

The Fire Hose

By Keith Eckert

kaxeckert@gmail.com

Cast

Judge

Prosecutor, unflappable, somewhat cold

Mrs. Blabberblogger

Defense Lawyer, ne'er-do-well lawyer

Mr. Joy-joy, speaks with a German accent

Physics Policeman 1

Physics Policeman 2 (non-speaking part)

(Scene: A typical courtroom setting with a judge's chair, a witness stand, and a defense table. When the lights are raised, Mrs. Blabberblogger sits in the witness stand, the judge in his seat and the Prosecutor standing. Sitting at the table is the defendant, Mr. Joy-joy, and his Defense Lawyer.)

PROSECUTOR

Mrs. Blabberblogger, tell the court what happened on the night of September 17th, in your own words.

MRS BLABBERBLOGGER

In my own words? Well, uh, blee doogle dong ab fied, zo tippel vit zuh.

PROSECUTOR

Yes. And in English this time, Mrs. Blabberblogger.

MRS. BLABBERBLOGGER

Ah yes. Well, I was watering my venus flytrap garden, with it being so dry and all, when suddenly without warning the garden hose caught fire.

DEFENSE LAWYER

I object, the witness is badgering our hose.

JUDGE

Then I suggest you put it away.

PROSECUTOR

You say the hose caught fire?

MRS. BLABBERBLOGGER

Yes, strangest thing, it was. While the water was coming out. Unnatural it seemed.

PROSECUTOR

And what did you do?

MRS. BLABBERBLOGGER

I called to my husband, Mr. Blabberblogger. "Mr. Blabberblogger!" I yelled. "The hose is on fire!" and he said, "Get the hose and put it out, you stupid whore!" and I said "It's the hose what's on fire!" And he said, "You been at the pills again?" And I says, "I don't take any pills." And he says, "If you make me get up I'm gonna knock you –"

PROSECUTOR

Yes, yes. What happened then?

MRS. BLABBERBLOGGER

The in-ground pool burned down. Then our house. Then the neighbor's house, the neighborhood, then the entire city. I think that hose is still burning. And that was two years ago.

PROSECUTOR

I see. And that garden hose was manufactured by the Tinky-Tank Tum-Tum Company?

MRS. BLABBERBLOGGER

It was.

PROSECUTOR

No more questions.

JUDGE

(to the Defense Lawyer)

Do you have any questions for the witness?

DEFENSE LAWYER

I move to have the witness stricken, your honor.

JUDGE

You mean her testimony?

DEFENSE LAWYER

No, I mean the witness, your honor. The Tinky-Tank Tum-Tum sledge hammer would do it quite nicely.

JUDGE

Motion denied.

DEFENSE LAWYER

Then I have no questions.

JUDGE

(to Mrs. Blabberblogger)

You are dismissed.

(Mrs. Blabberblogger exits.)

PROSECUTOR

I call Mr. Joy-joy, president of Tinky-Tank Tum-Tum Company, to the stand.

(Mr. Joy-joy walks up and sits in the witness box.)

Mr. Joy-joy, you are indeed president of Tinky-Tank Tum-Tum Company?

JOY-JOY

Ja – I mean, yes, I am.

PROSECUTOR

And you sell the Tinky-Tank Tum-Tum Garden Hose?

JOY-JOY

I – I don't recall. We sell many things.

PROSECUTOR

According to your website and catalogue, you sell exactly two things, Mr. Joy-joy – the Tinky-Tank Tum-Tum Garden Hose and the Tinky-Tank Tum-Tum Sledge Hammer. A rather odd set, but that's not against the law.

JOY-JOY

Hmm, I don't recall what products we sell.

PROSECUTOR

(giving several documents to the Judge)

Then, your honor, let me enter into the record exhibits A and B, the Tinky-Tank Tum-Tum Catalogue and Website, respectively, showing the garden hose in question. *(turning back to Mr. Joy-joy)* Now sir, we just had five witnesses testify that the Tinky-Tank Tum-Tum Garden Hose ignited spontaneously into flames causing millions of dollars in damages and the crisping of uncounted critters.

DEFENSE LAWYER

I object, your honor. The prosecutor is being alliterative with my client, a clear violation of the United Nation's Convention Against Torture.

