly's Water Taffy Emporium, and 1996 in Vegas—at that glorious magic show he performed for over five years.

But I could never get my head around him and his magic and for me, back then, with my sawdust-covered knees and my aching ankles, all I could wrap my head around was that one mile wide by one mile long by one mile high vault Scrooge McDuck had built and filled to the tippy-top with money. So I

sort of blocked out most of what Pastor Kirk said, and George and I even took our eyes off the curtains most of the time—although they seemed to come and go, which I guess depended most on if we were looking at them or not, and I still needed to pee and George did as well, but I think he started without me, and I wanted to open that pack of Twinkies I had left back there on the wooden bench and prayed that that fat girl sitting behind me was not unwrapping them, although I swear I heard a crinkling of plastic being torn asunder, and munching them with her mouth open and that glorious Twinkie filling oozing all over her lips . . .and I still needed to brush off the dirt from my aching knees. And, damn it, on top of all that, it was only Monday night and Saturday was bath night and all the boys would laugh at me the next day in Mr. Fox's boys' physical education class at Belt Junior High, where the showers were broken because some damned ninth grader had filled up all the shower faucets with Superglue. Life was a bitch and a trap and my mind flicked from curtain to curtain to curtain to Hostess Cream Filled Twinkie to my inability to piss like a sailor.

But somehow the words came back to me, I guess you can only concentrate on pee so long before you give up and wait for the words that say amen and that means you can run like hell to the bathroom. I listened to Pastor Walter Leroy Kirk drone on and on as the fire ants danced from my naked legs to Merlin's to George's and back again, teaching all six legs to rumba and mambo and cha-cha-cha all at the same time.

And then just when I thought I couldn't hold my pee anymore, Pastor Kirk had us rise and blessed us and the congregation sang some damned song or another—although not as long as the first one—and he presented us each with a red Bible and told us the Bible must be red and we all thought that was pretty cool. Then Pastor Kirk took out this real real expensive looking fountain pen—I think it was made of gold, maybe even gold from Uncle Scrooge's money bin, but I knew

Huey, Dewey and Louie must never find out or they'd quack us to death for sure, and Pastor Kirk wrote in big round thick fat girlish handwriting that George really excited because he said it reminded him of his girlfriend, Sharon Amacker, in each of our brand new, never-opened, never-read, never-used Bibles and I thought, I bet he did that so we won't resell them because there was no other reason I could fathom. So, I looked at George and Merlin and gave them the old wink eye which mean, "we'll swear an oath when this ordeal is over and rip out the cover pages and sell them anyways." And then we shot like cannon balls out of there to the toilets where we peed and peed for twenty minutes before we were half way empty. And that's how George and I met Merlin, although I told you I met Merlin a long long time before and the best thing about Merlin is that after all these centuries, his ass seems to get hotter and hotter every time I look at it. But to tell you the truth, Merlin spends as much time looking at our fannies as we do his, so I guess there's a lot of good things about Merlin floating in and out of our lives after all.

I think I digressed again; sometimes my head hurts real bad. I was talking about the gold bars hiding in Merlin's tighty-whities. So, anyway, George's face lit up in smiles as he saw what was folded up in Merlin's shorts and even lost his desire to play with the golden bars next to them as soon as he saw my self-generating, fully charged solar powered flying machine—capable of traveling 1,200 miles between solar recharges—and able to take us to the nethermost points of the globe. It was one of my patented inventions. You can look it up on google anytime. If you know me or read about me or of me and George, then you know we, all three of us including Merlin, spent our lives inventing things and exploring new exciting places (usually where a flock of rich people lived) and we got our three hundred and nineteenth patent when we registered this one. Cool, isn't it?

Well, anywhere, *poof, bang, pop, alakazam*, we're all

back to the present and I barely have a headache but George turned red-faced again—he hates time travel but loves the magic. Go figure!

The three of us put our collective noggins together and figured we could make it all the way to Cuyahoga Falls. Merlin suggested the place. He said he loved the sound of the words as they flowed out of his lips and I thought gosh I like everything that flows out of Merlin's lips so I sure as hell like the sound of Cuyahoga Falls, too. And so did George and even though none of us knew where the hell Cuyahoga Falls was or even if there was a falls there or even what a falls was, or a damned Cuyahoga was, so George and I figured we'd just have to journey, like we journeyed down that sawdust aisle together, and find out for ourselves.

