

MASSACRE BY MIRTH

By

Kevin Kaysworth

‘One paper’s already coined you *Massacre By Mirth*.’

‘I could write less of my own gags,’ Zephyr said to his agent Mike.

‘Less! You can’t afford to write any. I’m going to have to get a team in to do that.’

‘What! For all my material?’

‘Yes, all of it.’

It had been just a week since Zephyr Ford had caused five hundred of his audience at the Hammersmith Apollo, to have to be rushed to London’s various A&E departments with laughter-related injuries. Three days since a man in Germany nearly choked on a frankfurter, while watching that very performance on TV and merely twenty-four hours since a police motorbike rider on a high speed pursuit, had reflected on the same performance, lost all concentration and ridden through an archery contest. Laughing all the way, despite the arrows embedded in his back and chest.

Mike had also decided to put Zephyr’s pending nation-wide tour on hold. Until things quietened down a little. Or so he reckoned.

Mind you, Zephyr knew better than anyone, that his agent had valid reason for wanting to tighten his comical reins. Having once suffered a split spleen courtesy of his humour, would have justified his reins being tightened long before now. But with Mike’s wife since having gone into early labour due to Zephyr’s jocular genius, and then having to suffer the ordeal of delivery room staff laughing all the way through a difficult birth, having just watched his latest DVD, meant that Mike had been under pressure from a very angry woman going through the effects of post-traumatic birth, to not only tighten things, but to scrub Zephyr from his client list.

The following week had got worse. Not only had Mike admitted to being no closer to finding a team of writers that didn’t have to display government health warnings, (and who Zephyr suspected, probably hadn’t even tried to), but Zephyr’s wife had decided to leave him. Taking their two sons to stay at her mother’s. Zephyr having reflected at the time, as to how he had not just laughed a woman out of the bed, but his home and life as well. With his wife having stated at the time, that her stress incontinence could no longer take the bursts of intense laughter and that their sons had to get through primary school without being constantly dismissed for laughing involuntarily in the teacher’s face. So when Mike had rung saying that he was coming over with more bad news, Zephyr could only see the following week being even worse.

‘Jesus, Zephyr! The PM’s onto it now,’ Mike said, while sat at the kitchen table with his fifth whiskey in succession. Zephyr having thought how impressive that was for a confirmed teetotaller.

‘Onto what?’ Zephyr said.

‘Your stuff. The jokes. Their effect. The bastard’s even on about setting up a designated Minister for Deadly Jokes.’

‘Hasn’t the man got some semblance of people’s lives left to destroy?’

‘We all know the goon’s on a crusade to outlaw the smilie badge, but that’s how it is. And even worse, my wife’s not very happy about me being your agent. In fact,

she's very unhappy about it'

Two days later, knowing Mike's wife had probably by then talked him into not acting as his agent, and with the words from their last meeting still ringing in Zephyr's ears, the telephone decided to do some ringing of its own. And with a call that meant, within the hour, he found himself sat around a huge table at a secret location, with comics both past and present.

For two hours Zephyr had listened to the committee's head and Chairman to Freeview's controversial comedy channel *Laugh Yourself Shitless*, Rufus Geek, on about how only humour could oust a government determined to tuck us in at night with *I say, I say, I say* jokes.

'You're officially the funniest man in the world,' Rufus had told Zephyr. Having gone on to say, 'And that's not just according to the *Guinness Book Of World Records*. Nor because of the fact you are responsible for a vicar being defrocked for laughing at a funeral. Nor because you were also responsible for an airline pilot being sectioned for crash landing on the new A44567, while crumpled up with mirth. Not even because the Queen's Christmas Speech had to be cancelled, because, as one paper put it, *One couldn't keep a straight face*. It's not even because your middle name is Cortina. No, Zephyr. It's because you've been deemed by a world leading medical journal, as the greatest threat to people's health only behind cancer and heart disease. And it's to that end, I have decided to promote that autobiography you've publicly talked about for do long.'

'But I haven't finished it.'

