

# That's Really Funny!

VOLUME 1



A STORYTELLER'S COLLECTION  
OF HIS ALL-TIME FAVORITE JOKES

JOE MCHUGH



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This book is dedicated to:

Brian Dooley, Gene Carroll, Don Thompson, Craig  
Johnson, U. Utah Phillips, Ray Stockdale, Melvin Wine,  
and George Daugherty aka *The Earl of Elkview*.

And all the other purveyors of good jokes down  
through the ages.

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Note to Reader:



There are a few jokes in this collection marked with a chili pepper. Just like on the menu of a Mexican restaurant, these stories, although in the best of taste, are on the spicy side and more suitable for adults. Ole'





## INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO VOLUME one of *That's Really Funny*, a collection of my all-time favorite story jokes. Unlike the quick one-liner or put-down crack, story jokes are situational, weaving together character, setting and plot. I was introduced to these kinds of jokes growing up in an Irish-American family in Paterson, New Jersey, during the 1950s. I heard more of them while living on a farm in the hill country of central West Virginia and later in the highlands of Scotland. Since then I have made my living as a traveling storyteller performing for audiences both young and old here in the United States and abroad, all the while keeping an ear cocked for any good story joke that might come my way. On more than one occasion, in fact, I encountered someone who, like myself, was a great lover of jokes and who took great delight in telling them. And what a fun time we had sparring back and forth, joke for joke, until we'd exhausted our memories and made our sides hurt from laughing so much.

Which begs the question: Why do jokes make humans laugh? There are one or two species on the planet that make a sound like laughing but it is nothing like what you and I experience when we laugh. So what gives?

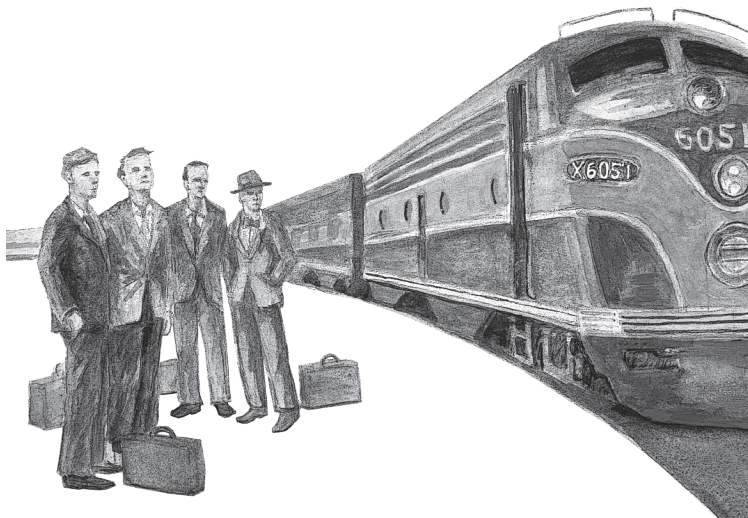
Well, my old friend, the gifted storyteller and songwriter Bruce "Utah" Phillips, had an interesting take on the subject. You see, he grew up, as I did, with the first generation of television sets that pulled down images and sound from the ether using vacuum tubes. If you happened to strike the side of one of these TV sets with your hand, it would go all kerflooy, the image on the screen transformed into a riot of

distorted squiggling lines, the sound into a senseless blare of static. But in a moment the tubes would settle down and Marshall Matt Dillon would appear once again on the screen flirting with Miss Kitty inside the Long Branch Saloon, or Rod Serling, cigarette in hand, introducing another episode of *The Twilight Zone*. Well, Bruce regarded laughter as the brain's kerflooeey reaction to a sudden and unexpected break in the continuity of consciousness. The brain doesn't know what to do with the contradictory information, so it short circuits, sending signals to different parts of the body resulting in a momentary spasm of the breathing apparatus, a quivering of vocal chords, contracted upturned facial muscles, and, in extreme cases, causing the eyes to water.

So now as the buzzer sounds to signal the beginning of the fourth quarter in my game of life, I want to share some of my favorite story jokes collected during the first three quarters. Perhaps some will even be so impolite as to strike the side of your brain and make you laugh, as they have so often done for me. For even though life sends us many difficulties and would break our hearts if we let it, a laugh, a smile, a friendly word, these have always served as true tonics for the soul. So please enjoy these story jokes in the spirit in which they are offered. And should the opportunity arise, share them with others. I am certain the sharing will help lift their spirits and they'll thank you for it.