George did mention that his Aunt Edna had a couple of falls in her life, so we'd better be careful, but I loved the term Cuyahoga. It might have been something Carol Burnett might have shouted in one of her Tarzan yells: *Cu-yaaaaaaaa-hoooooo-gaaaaaa faaaaaa-llllls*. And I let loose and *cu-yaaaaaaaaaaaa-hoooooooooooo-gggggggggggggg* as it echoed up and down that damned barren valley and George stared at me with a look that was halfway between the fear of God and the ecstasy of his girlfriend Sharon's thighs. I guess George might have remembered those tenor-singing days in Mrs. Holcomb's 9th grade chorus at Wheaton High School, when our girlish boy voices filled the auditorium or the times he and I sat in my back yard on Sheraton Street and sang loud enough for the neighbors to hear and applaud. George said he heard them applaud. I thought they were yelling so I'll accept George's memory on this one. But let me tell you, if I had my own time machine, George and I could have *Cu-yaaaaaaaa-hoooooo-gaaaaaa*ed those falls 'til the cows came home. So we would have let loose and *cu-yaaaaaaaaaaaa-hoooooooooooo-gggggggggggggg* our hot little asses to wherever in the hell it was and back back then.

Merlin gave us one of his wizardly old man looks, you know what I mean, hanging his face down and look up at us over his glasses, a pose that always freaked out both of us, wo we knew it was time for us to get a mosey on, that's a phrase we must have picked up from watching Roy Rogers and the Lone Ranger and Gene Autry. You know, when they weren't on horses, they just moseyed a lot. We started a-moseying, knowing the folks here in Alley Valley would be waking up from their drunken slumber and realizing Merlin had shorted out all their damned batteries. We didn't even have to look him to know his power. When you pissed Merlin off, like this whole town did, he pissed on you. So, when the good people in that selfish village refused to hand over their gold watches and earrings and dinnerware, off went the power, out when the batteries and, if there was a bottle of booze anywhere in that sordid town you can rest assured, Merlin watered it down hours ago. Merlin was a teetotaler: remember that if you ever read the Collected Works of King Arthur and His Roundheads Who Turned the Tables on the Romans . . . it's the coolest book ever—although it's hard to find now, but if want to look for it, don't go on line, check out the local thrift shops—it's usually back there in the boys' underwear department or next to the stuffed foxes and skunks. Don't ask about it or you'll open up a whole kettle of fish. Take my word on that because the last time I asked, I ended up eating codfish stew for over a week.

Merlin gave a nod of his head and played with his beard. That was a sign to tell us we were off for a flying adventure, off to *Cu-yaaaaaaaaaaaaa-hooooooooooooo-gggggggggggggg*, off to see the wizard, off to follow the second star on the right, off to join Ramar of the jungle, off on Scout and Silver to save the great white whale from evil Captain Ahab. Off to save the world.

Hurray!

Oops. You keep distracting me! Are you looking in the

boys' department at the Glenmont Ladies Home Auxiliary Thrift Shop? Pick under the tighty-whities and you'll find a copy of the King Arthur book there for sure.

I remember. We we talking about the gold bars. I bet these will be better than Bit Coin because they're real and maybe we can ask Merlin to put his sandal print on them—or his toe print anyway—something to show ownership or something like they do on the Gene Langley TV show where Gene sews labels in kid's clothes so when they get washed the right kid puts the right socks and sneaks and stuff back on so we figured it would be real easy for Merlin to turn our gold into Bit Coins or nod his head or shake his left sandal or a swish his hot ass and say his magic Merlin words and change them any which way he wanted.

I looked at George for approval.

As George looked at me.

Both of us nodding our heads up and down at each other.

Merlin grabbed us both by our skulls and tapped our noggins together—not hard—just an embarrassing jolt to tell us to stop acting so childishly.

George could always read my mind, which was one of the few things as a second grade drop out he was able to read, and he mumbled something about the gold and what we could do with it. I mean he implied that since we had Merlin, we didn't need gold because he could conjure (my word not his, George's vocabulary was limited mostly to grunts and smiles and was tone deaf to words like conjure and abjure and major and manger because to George didn't sound "right" he was tone deaf and sadly it took me half my life time to realize George was frightened of words that could injure—so at least his brain was functioning on a level of comparison, albeit, one that had a long way to go before settling down to the realm of cogent English) anyway, George forgot Merlin was the main reason we

collected the gold in the first place. He, yes George, of all people, reminded ME that we were trying to do things on our own—without magic—without Merlin doing everything for us and even though our approach was to bamboozle everyone around us out of their gold, at least WE were doing something.

