

Crossing the Bar

by Charles Langley

He was dead. No two ways about it. No one fell from the top of the Eiffel Tower and survived. He remembered looking down as he was falling and seeing Toulouse-Lautrec, brush in hand, at an easel on the left bank. All around him were other painters, all with a brush at the same angle and wearing the same green beret. No imagination. No originality. No wonder they'll never make it in the art world.

His head hurt. He was surprised that pain continued after death. Would he hurt like this all through eternity? Or was this just the pangs of purgatory, seasoning him for his stay in Hell? It wasn't fair. He found himself roaring with laughter at this expectation of fairness in the fiery region. He doubted if they had discovered fairness in the Heavenly place yet. There was no sound. His body didn't shake with the paroxysm of mirth. Then he remember there was no body. If you roared with laughter in the depths of eternity and there was nobody there to hear was there any sound?

He wondered how fast the train had been going when it hit him. Must have been seventy or eighty miles an hour. Probably broke every bone in his body. Or what had been his body. It wasn't his anymore. The engineer's face had been twisted in horror. The fireman had been oblivious to it all. Probably hadn't been aware of the tragedy taking place. Maybe he was too busy wondering what's for dinner tonight.

He was coming in for a landing in the Piper Cub when the wind-shear hit him, causing the mosquito size craft to head straight down. He saw his wife and four year old son waving at him, unaware that the plane was out of control. He wondered if his insurance policy covered him in a case like this. Without insurance they would have a difficult time. Hell, even with the insurance they would have a difficult time. The agent had urged him to double, to triple the coverage. Instead he had opted for the in-ground pool. He hoped she could afford to keep it up. He hated to see unused holes in the ground marring the view.

The President stood there, arm raised in greeting to the crowd. The usual smile painted on his not un-handsome face. A shot rang out. Jamison sprang forward, hitting The Man with his shoulder, knocking him to the ground. More shots. He felt his life leaving him in crimson spurts. In the line of duty. It would look good on him tombstone. But it wouldn't put bread on the table for his wife and son. What would their survivor's pension be? He regretted not giving more thought to such things. Instead of worrying about his job of protecting the Head Man. Sic transit gloria g-man. He was dead. Why was he hurting so much?

The doctor came out into the waiting room. There was a smile on his face.

"I'm sorry Mrs. Jamison," he said. "I don't mean to be unfeeling. But slipping on a bar of soap in the bathtub is strictly for the comic

strips. He's going to have a headache for a while, but no real harm is done. He's still babbling about the Eiffel Tower, trains, airplanes and the President, but he'll come out of it. Try getting him a bottle of liquid body-wash. He can't be trusted with a bar of soap."

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