Joe McHugh Olympia, Washington 2026





## FOUR MINISTERS ON A TRAIN

FOUR MINISTERS FROM a small town in Oregon were sitting together on a train. They were on their way to a religious conference in Portland and as often happens with travelers a spirit of camaraderie had grown up between them.

“You know, I’ve been thinking,” Rev. Michaels said. “We live in the same town but we never get the chance to hang out with each other. I know we represent different denominations but, still, our pastoral work is quite similar. Don’t you agree?”

The three other ministers nodded their heads.

“And here’s the thing about being a minister,” Rev. Michaels continued, “at all times you must appear to act better than everyone else. You have to be more honest and God-fearing. You have to be thrifty and sober, faithful to your spouse, and kind to your children because, well, you’re the pastor and everyone looks to you to set a good example.

“Well, to be honest, I find it a burden. What about the rest of you?”

“We are human beings just like everyone else,” Rev. Carpenter then spoke, “and just like everyone else, each one of us is a sinner. And yet if we sin, whom can we tell? No one. Not even our wife or someone in the congregation. They just wouldn’t understand. It makes you feel all alone.”

“You’re right there, brother,” Rev. Smalls said. “The guilt is a weight that is hard to bear.”

“Well, since I’m among friends and fellow ministers of the Lord,” Rev Michaels piped up, “I’m going to take this opportunity to confess my one great weakness. I love to drink. I love to drink alcohol. I love the taste of it and how it makes me feel. Of course, I know it’s wrong, so I abstain. But then the desire slowly grows in me until I can’t stand it anymore. So once a year I travel to some city where no one knows me and I go on a bender. For three days I drink and drink until I black out. Then I come home and I don’t touch a drop of alcohol for an entire year.”

The Rev. Carpenter was next to speak. “I appreciate your honesty, Rev. Michaels, and I too will take this opportunity to unburden my soul. My great weakness is gambling. The desire to gamble gnaws at me day and night and for an entire year I manage to refrain. But then one day, like an ordinary thief, I dip my hand into the collection box and I use the money to travel to Las Vegas where I do all the gambling I can until the money runs out. I then slink home and I don’t tell anyone. And that’s how it is for a year until I go off gambling again.”

Again the ministers nodded their heads in sympathy as the tale was told.

Then Rev. Smalls spoke up. “Well, gentlemen, my weakness isn’t booze or gambling. It’s women. Yep, there,

I've said it. I'm a happily married man but once a year I visit the red light district of some city and I have as much sex as I can afford. I then come home and I'm good for another year."

The three ministers who had confessed now turned to the fourth minister whose name was Rev. Greene.

"Bob, you haven't said a word all the time we've been talking," Rev. Michaels said. "Don't you have a weakness you'd like to confess? Your secret will be safe with us. Isn't that right, fellas?"

The three ministers nodded their heads in agreement.

"No, I don't think I want to confess anything," Rev. Greene said.

"So you don't have a human weakness like the rest of us?" Rev. Michaels said. "Are you *really* a perfect Christian?"

"Not at all," Rev. Greene protested. "I'm no saint. I have a terrible weakness, a weakness I'm powerless to control. I just don't want to talk about it."

"But we've opened our hearts and minds to you," said Rev. Smalls. "The least you could do is tell us what your weakness is."

There was a long pause as the ministers directed their gaze at Rev. Greene.

Finally he spoke. "Well, alright then," he said, "I'll tell you. My great weakness is gossiping. I can't *wait* to get off this train!"

## THE FORTUNE TELLER

TWO FRIENDS WERE having coffee at STARBUCKS.

“You’ve got to check out this fortune teller I found,” Marlene told her friend. “She’s absolutely remarkable. Why, she told me things about my future no one could have known.”

“What kind of things?” her friend Melissa asked.

“Well, you know I told you how a lot of people at work are getting laid off and I was afraid I might lose my job? So that’s what I asked her. Would I lose my job? And she said not only would I keep my job, but that I would get a promotion. And you know what? The very next day my boss came into my office, and he gave me that promotion. I make twice as much money now as I used to.”

