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SMOOTHER

AMAZING, ISN'T IT?

I guess. It would be even more amazing, as Oscar Wilde once said, if the water didn't fall.

Oscar Wild? The weiner guy?

A famous funny sayings guy. From long ago. I think he played the piano, too. Anyway, it could happen. Or not happen.

What not happen?

The water not fall.

I get it. You're talking about Smoother. I thought we weren't going to talk about Smoother.

Sorry. It's just that, there it is. Smoothing along. One hundred twenty miles a day, day after day.

So what? So what does that have to do with us, you and me, here and now?'

Nothing. And everything.

Smoother's not even heading this way.

Not now.

I get it. You're talking about the whole world again. Well, for your information, at the rate it's going, Smoother will take thousands of years to smooth out the entire world.

More like hundreds. Do the math.

Okay, I'll do the math. It's a mile wide, it moves at about five miles per hour...

Eight point four kilometers per hour, to be exact. And Smoother is 2.173 kilometers wide.

Whatever. Metric Smoother, then. Either way, we're talking about a long time. The world is huge. Smoother just smooths a little strip.

That little strip, as you call it, gets longer and longer. Every year Smoother

smoothes an area the size of England. Smoother has already smoothed a strip long enough to stretch around the world five times at the equator.

Most of it worthless land. Most of it ocean floor.

In a few hundred years the whole world will be as smooth and featureless as a pool ball. A giant beige cue ball.

Lighten up! You and me won't even be around in a few hundred years.

Our children will

We don't have any children. And we never will if we spend our entire Honeymoon worrying about Smoother. It would be more amazing if it didn't smooth, according to your wildman guy. And it could be worse. Smoother takes its time. It's moving at a walk. A fast walk.

Still. People have plenty of time to get out of the way. Nobody's been killed by Smoother since Malta, and that was sort of a sneak attack.

And those villages in India.

Hey, it wasn't Smoother's fault they didn't watch TV.

They didn't have TV.

Same difference. And then they hung around, getting in the way, wanting to watch.

I know how they felt. Everybody wants to watch.

Not me. I got enough of Smoother when I was in the army.

You told me you only saw it at a distance, once.

Once was enough. I was in a helicopter. They were trying to cut it off with bombs.

What was it like?

Same as on TV. A ribbon of smooth nothing, about a mile wide, unrolling over everything. Flat. Sort of beige. No noise. Kind of a hump in the front, about four stories high

I don't mean Smoother. I mean, what was it like trying to stop it?

Stupid. Pointless. You saw it on TV. They shot at it, bombed it, tried to dig under it. Most of the guys killed were killed by friendly fire. And of course, the nuke. That was super stupid.

What's stupid is doing nothing. You can't just let Smoother smooth out the whole Earth without trying to stop it.

Sure you can. Especially if there's nothing you can do about it. And no matter what we do, it keeps going at the same speed, winding its way around the world, smoothing out whatever is in front of it, leaving behind that mile-wide smooth strip of nothing, like a yellow brick road.

Beige.

Beige, then. Rain evaporates as soon as it hits it. It won't burn, it won't break, it won't --

They say you can walk across it.

You can jump up and down on it howling at the Moon, if you want to, but you can't get rid of it or change a damn thing about it. Once it's there, it's there. Period. Finis. End of story. Get it?

Now who's the one that's all hot and bothered?

Sorry. It's not Smoother that bothers me, it's all the people who can't stop obsessing about it.

Like me.

I'm not mentioning any names. Notice how I'm not mentioning any names?

So just forget Smoother. Is that what you're saying?

Exactly.

What if you can't?

It's a discipline. It's all about living in the Now. Which is our Honeymoon, in case you've forgotten. Why don't you come over here.

Not in the mood. Let's see what's on TV. Damn! I should have known.

Smoother looks kind of peaceful on the small screen, doesn't it? Spiritual, almost.

It's disgusting.

It's smoothing a bunch of desert. Now tell me, is that so terrible?

That's Africa. Last month it barely missed Kilimanjaro.

See! A miss is as good as a mile!

But it will get it eventually. That's the thing. It will smooth everything. No matter what it hits or misses, Smoother will keep going, around and around the world, until every square inch is smooth.

Girl, you have got it bad! Why dwell on doom and gloom? You'll be gone long before it happens. In the meantime, why not sell the roses?

Smell the roses.

Whatever. Look at those elephants run! Smoother can be cool if you let yourself get into it. Remember when it went through China and took out a twenty-mile section of the Great Wall? That was horrible.

But spiritual too! Nothing lasts forever. Not even the Great Wall of China. Not even the Taj Mahal, though part of it's still there.

Most of it's gone.

Is the glass half full or half empty? I say it's half full!

What'll you say when the glass is gone?

Listen to you! Sometimes I think if there wasn't a Smoother, people would invent one. Just to have something to worry about.

Like me.

I didn't mention any names. See how I'm not mentioning any names?

Just because I'm concerned. Aren't you ever concerned?

There's a difference between being concerned and being obsessed. When I see Smoother heading my way, I will worry. Until that happens, I want to enjoy my -- our -- Honeymoon. What's left of it.

I get it. Your feelings are hurt. You think I care more about Smoother than about you.

Well, don't you?

Of course not. It's just that -- I hate Smoother so much!

There's that word I hate: Hate! But seriously, life's too short to waste on hating. Just accept Smoother for what it is.

Which is -- what?

Maybe there are some mysteries we are not supposed to unravel. Think how boring life would be if Nature had no secrets!

Nature won't, when Smoother gets through. Don't you ever wonder where it came from? What it's doing here?

Maybe it was here all along and we never noticed it. Maybe it dropped in from another galaxy. Maybe some crazy guy made it in his garage. Maybe it escaped from a bottle in a lab. Who knows? And it's pretty obvious what it's doing here.

But why?

Want to know my theory? I think Smoother is here to remind us that life is about Change.

Smoother is about the end of Change. When it's finished the Earth will be a smooth ball floating through space. No water, no wind, no people, no life at all.

That's Change, isn't it? Stop trying to control everything all the time. Think different. Live in the Now. Hell, it's kind of pretty, smoothing along across the veldt anyway. It is veldt, isn't it? Do you say the "d"? Or is it the savannah?

Both. Either. Neither. I don't know. Never mind, Sooner or later it'll all just be a big smooth yellow nothing anyway.

Beige. You said yourself it was beige. Hey! Why'd you turn the TV off?

I thought you were sick of Smoother.

I am, but I'd rather watch it than talk about it. But hey, this is our Honeymoon, and the water's still falling, as your wildman would say. Why don't you come over here with me.

Because I'm not in the mood. Plus I have a headache.

On our Honeymoon? Try one of these.

Tylenol?

Better. It doesn't stop the pain, it goes straight to the brain and blocks the consciousness of pain. So you don't feel it?

You feel it, but you don't feel it as pain. Might even work on your mood.

Sounds good. I'll give it a shot. What's it called?