

PULL/PUSH©

(A Bits-&-Pieces story)

by

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You ask me how the blind Oriental came to play the garbage can cover in front of Bodoni County City Hall? I will tell you.



Once upon a time, not very long ago, a young violinist by the name of Pull My Jambe went on his first world tour. The gifted young Pull was very pampered in his own country (a small ancient mountain city called, *High Tessatura*, located between Manchuria and Siberia), and much was expected from Pull My Jambe on this tour.

Pull would bring glory and big bucks back to *High Tessatura*. To that end, Pull My Jambe was given every luxury and comfort and convenience as he traveled. He could purchase anything he wanted. He traveled with a retinue of managers, secretaries, cooks, his very own gold Port-O-John, and five Head Girls (whose sole job was to give Pull "Head" whenever he required it).

Tonight, Pull was to be the major soloist of the evening, scheduled to open and close the orchestra's concert in the new Performing Arts Center & Breadsticks Factory (The PAC&BF) in a place called Bodoni County, U.S.A.

At first Pull had been honored to be booked as soloist for this prestigious, inaugural concert (He even put on a brand new Caucasian mask for the occasion — the *always-smiling mask* with the slightly turned up smiling nose). But when Pull My Jambe saw the program and what he was scheduled to play, he became troubled.

On two counts:

Count #1) Pull's performances were to be sandwiched between: *Five Bruckner Symphonies; a concert version of the entire Ring Cycle by Richard Wagner; the First, Second and Third Symphonies of Gustav Mahler; Beethoven's, Eroica, Pastoral, Seventh and Ninth Symphonies; a two hour kazoo transcription of The Star Spangled Banner; Strauss's, Also Sprach Zarathustra, and Four Last Songs* (to be performed by the minor soloist of the evening, a seven year old, four-foot soprano from Mozambique).

Count #2) Pull did not know the two pieces he was listed to play.

Now, Pull was a very controlled Asian person — was taught, in fact, to be ultra controlled, stoic and tight-assed by his venerable master, Master Mr. Push. But opening and closing a two-month-long program to be played in one night?

(and it was made clear to Pull that he was expected to sit on stage throughout the concert in a low stool)

And not knowing the pieces he was scheduled to play in front of 20,000 paying customers made Pull feel — well — less than secure — and even, for the first time in his young life, made him acknowledge and confront a smoldering inner rage, as it rose from his heels to his now-burning face cheeks, under the *Caucasian always-smiling mask*.

So, to calm his nerves, Pull called for his Head Girls, but they did not answer his call. Then he called for his secretaries and cooks and managers. He was told that they had defected.

So Pull tried to call his New York booking Management. But the New York office told Pull that pampered young masked violinists from small mountain Asian countries weren't selling any longer and that they were letting him go and that from now on he would be on his own and made a rude sound and then they hung up on him.

Abandoned. Alone. For the first time in his life, the pampered Pull had to deal — on his own! — with a crisis in his career— *in his life* — so he tried to contact the Bodoni County Orchestra's Business Manager, Mr. Fettuccini. But Mr. Fettuccini couldn't be reached by phone. Because of the storm. Which was very severe. So severe, in fact, that when he looked out the window, Pull saw that the water had already reached the second floor windows, and that the rain showed no sign of letting up.

So Pull My Jambe tracked down the Bodoni County Orchestra conductor, Maestro Sewickly, who was getting ready for the concert by painting his toenails puce in his dressing room, and Pull asked Maestro Sewickly if anyone could really expect him to play the two concertos that he did not know.

Pull was so agitated that he took off his always-smiling Caucasian mask and waved it under the nose of the conductor. The Maestro was shocked to see that Pull was Asian. "Why, you're Asian!" said shocked Maestro Sewickly; who then made a quick mental note, in Pull's honor, to conduct tonight's ten-month-long concert with chopsticks.

Then Maestro Sewickly asked Pull to please blow on his puce toes while he looked over the scores of the concertos Pull was scheduled to play and was bitching about.

"Why," said Maestro Sewickly (after inspecting the scores), "these are works every solo trombonist should know."

"But I'm a violinist!" said Pull.

That made Maestro Sewickly furious and he re-HushPupped his puce toes and icily suggested that Pull *"pull yourself together and pray to Buddha or some other Asian Machuh for guidance,"* and pushed Pull out of the dressing room and slammed the door at Pull My Jambe's back.