“Well, that’s wonderful,” Melissa said. “Did the fortune teller make any other predictions?”

“Well, you know my mother’s been having that weird thing with her eyes and the doctors don’t know what’s causing it? So I asked the fortune teller about that and she said not to worry. It would clear up all by itself. And it has. Her eyesight is as good as mine now. I’ll tell you it was a tremendous relief to the rest of the family. We thought she might be going blind.”

“That is amazing,” Melissa said. “How much does she charge to tell a fortune?”

“Well, you see she’s not like other fortune tellers that charge by the hour or half-hour. No, she charges by the question. And it’s not cheap. It’s \$100 per question. So before you go to see her, you have to think real hard about what questions you want answers to.”

“What’s her name?” Melissa said.



“Well, she calls herself Madame Moloney. She dresses like a gypsy but I think she’s Irish.”

“Madame Moloney? Sounds more like Madame Bolo-ney,” Melissa said.

“Oh don’t be so cynical, Melissa,” Marlene said, “This woman is the real deal. I mean she has a true gift. Look, I’ll write her number down. Give her a call and see what you think. I guarantee, she’ll blow your mind.”

So Melissa went to see Madame Moloney. The fortune-teller was a small woman with gray curly hair sticking out from under a red bandanna. She wore thick black eyeliner and four large silver bracelets that jangled whenever he moved her arms.

Melissa gave the woman a crisp new \$100 bill and then asked her question. “You see, Madame Moloney, I’m a bit of a worrier and I just want to know if anything bad is going to happen to me in the next six months?”

Madame Moloney closed her eyes and began to rub her temples with her fingertips as she commenced swaying ever so slightly from side to side. This went on for a full thirty seconds, so long, in fact, that Melissa felt the silence pressing in upon her and her palms began to sweat.

Finally, the fortuneteller opened her eyes and a grave expression took hold of her features.

“I’m sorry to tell you this, dear, but your husband will die within the next six months,” she said.

Without a moment’s hesitation, Melissa reached into her purse and fished out another \$100 bill that she handed to the fortune teller before asking the next question.

“Will I be acquitted?”

## WHAT!?

MRS. RALSTON STORMED out of the examination room at the urgent care facility in an absolute fury. She marched down the hallway until she came to the front desk.

"I demand to speak to the person in charge," she told the receptionist. "I've never been treated this way."

"That would be Dr. Klein," the receptionist said. "I'll page him for you."

*"Dr. Klein, please come to the front desk."*

"He shouldn't be long," the receptionist said.

Mrs. Ralston continued to fume until a tall, thin man in a long white coat arrived.

"Hello, I'm Dr. Klein. Can I help you?"

"I certainly hope so. That young doctor of yours, Dr. Evans, just informed me that I'm pregnant. Of course, I told him that's impossible. I'm sixty-three years old and my husband died four years ago."

"Yes, I can see how that would upset you," Dr. Klein said. "Let me go talk to Dr. Evans and find out what's going on. I'm sure there's been some misunderstanding. I'll be right back."

Dr. Klein went in search of Dr. Evans and found him in his office entering notes into his laptop.

"What's going on, Bob? There's a very upset sixty-three-year-old woman at the front desk who says you told her that she's pregnant."

Dr. Evans closed his laptop. "That would be Mrs. Ralston."

"Well, is it true? Did you tell her that she's pregnant?"

"I did," Dr. Evans said.

“But that’s not medically possible,” Dr. Klein said. “She’s too old and her husband died four years ago. I think what you’ve done is both unprofessional and inconsiderate.”

“Yes, I know,” Dr. Evans said, “but—does she still have the hiccups?”



## IN A BROOKLYN BAR

PICTURE THIS: an old-fashioned working class bar in Brooklyn and two elderly men sitting side by side drinking BUDWEISERS. It’s late afternoon and the bartender is drying glasses.

“I hear you speak with a bit of the brogue,” the one man says to the other. “Are you from Ireland?”

“That I am and what of it?”

“Nothing at all. I’m from Ireland myself. Where in Ireland are you from?”

“From Dublin,” the man says.