I sat down with George—put his head on my lap and reminded him of Merlin’s magical powers—and of where Merlin had “disappeared to” for so many thousand years.

“He was on that island,” George said as I felt his head throb and saw his eyes roll back in his head as if he was in a trance, trying to picture himself as brave as Merlin, living alone, with nothing but his wand and spell book, eating coconuts and bananas for thousands of years, as he pulled away from us humans.

True, we had met him long before that, and again a while ago in the tent revival meeting but each time Merlin came into our lives we blocked out our previous meetings (or at least I tried to), George on the other hand wasn’t able to assimilate things so I just let his eyes roll back in his skull and painted a picture for him.

Merlin’s ability to transcend time, to move through era after era was his major power.

Now I had George’s full attention!

“Like Superman!” George shouted.

“Yes, like Superman!”

George paused for a long time and my legs hurt. George was a big man and the longer his head rested on my lap the more my body ached.

“Do you think all those years on the beach is what gave Merlin such a hot ass?”

"Yes," I said as Merlin appeared out of nowhere in his time machine.

"Load it up, boys, we're off for an adventure."

We loaded it it up with our non-alcoholic Zero Cokes and Dr. Peppers, and all the food George had taken from the truck, along with several pairs of clean underwear that Merlin miraculously pulled out of the glove compartment. Then we struggled with the gold bars, until I turned on my anti-gravity machine (patent pending) and the gold bars wafted across the open field and gently landed in the gondola of our Dr. Who-like flying machine—which was like Merlin's heart and soul—way bigger on the inside than it was on the outside.

Merlin nodded at me, as his left-hand man, and I pushed the button and off we went—flying high into the late afternoon sky, waiting for the moon rise, the stars to come out and say howdy Merlin, George and Scot: I hope you have a glorious evening (and yes, stars talk, you just have to listen), as we wondered how much our gold bars would glisten and glean in the dancing moonlight.

Within twenty minutes, George was fast asleep, purring like a calico kitten who'd lapped up a saucer full of half-and-half and I faced the void and the gold alone, waiting for it to gleam—to give me a sign—to let me know what our mission really was. Were we really existing and re-existing and co-existing with Merlin through vortex after vortex of time or was our relationship, like Dr. Leon Meadows, that freaky free-clinic psychiatrist and graduate of the Mississippi School of Agriculture, suggested, just a figment of my demented mind? Well, let me tell you, I sure as hell let the good old doc know I was the sanest peanut in his can of peanut brittle and you should have seen his face! It was like wow, gosh, really? And all I could do was hold my giggles and my pee as I imagine was how undereducated the shrink was and hoped I'd look down on him one day in my solar flying machine with my gold bars

glistening and my heart thumping and my cookies rocking and rolling in Tembo (named after Dumbo, the flying elephant's third born son) hand-painted elephant cookie jar, and yes, every time I lifted the lid, Tembo made a trumpeting call which only made me open it more and more each day, often just prying it up an inch or two, hoping other Swahili elephant cookie jars in the neighborhood would heed Tembo and bring a trunk load of cookies to my door. But it got old after a dozen visits to shrink Meadows with me and my elephant cookie jar sitting side by side in the doc's chartreuse Lazy-Boy recliner and I wanted to find a way to split in a meaningful, but boyish way, so I left the good doctor a box of multi-color Coral Gables rattlesnakes cookies . . . hehehe . . . that had been infused with real rattle snake eggs by a wave of Marlin's magic wand, for which I thanked him immensely, but someone they got lost by UPS so . . . word to the wise, if you ever find an extra-large crate marked homemade peanut brittle and it's hissing, well, don't open it, just look up Doctor Leon P. Meadows and forward it to him.

I looked at the GPS on my phone, I'd given up trying to figure out the meaning of the stars, but as my WIFI connection kept fading in and out, I dared give another Carol Burnett Tarzan yell. . . what the heck. I had nothing to lose: *Cu-yaaaaaaaaaaaaa-hooooooooooooo-gggggggggggggg*, but when there was no response, and no elephants dropped cookies from the sky, and no distant rattlesnakes hissed, and both Merlin and George snored and tossed and turned, I still didn't know where in the hell any of us were.

