

Break a Leg--short story

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A dare devil with common sense, not so much!

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Break a Leg--short story

Table of Contents

Break a Leg--novel

Break a Leg--short story Chapter 2

Break a Leg--short story Chapter 3

Break a Leg--short story Chapter 4

Chapter 1: Break a Leg--novel

Break a Leg

By Mike Stevens

Chapter One:

Around the track he went, building up enough speed. All his friends watching him said it couldn't be done, and that he was crazy even to try. But Ben Haversack *knew* it could be done, and he'd bet every last one of his friends he would make it. As he approached the take-off ramp, he took his hands off the handlebars and waved to them. *They probably think I'm crazy*, Ben thought to himself. *But I'm not crazy*. Unbeknownst to them, he'd been secretly coming here and jumping his bicycle, he knew how far he could safely jump, and this jump was going to be easy. He had plenty of speed as he hit the ramp. He went airborne, pulled up on the front end, and watched as his front tire fell off and bounced beneath him. He knew he would bite it upon hitting the ground. *Damn!* His bike landed, clearing the boxes by plenty, but upon hitting, he flew over the handlebars, did a face-plant, the bike pin-wheeled above him, and the forks struck him right in the middle of his back. He jumped up, fear gripped him, and he managed to say, through clenched teeth,

"I'll see you guys later, I've got to go!."

Yeah, to the hospital, all his friends thought. As he ran through the woods that bordered the track, he heard laughter from his friends; laughter! He didn't know how badly he was hurt, yet they were laughing. After he'd run for a ways, the pain started to ease. He dared to look down. He wasn't seeing any blood. His back still stung, but that was all he noticed. If he was severely injured, surely he'd be in horrible pain, and blood would be everywhere. The surge of adrenaline had passed; so if the pain was going, he must be okay. He turned around, put on a brave face, and walked back to his friends; friends he wasn't too sure about anymore. He walked up to his bike and proclaimed loudly,

"I'm okay and I'm going to try that jump again."

His friends just stared at him in disbelief. *Had the fool plum lost his mind*, they wondered? He retrieved the bike and the wheel, and soon had the two joined together again. He'd had to straighten the forks, but other than that, the bike was fine. As he was setting the bike back on its wheels, he heard a commotion from his friends. He glanced up towards something they were looking at, out on the track. His friend's grandfather was racing around the track, on his grandson's racing bike. Ben called out,

"Sir, what are you doing?"

The older guy yelled back, his voice vibrating with every bump he hit,

"Oh, it looked like fun, so I thought I'd try it."

"Sir, that's not a good idea, you could get hurt"

"Nonsense, I used to do this sort of thing when I was young."

They all watched as the older man approached the jump. He flew up the ramp, pulling up a little too much on the handlebars, and with his arms flailing the air helplessly, he sailed off the back of the bike. The bike, sans rider, hit, bounced high into the air, and disappeared into the sticker bushes which surrounded the racetrack.

Break a Leg--short story

Meanwhile, the friend's grandfather hit the ground and performed a nice-looking somersault, hit the ground again, and lay motionless. After they got over the shock of what they'd just seen, everyone rushed up to the guy, fearing the worst. He was moving, at least. Ben said; worry making his voice tremble,

"Are you okay, man?"

The older man groggily tried to get to his feet. As everyone tried to help him up, he whispered,

"Y-y-yeah, I-I th-think I'm o-o-kay. If yo-you guy-guys do-don't mi-mind, I th-ink I'll he-head on ho-home."

And with that, he slowly limped his way to the trail through the woods and disappeared. Ben followed the others back to the track. That had been scary! What was the older fella thinking?

Ben was on the track once again, heading as fast as he could peddle towards the jump. He was bound and determined to make the jump successfully. Briefly, ever so briefly, he had a vision of his tire falling off again, then shook his head to clear his mind. He didn't need those negative thoughts. Nothing bad was going to happen; the wheel was tight. He told himself to concentrate on the positive. As his friends watched, he hit the ramp, went airborne, flew through the air, and landed perfectly, skidding to a stop in a swirling cloud of dust. He'd made it!