“Ah, that’s grand. I’m from Dublin and what a lovely city it is. What parish are you from?”

“From St. Joseph’s parish.”

“Ah! The saints be praised, can you believe it? I’m from St. Joseph’s parish. Did you go to the parish school?”

“I did.”

“Ah! So did I. The Christian Brothers were hard men, were they not?”

“Yes, they were that.”

“What year did you graduate?”

“1944.”

“Oh my God! 1944? I don’t believe it. That’s the very year I graduated.”

At this point the bartender puts down his cloth, comes out from behind the bar, and grabs each of the men by the collar and pushes them out the door.

He then returns to his station behind the bar and goes back to drying glasses.

“What’s with the old guys?” says a patron sitting by himself further down the bar. “Why’d you throw them out? They seemed harmless enough.”

To which the bartender replies, “I can’t stand it when the Dooley twins have been drinking too much.”

## THE MEANING OF EASTER

THE REVEREND DANIEL White was the regional director of one of the smaller Christian denominations here in the United States and, as such, he often had trouble finding qualified ministers to serve as pastors for the church’s congregations, many of them located in rural towns.

One year, in the lead up to Easter, he received word that one of his pastors had died and he had to find a replacement as quickly as possible. After many phone calls and emails he managed to come up with three candidates for the position.

But as he got ready to conduct the interviews, he decided it would be best to begin by asking a general question in hopes of weeding out anyone not up to the task, theologically speaking that is.

The first applicant came into his office and Reverend White asked him, "Can you tell me the meaning of Easter?"

The man smiled and said, "Oh, I love Easter. You bring a tree into the house and there's this jolly guy in a red suit, and it snows, and everyone gets presents."

Reverend White could only shake his head. "I'm sorry, but you're describing Christmas, not Easter. Will you please ask the next candidate to come in on your way out?"

Again, he asked the next fellow, "Can you tell me the meaning of Easter?"

"Sure, no problem," the man said. "You see the Pilgrims were starving and the Indians helped them out by cooking up a bunch of turkeys and making cranberry sauce and everyone sat down at a long table."

"No, no, no—that's Thanksgiving, not Easter. Please tell the next person to come in on your way out."

The last applicant came in. He was older than the first two. He was also well-groomed, wore a tailored suit, and his shoes were shined. To Rev. White, this was a welcome ray of hope.

"Can you tell me the meaning of Easter?" he asked.

"Yes, of course," the man said. "It starts with the crucifixion of our Savior Jesus Christ."

"Yes, that's correct," Rev. White said, with an inner sigh of relief. "Please continue."

“Okay, so then they took Him down from the cross and they put His body into a tomb that was really just a cave like place and they rolled a huge stone in front of the entrance. And three days later, the stone was rolled back and, if Jesus saw his shadow, there would be six more weeks of winter.”

## THE TRIP TO PARIS

HERMAN AND HIS younger brother Sid moved from New York City to North Carolina where they bought a company that manufactures high-quality furniture for the home: dining room sets, bedroom sets, living room couches and coffee tables, even a line of teak patio furniture. Year after year each brother dedicated sixty hours a week to the business and never took a vacation. Nor did they marry and raise families. There were only two things the brothers cared about—making furniture and making money.

But then one day, Herman announced to his brother that he was going to take some time off and visit Paris, France.

“I’ve always wanted to see the City of Lights and since business is good and you’re here to take care of things, I’ve booked a flight to Paris that leaves on Saturday.

“How long will you be gone?” Sid asked his brother.

“Three weeks. Do you think you can manage on your own?”

“Of course I can. And I think it is high time for you to take a vacation. After all, neither of us is getting any younger.”

So Herman went to Paris and three weeks later he arrived back in the States and his brother picked him up at the airport.

“So how was your trip?” Sid asked, as they drove home.

“It was wonderful, simply wonderful. I visited the Louvre Art Museum, Notre Dame Cathedral, and the Eiffel Tower. But the best part of the trip was when I bumped into a French woman on the street in front of the Tourist Office. Her name is Celine, which in French means ‘heavenly’ and that’s what she is, Sid, heavenly.”

“Really? What did you talk about?”

“Well, we really couldn’t talk because she doesn’t speak English and I don’t know French.”

“Then how did you communicate?”