'No need, Zephyr, I've seen that you've written as far as when its divulged as to the mixtures of nationalities your parents were and what your real surname is. And that will be enough to send your humour extraterrestrial. Aliens on the way to planet Earth, will be ripping their sides before they've arrived. Zephyr, you are going to massacre a government out of power.'

'What with? I haven't got a clue how to effectively wield a machete or a baseball bat.'

'You'll be armed with the weapon you know how to use better than anyone else: Humour.'

'Can't you just use laughing gas?' Zephyr pleaded.

'You're the laughing gas, Zephyr. Besides where would I get enough of it for the Fourth of July?'

'You mean for the *Don't Touch Britain With A Five Thousand Mile Long Disinfected Bargepole Summit?*'

'That's the one,' all twenty comics of the present day and yesteryear shouted in unison.

'And you'll be writing lots of that happy gas for your colleagues here,' Rufus beamed.

It had worked. Zephyr couldn't for the life of him comprehend just how, but it had. Six months after the British Prime Minister had rolled around the floor in front of world leaders, like a tinkled pink baby, Zephyr had found himself living at Number Eleven Downing Street as the Side-Splitters *Minister For Acting Infantile*. Second only to the new governing body's leader Rufus, as *Prime Side-Splitter*.

Rufus had wasted no time in having the Houses Of Parliament renamed *The Houses Packed To The Rafters With Comics*. And just as little time in having the

famous bell of Big Ben removed from St Stephen's Tower and replaced with four twenty-five foot tall, multi-coloured cuckoos. One for each clock face. Having also replaced such unpopular policies left behind by the laughed-out government such as tuition fees and the bedroom tax, the *Voluntary Contribution Towards Running The Country Tax* and the setting up of the *Donning A Witty Thought Balloon Initiative*.

But Zephyr started to relish his position a lot less, when the phone had rung one morning with a very uncharacteristically distraught Rufus the other end. Demanding to see him straight away at Number Ten, concerning a national catastrophe. The Side-Splitters first national catastrophe. A catastrophe that turned out to have been four for the price of one

'You're the only one, if there is a way through this, that will find it,' Rufus had told Zephyr, while choking back the tears.

It had transpired over the hour between Rufus sucking his thumb loudly and smacking himself across the face, that the four cuckoos had done as designed when they had made their collective debut. Only they had been a little too eager in showing themselves, when having shot simultaneously from their moorings, taking out the statue of Sir Winston Churchill, stood proudly in Parliament Square, two of the four pinnacles from the Victoria Tower the other end of the Palace Of Westminster, causing god-knows what damage to the Florence Nightingale Museum just over The Thames and striking a ferry coasting into the Millennium Pier on The Embankment. Sinking the packed vessel. All four big birds having eerily made contact with their inadvertent targets at exactly the same time.

'Jesus, Zephyr! They're launching an Official Enquiry. In eight hours time,' Rufus babbled. Now twisting both of his already reddened ears anti-clockwise. 'You'll have to use your magic again, Zephyr. Make the straight-faced bastards laugh the seriousness of the matter into never being mentioned again. You can do it. I know you can. Remember, you laughed a government into having to stand down mid-term.'

Yes, Zephyr had written every nation-offending line of every nation-offending joke that saw a government sent packing with less political pull than a residents association would have at any G8 Summit. According to the media, having *Massacred them by mirth, mutilated them out of power* or using whatever phonetically-friendly catch phrase they could care to dream up. But Rufus's hysterical ranting, hadn't given Zephyr the chance to let him know what had been blighting his life for months. A condition he thought would pass.

'Look!' Rufus screeched, as he held up the front page of a newspaper. 'A Japanese tourist aboard that fateful ferry a Mr Mi So Sik, said, "*On the cuck bird leave tower, and by the coo we swimming for life.*" We're going to be the first people in judicial history to be put on death row, in a country that doesn't even have the death penalty,' Rufus sobbed, now on his knees and his arms wrapped around Zephyr's legs.

But Zephyr didn't know where to start to tell a man that was increasingly moving toward going back into nappies, that his faith in him and his humour was very misplaced right now. But he was confident that his chronic, unrelenting writer's block would ensure the message got there in the end.

THE END

(1625 Words)