Pull, with Caucasian always-smiling mask off, then tied together three metal music stands, two saxophones and a kettle drum, draped them all over his person, stood on the window ledge and got ready to jump into the raging gutter rapids.

Suddenly, behind Pull, there was a crash. Pull turned and saw that the glass in the oval wall mirror he had been ordered to carry with him wherever he went had fallen from the oval frame and had smashed onto the floor.

In the glass's place was the face of Pull's venerable old music master and all-around teacher and reigning disciplinarian, *Master Mr. Push*.

Master Mr. Push, always stern, said, "It has always been understood that I would be the one to tell you when to de-mask and de-live." And then, of course, venerable Master Mr. Push created on the spot one of his famous epigrams. *"Because,"* epigrammed Push, *"on your own, you cannot throw flower petals onto the Ventura Freeway and expect the Cherubim of Malibu to aim their smiling tushies on you."*

Pull was stunned. Here he was, Caucasian (*always-smiling*) mask off, and on the verge of de-living himself out of fear and frustration, in a foreign place called Bodoni County, U.S.A., and his old, venerable, disciplinarian Master Mr. Push, had, in 26 words, aimed his verbal shaft of bullshit into the heart of Pull's angst. And Pull, as usual, didn't understand a word of it.

However, Pull, with bowed, obedient head (and in pain, from the weight of the music stands and saxophones and kettle drum) automatically fell into the ancient *"Knowledge By Epigram Combat"* he had been forced to learn when, many, many years before, Master Mr. Push had caught Pull trying to plug a Peking Duck with his Lo Mein and, as punishment, forced Pull—for the rest of his life—to *"the Combat."* And, of course, in those *"Combats,"* Pull was always defeated. And those defeats kept Pull subjugated and dispirited.

Would Pull be defeated this time? Somehow, if defeat came this time, Pull knew that it would really be over for him, forever and ever. And a day.

With no manager or hangers-on now, Pull wanted to be the one to make the decision about whether to put back on the *Caucasian always-smiling mask*, and/or whether to de-live.

And so, the *"Knowledge by Epigram Combat"* commenced:

“Do you suppose, my young Pull,” said the pushy Master Mr. Push, pushing for an opening advantage, “— do you suppose that the seaweed girdle coverting the kiwis of the Scandinavians can also smile on a country like Tallahassee?”

Pull immediately used the strategy of answering a question with another question.

“But, Master,” re-questioned Pull, “cannot a leaf of Springtime survive being used as toilet tissue in the outhouse of despair?”

“Only,” replied the old, but strong-voiced Master Mr. Push, “Only if the bark of winter sprouts watercress in the sinuses of eternity.”

“But how,” insisted Pull, who's back was beginning to break, “How can the compost heap of sorghum breed ice cream in the cavities of a flounder's naval?”

“The same way,” responded the now exasperated Master Mr. Push, “The same way that the bedbug lies dormant in the discarded wrinkles of an armadillo who has just had a face lift.”

“But if that is true,” pressured Pull, “How is it that the lice found in a stale blini often procreates even when gargling?”

“Because,” said the angry and now winding-down Master Mr. Push Push, “Because the Sandy Loam yeast makes the mud rise on the Merkin-and-spread-legs archipelago of mankind's horny plain.”

“Then who,” insisted Pull (getting stronger and stronger) and moving in for the kill— “Who will answer the coyote's yelp when he licks the sap from the private parts of the holly berry tree and dives into the flotsam of the sulfurous pit to try to save the giant anchovy from being sucked down into the gelatin of the kielbasa caves-of-lost-puss-pimples where all the world's suctioned cellulite is stored?”

This, of course, was too profound for the totally exhausted venerable Master Mr. Push to parry.

“I am old and full of wind and vocal nodes and anal fissures,” said defeated Master Mr. Push, “And I tried to interfere to save you — keep you tied to the authority that made you — and even —when I smashed through the umbilical mirror of bondage, got some broken glass up my nose. But I see now that the itchy back of your arrogance is beyond the scratch of my despairing old claws, and I fear that I do not understand the world and its young any longer. So, I shall retreat to the great rice fields among the fluted plains of pain. Goodbye, young Pull My Jambe. From henceforwardbackwardandbeyond — you are on your own. I'm outta here.”

And venerable Master Mr. Push, in a puff, passed over.

