

You Have Got to be Kidding Me!

By Dennis Knight

I confess to being a kidder by nature. Pulling legs is part of my normal interaction with society, and few are immune. It is not unusual for me to leave guests at a social occasion listing fore or aft with pulled legs. I have done it to parents, siblings, spouse and issue, lady friends, co-workers, teachers and clerics, politicians, storekeepers and librarians.

I suppose I am splitting hairs when I admit to being a pathological kidder but not a liar. Mom told me once she could tell when I was lying because my nose wiggled and my voice cracked, so I avoid that activity. When I am kidding, I try to exaggerate my joke to the point it could never be believed, but I deliver it in a matter of fact voice that tends to make it sound credible. I will brag that I paid only ninety bucks for a five dollar item, and when I hear, "You've got to be kidding," I know the response really means "You'd better be kidding because otherwise you're an idiot," and my mission has succeeded.

Usually I do follow such an assertion with my own 'just kidding' disclaimer. I do that in self defense, because there are humans who, in the very pretense of buying the baloney, actually flip the situation to make me the fellow limping with a pulled leg, giving them the last laugh.

It is fun sometimes to keep a victim on the hook. An office I worked at many years ago had a copier that was prone to jamming. One young woman in particular seemed to be the one to clog it up. I watched her one day and, with great authority, corrected the way she pressed the keys. I taught her to center her index finger on each button, and to push it straight and carefully because an oblique depression could cause the paper to disambiguate in its path, the mechanism to calamitize and general mayhem to ensue. From my observation, she never again failed to properly articulate her contact with the keyboard, and I expect she maintained this virtue throughout her business career. It didn't stop the jams, but at least she could blame them on the insides of the machine and not sloppy human interface.

The dream of the inveterate kidder is to create a silly fiction that will take on a life of its own. For that reason, I salute the person, lost to antiquity, who invented the Easter Bunny. I was seventeen that Easter morning when Dad asked me to help him hide the eggs. Heartbroken and incredulous, I cried, "You have got to be kidding me!" Months later, I was disabused of the Santa myth as well. It was a rough year but I have since gotten even.

To you, my reader, I make the assurance that I take my craft as an author seriously and would never stoop to foolish exaggeration such as I might use in normal conversational discourse. You may put your full faith and trust in every word I put on paper, then, now and forever. I kid you not.