“Well, you know how much I like to sketch. I made sketches of all the places I’d visited in the city. And when I wanted to ask her to go with me to dinner, I took out my sketchbook and drew a picture of plates of food and glasses of wine and I showed it to her.”

“How did she respond?”

“She went to dinner with me. I took her to a fancy restaurant in the Latin Quarter and the food was delicious. Then I drew a picture of people dancing and showed it to her and she nodded her head and we went to a nightclub in Montmartre and we danced for hours.”

“That sounds like fun,” Sid said.

“Oh, it was. She’s so tall and slender and I held her close to me.”

“What happened then?”

“Well, as we were leaving the club she took my sketchbook and she drew a picture of a double bed and showed it to me.”

“Herman, that’s amazing!” Sid said. “How in the world did she know that you were in the furniture business?”

## HIGH WATER

THERE HAVE BEEN some terrible rainstorms of late. Just a few years ago one such storm rolled over a small rural town and caused all kinds of trouble, so much so that the citizens of the town didn't know what to do. The storm drains backed up and the streets flooded and some people were forced to watch as their cars and trucks floated away. Even the basement of the small department store on Main Street filled with water, ruining a substantial amount of the store's inventory.

And just out of town there was a house that stood in the middle of a field that was next to a river, and as far as you could see, there was nothing but brown swirling water surrounding the house.

What's more, two young boys were in the house looking out of a window on the second story. And, let me tell you, they were having the time of their lives. I mean, you know how it is with youngsters, they just naturally get excited about disasters—a tornado, hurricane, earthquake, something dramatic and out of the ordinary.

And as they looked out the window they saw a chicken coop go floating by, with the chickens still inside cackling like crazy. Boy, that was some fun.

Then a porch swing floated by, and then a mailbox with the red flag pushed up. They then noticed an old hat go floating by. They didn't pay much attention to it until it reached the end of the yard where it turned around and started back the other way, against the current. Now, that did get their attention. Then after fifty yards or so, it made another u-turn and floated down the way it had come. But then at the end of the yard or thereabouts it changed direction again. Six or



seven times the boys watched that old hat as it went back and forth, back and forth in front of the house, until the younger boy asked his brother, “What do you reckon that is, Jake?”

And his older brother just smiled and said, “Oh, that’s Pa. He said he’d mow the lawn come hell or high water.”



## THE IRISH PHARMACIST

A WOMAN WALKED into a pharmacy in Dublin and went up to the counter.

“Mr. Martin,” she said, “I want to talk to you.”

“I’ll be right with you, Mrs. Hennessy,” the pharmacist said. “Just let me fill this bottle with pills for Mrs. O’Brien. She’ll be by later this afternoon to pick them up.”

He finished filling the bottle and put it on a shelf. He then came forward. “Now Mrs. Hennessy, what’s on your mind?”

“I want to buy a bottle of arsenic, Mr. Martin,” she said.

“Arsenic?” he said. “Now what in the world would you be wanting with arsenic? Do you have rats?”

At this the woman bridled. “Indeed and I don’t! I’m a fine housekeeper, as you well know. You’ll find no rats at my house.”

“I didn’t mean to give offense,” he said. “I was just wondering why you need arsenic?”

“Well, if you must know, I am going to poison my husband.”

The druggist was stunned and hardly knew what to think. Mrs. Hennessy was a serious woman and not given to joking.

“And why, in God’s name, would you want to poison your husband?” he asked.

“Because he’s having an affair with another woman and, as sure as there’s a hot hob in hell, I’ll not put up with it. So I’ve decided to poison him.”

“Ah now, Mrs. Hennessy, I can’t be selling you arsenic to poison your husband. That would be murder and I’ll not be party to that.”

“You won’t? Well, then have a look at this. She reached into her purse and handed the pharmacist a photograph.

The photograph showed her husband, Mr. Hennessy, in bed with his wife.

Then Mr. Martin straightened up and said, “Ah sure now, Mrs. Hennessy, you didn’t tell me you had a *prescription*.”

## LOVING HER TO DEATH

TOM BAXTER was finished with being married. Forty-two years of putting up with a sharp-tongued woman endowed with an iron will. Where was the fun in that? If it had once been fun, he’d forgotten what that felt like.