Finally, George and Merlin woke up, waddled over to the cooler and set up our midnight meal of six Mr. Ed sandwiches (Italian ham, salami, Provolone cheese, bacon, tomatoes, onions, lettuce , Italian dressing, and hot peppers) from the Fairfax Deli, several Cokes, four and a half Girl Scout Samoas, a quart of Popeye's Cole slaw, a large pack of slightly frozen McDonald's French fries, three Starbuck's

apple pies, a jar of honey, two cans of Franco-American spaghetti with meatballs—the large size—the real ones—not those damned mini-balls that the kids love, five oranges, a cluster of Concord grapes, and a can of Alpo dog food. George went right for the Alpo, picked it up in his ham-like fists and flung it out of our flying machine as Merlin and I giggled like adolescent school girls, watching it pick up speed, zooming down to a farm house far below, where it seemed to end its can life in a thunderous plop, exploding dog food all over the front porch of a fat lady with a cat, both of whom sat in a wicker rocking chair singing. Well, actually the fat lady was singing the cat was must purring along in tune, but I'm gonna be totally honest, the cat was a way better singer.

Nearly simultaneously, George and I reached for the bunch of grapes. He got half. I got the other half and we bit into a mouthful at the same instant. God, how could anything be so sour? One by one I tossed them out of the flying solar machine only to notice a murder of crows circling us, need I say “ominously.” I tossed a few to them, as did George and soon all our grapes were gone—as were the majority of the murder. And we watched them fall to the ground in small groups, cawing agonizingly with their tiny talons splayed out before (many of them actually flipping over and falling upside down as I wondered if they were alive, would they have landed like a cat, flipping over at the last moment and landing on all fours, although I know and you know crows don't have feet) until they splatted onto Route 40 a thousand feet below us, and all the while, we finished the sandwiches, the McDonald fries, the orange eating and giggling boyishly as we changed our underwear and tossed our dirty drawers over the side, giggling as they parachuted slowly, our “Valentine's Day is for Lovers” boxers, our “Kiss my Bippi briefs,” our “This is the End” boxer shorts and our bikinis from Bikini. They flickered, flickeringly, down to Route 40 and alighted on the heads of the dead crows. Murdered underwear on top a murder of crows I thought. What a way to go, buried so no one will find

them, not even their crow mummies and daddies. Merlin, George and I made mournful little cawing sounds, so precise that even Carol Burnett would have been proud . . . or at least Tim Conway would have.

Suddenly the full moon rose over the horizon—bathing us in its ethereal beauty and it was as if Merlin was hiding behind it, showering us with his magic, protecting us from the murderous crows and the filthy underwear and the failed batteries in the broken down truck we'd abandoned in that hellhole of a town bubbling over with slobbering drunks who did nothing more than shoot bullets into each others' legs for fun and frivolity and scream things like "Gotcha!" and "Atta boy!" And I thought, frontal lobotomies can't get much better! But as I thought that thought, Merlin dropped a Tootsie Roll Pop from somewhere (or created it or wished it or whatever) and while it was rolling over and over in our flying time machine that was fifteen times bigger than Dr. Who's phone boot, he reached down, nearly touching his toes, as his gorgeous ass was squeezed and squished into his tight shorts and now not only George was drooling . . . but so was I. I know, I know, I've already described Merlin's ass, but some of you are breast men and others are leg men—it's all a matter of perspective and as Merlin said, "Judge not numb nuts, lest thee also be judged." And how that Arthurian ass simmered and quivered! I could never describe and all I could think was why an artist—a real artist like Rembrandt or Da Vinci—not fake ones like Salvador Dali or Andy Warhol, hadn't painted a portrait of that mind boggling gorgeous ass . . . or even his legs or breasts if artists were of that proclivity, or of Merlin's big oval Opal colored eyes, which often, like teeny tiny traffic lights when we were late getting from point A to point Z, turned green. But they also were ebon black sometimes, or nut like hazel or blue—like Sinatra's or Newman's. And all the while, Merlin's quivering ass rose and fell as his eyes changed color and his entire body flicked—or was it mine? Or was it the winds blowing our tie machine

through the clouds? And I slipped and fell to the floor and looked up at his legs which were hairy, like a simian from one of those, I dare not think, Tarzan movies or Charlton Heston when he was naked for way too long in the Planet of the Apes flicks. Merlin, help me, my mind is so easily distracted. Can it be that you are an ape from a Carol Burnett Tarzan flick or a nephew of Charlton? I inhaled more deeply than normal. Yes, there is a Kurt Vonnegut Monkey House smell about him. Monkey House smell, for sure.

But George could always get my goat. Always!

He fell on the floor of the time machine and rolled around and looked up at Merlin and winked and when George stood back up he had huge chocolate flavored Tootsie Roll Pop dangling from his lips like he was James Dean in Rebel Without a Cause, I saw tears in his eyes that could barely contain the guffaws he and Merlin rolled (pardon the pun) at me.