And then a clap of thunder followed by a lightning bolt struck the metal music stands still tied around Pull's neck and recharged Pull's sinking soul and made the kettle drum, also still tied to his person, reverb right into the heart of his coccyx and prostate and, as if freed from some terrible cramp in the scruff of his scrotum, Pull My Jambe pulled himself

up, threw off the inner weight that had made him an Asian wuss all his life, flung away for good his Caucasian always-smiling mask — *and* violin (he always hated that damned violin!) — beat with his bare hands the kettle drum, and, note-perfect, played on percussion the two trombone concertos he had never learned.

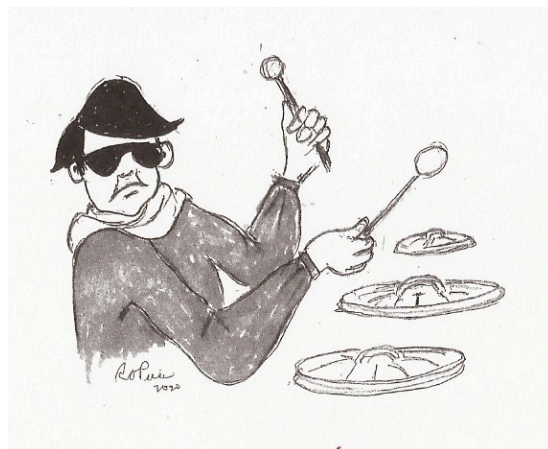
Yes! Pull, finally, had out-epigrammed his teacher, his father figure, the venerable asshole Master Mr. Push — and Pull was free.

And Pull, a man suddenly possessed, showed his own de-masked face to the Bodoni County world and played the Kettle Drum at the open window of the concert hall as the rain rained in on him. And the Ark, carrying the audience to the concert, dropped anchor, and all 20,000 aboard got to their knees, broke wind and, soaked to the soul, listened in awe and reverence to the now percussionist Pull pound the kaka out of those skins. And, while he played, and to the world, he ejaculated:

“I HAVE FINALLY OUT-EPIGRAMMED MY TEACHER, MY FATHER FIGURE, THE VENERABLE ASSHOLE, MASTER MR. PUSH.”

* * * * *

And Pull My Jambe continues to live in Bodoni County. And he sleeps in the raw and makes love to little brunette kettle-drum groupies on a bed of broken glass in his own platinum condominium-coffin.



And, by day, he stands in front of the Bodoni County City Hall and beats out complicated ditties on garbage can covers. Pull wears dark glasses and pretends to be blind. And watches. And, on occasion, he tells tales to the passing parade of the lost and lonely:

“--and so” (one tale might begin) “for his many sins, little kumquat was turned into a turtle and he swam the marshes and swamps and looked for heknewnotwhat but did a lot of slow turtlethinking and he imagined that he was a tall rockandroll lead guitarist playing in an apse at OurLadyoftheBoringBeat and people were kneeling in front of him and he blessed them by voiding his holy water on them but then that incarnation pisspassed and kumquat became the foreskin of a legendary Christian stud and then became the payus of an orthodox Jew and then the finger pulling on that payus and also

was transformed into other things quite charming things like the well-strummed and tongueflickedsouthcentraluvula of an active talentless starlet and then became gross things too like caked-up buggers in the nostrils of a very hairy Serbian brigadier general and a hemorrhoid in the bum of a sedentary congressman but soon found himself in open water and swam to a barge that was a free floating garbage barge filled to overflow with stinking garbage from a large stinking city that no one wanted and had no captain captaining it so finally kumquat turned into the skipper and ferried this garbagebargewithoutacountry, like some stinking Flying Nazi, and loved the endless aloneness of it all since kumquat now knew that aloneness would be the essence of his life and could always have a combat-of-the-epigrams with the seagulls and ask them things like is there a puffcloud in the sky that god uses to powder and deodorize her armpits and kumquat would imagine the seagull answering only hogs that belch have the kind of warts that give milk and Pull might then respond with but does that not mean . . .

And on and on it would go like that until the end of time.

And so, without leaving his garbage can in front of the Bodoni County City Hall, Pull My Jambe went on endless, wonderful journeys of the soul — as despairing turtles, armadillos, sand hogs, orangutans, calamaris, and like that.

And never, never, ever again took off his dark glasses.

But. Also. Pull never ever again wore a Caucasian always-smiling mask either.

Or any other mask.

Ever again.

And, like most people in Bodoni County, lived sadly ever after.

END

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