JUDGE

That only applies to puns and dramatic irony. Denied.

PROSECUTOR

When did you first become aware of this problem, Mr. Joy-joy?

JOY-JOY

What problem is that?

PROSECUTOR

Your hose – catching fire.

JOY-JOY

What? That's a problem?

PROSECUTOR

Uh, yes. People, as a rule, do not expect, nor do they want, their garden hose to catch on fire.

JOY-JOY

At one time people didn't want their phone to take pictures. Now look at the state of things.

PROSECUTOR

Be that as it may, Mr. Joy-joy, when did you first learn that your garden hoses were catching fire?

JOY-JOY

This is the first time I've ever heard of such a thing.

PROSECUTOR

Is it?

JOY-JOY

I will point out, though, that the hose (if it existed) comes with a warning label saying it may catch fire and the Tinky-Tank Tum-Tum Company is free of all liability.

PROSECUTOR

A warning written in ancient Mandarin inside the hose hardly qualifies as a sufficient warning –

DEFENSE LAWYER

I object!

JUDGE

On what grounds?

DEFENSE LAWYER

On the basis of the meaninglessness of life.

JUDGE

Uh, sustained, but I'll let the questioning continue.

PROSECUTOR

Why is it, Mr. Joy-joy, that your garden hoses, when filled with water, catch fire? How is that even possible?

JOY-JOY

(shrugging)

I am just a simple American businessman from Pasadena.

PROSECUTOR

That so? It seems, Mr. Joy-joy that the Tinky-Tank Tum-Tum Company's incompetence and criminal negligence extends beyond the laws of physics!

DEFENSE LAWYER

I object!

JUDGE

For heaven's sake! What now?

DEFENSE LAWYER

Uh, if the prosecutor claims the laws of physics have been violated, I contend this court is not the appropriate venue for the case!

JUDGE

Hmm, I think you have a point! Based on this new information, I have no other recourse then to dismiss –

(As the Judge raises his gavel, two scientists in lab coats and wearing police badges rush in.)

POLICEMAN 1

Wait! *(dramatic music)*

JUDGE

What's going on? You can't just barge in like that. And where'd that music coming from?

POLICEMAN 1

(showing his badge)

You're honor, we are law enforcement officials from the Bureau of Physics, Theoretical Division. And we've come to take the notorious Mr. Joy-joy, aka Mr. Bum-Bum, aka Mr. Pee-Pee, into custody. He's a world-renowned Physics scofflaw wanted in thirteen dimensions.

JUDGE

He is?

POLICEMAN 1

Oh yes, last year we booked him going 187,000 miles per second – a clear violation of the speed limit of light. And he has built a perpetual motion machine in flagrant violation of the First *and* Second laws of thermodynamics. See for yourself.

(Policeman 1 gives the Judge some papers, which the Judge reviews.)

JOY-JOY

I spit on your laws of physics! Hee hee hee!

POLICEMAN 1

We had him in custody last year, but he escaped through a clause in Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle.

JUDGE

(looking up from the papers)

Everything looks in order. In that case, I remand him to your custody, officer.

POLICEMAN 1

Thank you, your honor. We'll take good care of him. Come on, Joy-joy, you're going to do some hard space-time in the electron slammer.

JOY-JOY

You got nothin' on me, flatfoots! You coppers couldn't calculate the Schrodinger equation in two dimensions, let alone three! Your particle charges will never stick!

POLICEMAN 1

Oh yeah? You'll see. We're throwin' the book at you – von Neumann's *Mathematical Foundations of Quantum Mechanics*. Laugh that off, punk!

(The physicist-policemen take Mr. Joy-joy roughly by the arm.)

Come on!

JOY-JOY

You got me now, Johnny Law, but I'll defy the Pauli Exclusion Principle of the law of electrodynamics and escape right through the jailhouse walls – escape, I tell you! Escape! Ha ha ha!

POLICEMAN 1

We'll see about that, ya bum!

(They escort Mr. Joy-joy out.)

JUDGE

Well, then, this case is dismissed! Let's have a recess.

(The Judge strikes the gavel and the lights go down.)

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