Then George stood up, turned around twice, as Merlin waved his wand up and down to show off his brand new tighty-whities and both wizard and man stared at me in my ever tightening Batman underwear and both of them sang, "Hold tight!" as my size thirty-twos became size thirty became twenty-eights and I yelled. "I give up! I give up! This is worse than a wedgie!"

After a while I laughed, as well. . . but nowhere near as loud as the other two until Merlin slowed down our flying time machine and George gave me a hug. And twisted my nipples. And smiled and I looked down and saw what I thought was our town, our Carol Burnett town—but it wasn't *cu-yaaaaaaaaaaaa-hoooooooooooo-gggggggggggggg*, it was Orlando . . . and I don't mean Bloom, it was the real Orlando, not the namesake. Below us were the Magic Kingdom, Pirate World, Space Adventure, and the newest attraction, El Dorado. "They're nothing at all like Camelot!" we all said in unison. "Nothing at all."

The flying machine landed gently in parking space 1,345 in lot number 19, about a half mile from all the attractions and I decided to wing it. Bad choice of words, after the murder of the murder of crows. I decided George and I would freestyle and take life and attractions, no matter how sultry they seemed, one at a time . . . unless they were twins . . . then we'd toss a coin (which I always kept in the secret compartment of my high top sneakers) and the winner (he he) would get them both and the loser could recharge the battery (which meant standing in the sun, focusing the solar collector in the right direction as the winner (me) went off for a quiet (or not so quiet, depending on what exactly the winner was planning . . . or not planning to do) afternoon.

Well none of that happened because the flying time machine battery adjusted and recharged itself, even on overcast days, so it was never a matter of being without power in that glorious machine—just in cars and trucks where it only seemed to work every other Friday.

Merlin magically changed all our outfits so we could blend in as tourists in the Magical Kingdom, including extra pockets in our trouser legs in case we came upon some extraneous gold, which we didn't, but we did use them like snack packs as we went through the park.

It seemed like we'd never make it to the monorail or that marvelous ship that sailed across the lake, until Merlin magically transported us to the entrance right smack dab in front of the Crystal Palace that glistened in the morning sun. "It's a gift shop," Merlin said, "or at least that's what everyone else thinks." He waved his wand and it became a junior high school cafeteria.

"Let's eat," he said and we ordered lunch but all they had were left over peanut butter and grape jelly sandwiches on whole wheat bread and Merlin said the lunch fare reminded him of those y boring meals they served him while magically

putting doing plumbing works while building Houses for Habitat for Retired Knights and dames in Old Camelot. Somehow we got it all down and as I picked up my tray to return it, I noticed a bar of gold under it- "one more," I thought and realized that was Merlin's reason for the deep pockets he'd created for George and me. "Plenty of room for more gold," I thought.

George and I hurried off to catch as many rides as we could as Merlin checked out the Haunted House and corrected all the spooks and pitfalls.

George's favorites were the coasters. Mine were the ones that took place in the dark because all I could think of was being in my re-chargeable flying machine where sunlight (or moonlight) was a constant and it seemed the darkness would never return, but then we rounded a corner in Fantasyland and our eyes were blinded. We were standing at the threshold of the three bears' house, you know the one, the one in which Goldilocks ate all their damned porridge and then sat in all their damned chairs and then hid three bars of gold under the floorboards before falling asleep across all three of their damned beds.

"Damn," I thought, "there are three more gold bars right here under these beds and all George and I have to do is cause a wee disturbance and we can slide them in our hidden pockets and meander out of here. But then, there were three more bars, waiting for George and me to hoist up, shove down inside our pants and run like hell. And the hell we did, although to anyone watching I'm sure it looked more like we had just bought two five hundred-pound hot dogs and ran like Steve Austin, the Six Million Dollar Man. So, we lumbered. You've seen those slo-mo films where the superstars run but don't run, well that was George and me-*ruuuuuuuuuuuuuunnnnnnnning*.

Within moments, we saw the flashing red light, heard the sirens, and sensed that the mood of the crowd had changed.

We slowed to a trot, then to a walk as we mingled among the young men and women dressed as Snow White, all seven dwarfs and the wicked witch. I pretended to be a goldmining dwarf, swaggering along with them, singing *Hi Ho*, and George fell into the same mood as we danced a tarantella together, wondering why anyone would want to spend more than a few moments watching two crazy ass loon gold miners dancing in the Disney streets and we sighed a brief sigh of relieve as three moppets came to join us, six or seven year olds who decided that they, too, wanted to join the Disney parade, and so we danced, all of us now, as George and I taught the kids the moves in the tarantella and the gold bars we had hidden in our pants starting sliding sliding sliding until one by one they fell into the street.

