

Challenge

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A work of fiction, meant for adults. Read something else if you are not an adult, or are offended by stories with sexual content. Then again, if all you're looking for is in-out, in-out, in-out, you should probably read something else. I welcome constructive comments. Enjoy.

A challenge -- write a story, even a short piece, without mentioning ***s.

What, me do a story without ***s in it? Unthinkable! Unimaginable! Me, who seemingly dwells constantly on ***s, the way they curve, the way they bounce, the way they smell, feel, and of course the way they taste. The joy of being suckled to a soft, full ***, of being smothered between full ***s, of resting my head on a soft *** relaxing to the sweet sound of a beating heart.

Could I do it? Could I write something, anything, without ***s in it?

Sure I can -- take it as a challenge. After all, Wright wrote a whole damn novel without once using the letter "e" -- "Gadsby: Champion of Youth."

So let me tell you about a job my brother-in-law the pipefitter who lives in Southern California did recently. He's a pipefitter and a welder, and a damn good one. He can weld just about anything that will hold still.

He works for a small company. They're usually brought in for specialized work, or interesting - unusual situations. For one job he welded special stainless alloys in a facility being built to sterilize medical supplies and equipment using high intensity cobalt radiation sources. All the welds had to be specially tested.

Another part of their business is in package boilers. If you run a facility with its own steam plant, like a big printing press, factory, or hospital, replacing your old boiler with a newer one can give you a tremendous increase in efficiency, as well as reduced emissions, lower fuel bills, and fuel flexibility.

Those replacement deals are called shutdowns -- as in shut down the old boiler, rip it out, and get the new boiler up and running as quickly as possible. Since your business is also shut down while the boiler is off-line, you want things to go quickly, but above all, smoothly. No surprises and methodical is the name of that game, and the company my brother-in-law works for does a great job. They work with a few of the package boiler companies, and get involved in the planning stage, meticulously planning the operation, pre-fabricating whatever they can, pre-staging, and running the shutdown like the major surgery it is.

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But this one is more mundane. It's about a hotel, and it's about nipples, lots of nipples.

Wait, I hear you cry -- I thought you were going to do a story completely without ***s?

Yup, and I am. Not a *** to be seen. In fact, that's how my brother-in-law described the deal to me -- "Bob, I'm up to my ass in nipples, without a *** to be seen!"

To a pipefitter, a nipple is a small piece of pipe which is threaded at both ends. Don't believe me? Go to your local (good) hardware store and ask for a six inch nipple. Or for the technically inclined, see ASTM A733-03.

This is about a hotel under construction. This is about the fire-control system in the hotel, known colloquially as the sprinkler system. According to the blueprints (which aren't blue most of the time these days, but it's a tradition), the supply line running above the room ceiling has a tee in it, with a nipple (parallel to the ceiling) connecting an elbow, with another nipple (pointing down) from the elbow to the sprinkler head.

Sounds simple, and it should have been, but someone fucked up. The subcontractor put in the sprinkler heads with nipples that were too short. That's bad. Put in *all* of them with nipples that were too short, discovered when another sub came through and thought the sprinklers aren't quite where they should be -- check the prints -- ah, boss, we got an issue here...

The general contractor used many of his Special Words in the subsequent discussion.

But to make it worse, when the Day of Reckoning came upon the subcontractor, they couldn't quite show that the people who had done the work were certified to work on sprinkler systems. More Special Words were uttered, and none of them were, "Oops..."

Suddenly there's a subcontractor no longer on site, and a very pissed-off general contractor in a world of hurt.

That's where my brother-in-law's company, him, and two of his buddies come in. They are good. They are certified. They are available. What they are not, is cheap. They are *not cheap*. But the general contractor understands this, and will pay them to work as many hours in a day as they can to get the job done, and please start yesterday, or the day before.

Walking the site, one of my brother-in-law's esteemed colleagues points out marks on a sprinkler head, marks most likely left by someone using the wrong kind of wrench in the wrong manner to tighten the sprinkler head to the nipple the wrong way. More special technical language ensues, much of it speculating on the genetic heritage of the ex-subcontractor. A colloquium quickly called among the general contractor, the customer, and other parties. They decide that rather than inspecting each sprinkler head, the whole lot will be considered for shit (a technical term meaning unfit for re-use). Suppliers are quickly contacted and shipments of new sprinkler heads are staged to brother-in-law's company; luckily they are able to locate enough

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locally so that they'll be able to get started first thing in the morning, after doing what pre-fabrication they can at the shop overnight.

Take a nipple and properly attach it to the elbow. Take a second nipple and properly attach it to the sprinkler head. Repeat until you're sick and tired of seeing nipples. Nipples and elbows, nipples and heads -- makes for a weird scene, man!

Bright and early the next morning the general contractor accompanied by coat-and-tie wearing representatives of the customer observe with folded arms and somber faces as my brother-in-law sets up his ladder, removes the old nipple-plus-sprinkler head, indicating wrench marks on the sprinkler head where there shouldn't damn well be wrench marks, and tosses it in a bucket. He then removes the elbow and its nipple from the tee. Inspect the tee with flashlight and with finger, describing the process for all to hear, hoping the tee is intact, as replacement would be unfortunate and *quite* irksome. Tee checks out, so properly install new nipple with elbow, tighten and align. Properly install new sprinkler head and nipple. Check measurements and look over installation with flashlight to make the crowd happy. Get down from ladder and let the gathered luminaries stick their heads up around it, look, and make noise.

Consensus is that the work is acceptable. *Nihil obstat. Imprimatur.* Many signatures scrawled on a new blueprint page. General contractor signals his Aide-de-camp to escort the luminaries far away from his construction site so they can actually get some work done.

One of brother-in-law's colleagues suggests to the general contractor that rather than deploy the retrofit on multiple floors at once, given a review of the suppression system, if they deployed by section, they could retrofit one section so the pressure test could be done on that section while they reworked the next one -- the overlap would save them time overall.

The general contractor smiled for the first time in a few days, raised his hands in ceremonial blessing, and bid them to proceed in an expeditious but of course safe manner.

So my brother-in-law and his crew spent quite a few days standing on ladders dealing with nipples. Loosening nipples, tightening nipples, loosening nipples, tightening nipples.

From early in the morning to long into the night: nipples, nipples, nipples, nipples!

There! I did it! And I didn't mention ***s once!

FIN
Rev 2009/12/22

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