Well, I panicked, knowing the law would be after us faster than the cannibals chased Robinson Crusoe, but again, thank our lucky stars, nothing happened. The law did not come crashing down on us. Instead the moppets thought it was all part of the act, as did their parents, and soon I heard pockets jingling and coins tossed helter-skelter here and there until the street was shining with copper and silver and nickel. George bent down and began picking up the quarters and dimes and I tried brushing him aside and whispering to him but the damned band was banging out another *Hi Ho Hi Ho Hi Ho* song and the dwarfs starting dancing a weird variation of the tarantella I'd taught the moppets and I don't think anyone could have heard me, even if I had had a fifty-foot megaphone. Just then Dumbo, or rather the two men dressed as Dumbo, ambled by in their elephant walk style and the crowd cheered and the band struck up the Dumbo music and I plugged my ears as George giggled along with the moppets and showed them his Elephant Walk dance that he'd learned at that Teens for Christ social when we all pretended to be jungle animals and drank Hawaiian punch and ate animal crackers and I guess it was the first time anyone had ever seen Snow White mount an elephant and ride like that procession in Aida down the Main Street USA

in Disney World, but I can still hear the cheering and think one day, if George dies first and Merlin finds a new friend, I'll head back to Disney and get myself a job as a dance instructor—and worse comes to worse, I'll be able to watch the hottest asses in the south as they mambo and rumba and salsa from one end of Main Street to the other.

Both George and I stepped back, inching our way further from the crowd to the place where our gold bars had tumbled out onto the the street and we hoisted them and shoved them back into our clothes again, feeling like Marco Polo, I guess, as we hid all the treasures of the world in our tight clothes.

Suddenly the skies opened and the streets, Snow White, Dumbo, the moppets and all seven dwarfs were drenched to the skin, but then, George, greedy bastard that he is, swooped down and began picking up the quarters and dimes, which were now shimmering below three inches of water on the Main Street parade route. I kicked him. Honest to God, I kicked him in the ass and told him to get his sorry butt and our gold moving back to the time machine, otherwise we'd be weighed down with God knows how many pounds of gold, end up shivering and stuck here in Florida, and, more than likely, sometimes my brain is more imaginative than it should be, end up as hired Disney paraders, dressed, more than likely, as we were now—as Snow and Company's assistant gold miners and end our lives as dwarfs under the feet of the fifty-seven million annual tourists who trample those streets.

Just then my ears started popping and I saw the fireworks display—surprised that neither rain nor heat nor the Seven Dwarfs nor Dumbo, himself, could stop it and I figured that that was the diversion both George and I had longed for. We slowly oozed our way through the soggy streets as I pulled out my cell phone and did a quick GPS search to locate the exact location of our flying machine.

The sun was settling by the time we returned to the

fully charged solar powered flying machine—capable of traveling 1,200 miles between solar recharges, capable of taking us to the nethermost points of the globe, and we jumped into the gondola, slowly watched the gold bars work their way down our pants, but they had shrunk and the only way we could remove the gold bars was to wriggle out of our pants and watch the golden ingots seep slowly down our wet legs and let me tell you, the sound and sight of gold bars sliding down your leg might give you a hard-on, but that is definitely not the case. The gold cuts your leg hairs and tickles and it's so slow, it was like the old folks say, "slower than molasses in January." Well, I never really thought about that a lot until those twelve agonizing (and yes I timed it) minutes when those gold bars slid, no inched their way like yellow caterpillars, down my leg and finally landed with a slugging sound, like one of those fake coins crooks drop into vending machines onto the metal floor of Merlin's magical flying time machine just in time for us to clear Sleeping Beauty's Castle and hurl up into the stratosphere . . . almost!

Please, don't ask what happened next.

People say the thud was so loud police from towns within thirty miles of Orlando responded, as did six fire departments, and I wailing and screeching and screaming of the children as they looked up at that broken steeple was enough to break Scrooge's heart—not my hero, Uncle Scrooge, the real one, you know, that nasty old man in the Christmas Carol.

Anyway, I'm pretty sure some of the gold bars hit it Sleeping Beauty's Castle so hard that flecks of gold were left there—are still there if you want to borrow my patented gold detecting radar wand for only \$3,250 a day plus a \$500,000 deposit. I'm sure it will be worth it for the right person, someone who can climb up a steep castle wall and hang from the nethermost point of the turret with a six-ounce wand in his hand.

Happily, our fully charged battery flung us up and up and further away from the Disneyworld we had come to love as kids and which now, though partially wrecked, and with one of its steeples akimbo, would haunt us in our dreams forever.

George looked at me with hunger in his eyes . . . well in his tummy, actually, and I dug down into the lower part of the gondola and pulled out a bucket of Kentucky fried chicken. I hid it there the evening before our departure, hoping I'd have a quiet beach-like resort to enjoy it in, but here with George and me flying over (wait for it) Kentucky, I figured it was the best time to eat it. . . although I'm sure the colonel was too busy elsewhere, we paid him homage by wafting chicken bones from the gondola down to the roof top of a KFC on Route U.S. 23, just outside Auxier. Well, we sure as hell heard the ping, ping, ping and Merlin said that we needed to get a life, otherwise we would chicken some poor old codger to death someday soon, you know the type of man I mean, the one who is afraid to go into the restaurant so he always eats in the Drive-Thru lane, munching loudly for half an hour before sucking the marrow out of the bones as a dozen irate motorists honk behind him. George and Merlin and I swore we heard the codger burp as he finished his soda, screeched the truck in gear and moved along. . . more than likely to Howard Johnsons, which, sad to say, doesn't have a drive-in-window but which will bring it out to his car because the manager is the old codger's great-grandson and knew when he bought the franchise he'd have to accommodate his great gramps.

A few minutes later, George gave me one of his childlike looks and I tossed him two chicken legs and picked up several wings for myself. Dark meat is always the best, I thought. I don't know why folks even buy the white meat. I looked toward George for some confirmation but all I got was a system of ummms and burps and an inexplicable belch and a long fart just as Merlin took the breasts and turned them into chicken a la king. So there is a white meat lover after all, I

thought.

We continued our flight across the country. And, if you've never flown in a fully charged solar powered time machine, you must know the world is not like what you see on those maps we grew up with as kids. Nope, not at all. It's all splotchy and zigzaggy and it's impossible to identify anything. You'd think those folks who made all those maps would have warned us about this like they warned us about not standing on the top rung of a ladder or not plugging hair driers in while you're in the shower—but oh no, they didn't tell us there would be clouds and glare all around us and that when we looked down we'd wouldn't see those words identifying anything. And there were no solid colors—not really—just sometimes a big field of green stuff, but there were no no purples, no oranges, and no striped lines either—other than the ones on highways which sure as heck needed a paint job. In fact, our only map help was by spotting the occasional message written on water towers: Billy's Chantilly Meat Balls or Frederick Tires or Hagerstown Hooters, which I thought was a hoot because it was written so high up on those two big breast-like humps no one would ever be able to read it. But other than those, we had no real idea where we were, except for my phone, which, thank God, gave us a real view of what we were passing as it spoke the names of the towns, which we couldn't detect, and the rivers, which looked like broken blue straws, and the highways, which weren't straight at all like they seem to be when we drove on them but sinuously winding up and down through the patches of green here and there. But there they were Chantilly, Frederick, and Hagerstown. But you can't prove it by me.

When we got to Piscataway, we pissed over the side of the damned gondola. We pissed good and long and hard and laid down and went to sleep and I swear I don't know how long we were out but the sun was setting as we were pissing and by the time I woke up I had a hard on and, well, I took care of that.

George didn't—or at least I don't think he did but Merlin always took care of those matters during the night—usually a half dozen time or so, moaning and groaning so loud that George and I could barely sleep.

Then we sailed through what I thought was shaving cream until I realized they were clouds. And then we saw nothing, just fog. That's what it looked like. Really. Just mountains and mountains of Burma Shave. Until we bumped into a mountain—I'm not sure what it was, but there were soldiers on it in Confederate uniforms and I swear I felt one of their sabers brushing against my ass. George must have, too, because he said ouch or oooo or something indecipherable and I reached down for the bucket of chicken with all the trimmings and grabbed a carton of very cold mashed potatoes with gravy and I swear they were the best thing I've ever eaten in my life and took out my phone and discovered we were flying over Stone Mountain in Georgia and thought, it's a stone alright, maybe the Disney people can fix it when they're done repairing Sleeping Beauty's Castle.

And the three of us talked and talked about our adventures, well Merlin talked most. He seemed to be on a jag now that we'd bumped into so many things and he giggled and laughed and told us what it was living in Camelot in the good old days when knights were as merry as Robin Hood's men and how much he longed for it—but as many times as he returned in the time machine, it was never the same. So, he wanted to go back to Bimini for a while and enjoy the beach and the hot boys and the water and the seashells. And Merlin waved his hand and there were about six hundred shells in the gondola and he described each one as we sat there looking at the shells, sort of, and at his ass, mostly, and then into his ever changing eyes—flicking from blue to brown to chartreuse to stripped and as the gondola began to descend, I searched for a cell phone signal and discovered we were nearing the Mississippi—not the state—the river, and I wished we could go

low enough to see one of those riverboats—you know the ones I'm taking about—the ones we see in all those great musicals like Show Boat and Disney World, but by then Merlin had waved his hands again and his shells whisked themselves off to Never Never land or wherever they went so I took over the conversation and told Merlin about the model showboat I put together from a kit when I was fourteen—it must have had 5,000 plastic pieces and each one needed to be painted and each one need to be glued somewhere and the instructions must have been written perfectly because that ship, which I christened The Scotty W., was awesome, I mean honest injun', can I say that? Or am I dating myself? No if I was dating myself, I'd be the last person on earth, wouldn't I? but I'm not, because George is here and so is Merlin so I'll delete the word injun' from this story before it's published and if I forget. Mea culpa, alright? Anyway, the Scotty W. had a tragic ending—because on New Year's Eve, my dog, Lassie, attacked it while I was sleeping. I'm not sure what she thought it was, but she tore it from stem to stern and that night I was sleeping so soundly I didn't hear a thing except something that sounded like a boy crunching on potato chips, which made me hungry and I woke up with my mouth gnawing on the bedpost and spit it out and never told anybody, so don't read this part okay? That's where we need an editor's blue pencil or someone with a pair of scissors.

I decided to go down to see what had become of our car and that backwater of a town we had escaped, but I brought us down too fast and our ears popped. I looked over at George who was turning purple and hurried over to him, hugging him, wondering if he needed mouth-to-mouth. It had been a long time since we had done that, but he held me and cuddled me and I knew no matter what we, us, me, him, our love would survive forever and ever.

Merlin smiled at both of us and for a moment I thought he was going to come close and snuggle with us, but he didn't.

He seemed too happy watching us be happy. And Merlin just stood there in his Valentine Day boxers and Bimini is for Lovers T-shirt pointing toward the west, toward the setting sun and then to the five bars of gold we'd found and reminded us of the crows who had died and told us he'd preform magic and restore them to life.

We decided then and there to dump the five bars of gold and the extra battery that had been charging all day down to the men in the crowd below us. This time nothing killed anybody. The gold bars just landed in a row five or ten feet away from each other and the battery landed even more gently because Merlin helped lower everything to the ground and the three of us well-fed underwear clad men looked down on that town, at the bars, at the battery, at the living flying crows, and at the men who were racing toward the golden bars by our abandoned car, our El Dorado and like a light breeze, Merlin and the flying machine and the town disappeared and George and I walked to the El Dorado, where we discovered two T-shirts with the words Bimini is for Lovers and two plane tickets for that happy island.

The note attached said, "You thought I left you, I'm just making some early preparations for your visit. It's going to be a lollapalooza and bring some extra Kentucky fried chicken—the islanders never mastered the recipe like the old colonel did.

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Scot Walker, who is too poor to afford the second "T" and drinks a lot of coffee to compensate, is celebrating his 66th year as a paid author. He began as a 10-year old when Santa gave him a small printing press and Scot composed, printed and sold twenty copies of his newspapers for a penny apiece. Subsequently he has seen over 300 of his poems, short stories, novels, non-fiction works, letters, plays, essays, and reviews published. Mr. Walker has won a Flannery O'Connor Award for A Slow Bus Ride to a Shallow Grave; a Thomas Wolfe Short Story Contest award for Earsounds; a New Century Writer Ray Bradbury Fellowship award for Watched; a Kernodle New Play award for Kenu Hear the Wild Birds Sing?; A McLaren Memorial Comedy Play Writing award for, Screeches from the Zoo; and he has twice won awards in the Writer's Digest Competitions, once in the Stage Play Category for Abide with Me, and again in short story competition for La Mer. He's a member of the Dramatists Guild and his plays have been performed throughout the USA and Europe. You can email him at scotwalker2004@yahoo.com or search the internet. Be sure to go to Smashwords—he has collections of short stories, novels and non-fiction works there. Buy something for goodness sakes!

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