Trotter Willow had just seen the future; the future that would save his bleak career. He was a talent agent, representing anything that would pry the money from people's pockets. He'd been struggling to come up with something which would draw a crowd; and make him a lot of money. Just by chance, he had come with a friend to this dirt oval out in the middle of nowhere, to have a few beers and at least help pass the day. Here, he had unexpectedly seen a man who would be his next client.

This teenager had tried to jump 8 boxes on his bicycle and had endured a terrible crash, only to get up, dust himself off, and successfully try the jump again. The young man had no fear; he probably should have had, but was too dense. Perfect!

Ben had started to ride home when a stranger he was riding past waved for him to stop. He grimaced inwardly as he came to a stop. The stranger walked up to him and said,

"Hey kid, my name is Willow and I watched you jump today. Pretty brave of you to try the jump again after the spill you took on your first try. I'm looking for a man of your bravery (to himself he thought stupidity was a better word) to represent and make a star. I was thinking "movies" but after watching you out there, I said to myself, *why not a stunt rider?* I just happened to be here visiting a friend, and that's when I saw you jump. I would like to represent you, and there are plenty of places where people would pay a lot of money to see you jump, so what do you say; are you interested?"

Ben was shocked; pleasantly shocked! "Do you mean I could make a living at jumping things?"

"Sure, and a handsome living at that."

Ben Haversack was almost sick with nerves. Tonight was the big Tractor Pull, during which he would attempt to jump a motorcycle over 3 full-sized buses. He had wanted to start with an easier jump, but his new manager, or agent, Trotter Willow had told him if he wanted to earn the big bucks, this was a must. Spectators would only come out and spend their money if they thought there was a chance Ben would crash.

"Do you think I'll crash?" he asked Trotter.

Break a Leg--short story

"Kid, if I thought you would crash, I would never have picked you. You've taken to a motorcycle like a duck to water. I know you've never jumped a motorcycle before, but it's very similar to a bicycle. I have complete confidence in you." *Only you'll be going over 100 miles per hour, with a heavy bike that might land on you as you pinwheel down the track after losing control upon landing, and are eating the dirt*, he thought to himself. Inside, he was confident alright, confident that Ben would bite it, but outwardly he tried to look confident for Ben's sake. He figured this was more than likely Ben's one and only jump, so he'd take advantage of Ben's ignorance. He figured this jump was suicide, after he'd watched Ben try to master a motorcycle, he'd become more and more convinced he would crash.

Ben sat at the top of his take-off ramp and looked over the crowd. This was the intermission between the dirt bike races that opened the Tractor Pull, and the demolition derby which closed it. All eyes were riveted on him. In turn, his were riveted on the buses, looming large in his vision, and he told himself to be positive. He would make this jump. He blocked out any thoughts of failure, and started down the ramp. Faster and faster the bike went, and it was almost time to pull--suddenly, he was at the ramp. His mind went blank, and to the sound of the screaming engine, he was flying through the air. He couldn't help looking down, because when he'd hit the end of the ramp he'd forgotten to pull up on the front end. He saw the busses sailing beneath him, knew he was in big trouble, and lost control of his bowels. His bike landed almost nose-down, and suddenly he knew what a rag doll must feel like, as his body bounced off of the landing ramp and like a slow-motion cartwheel in old stunt wipeouts he'd seen, his flying body pin-wheeled end-over-end, until he at last came to a stop. Of course, hitting the concrete wall might have been part of the reason for the sudden stop.

The kid was finally coming to. Trotter Willow looked down at him, in a full body cast and blood-soaked bandages around his head. Trotter felt a twinge of guilt, but it soon passed. After all, he was only a businessman, doing what he could to earn a buck. Yeah, he might have used the kid's naivety, but the kid had also willingly attempted the jump. So he was just as much to blame for his current state. The doctors had told him the kid had suffer three broken ribs, a broken right leg, a gash on his head from plowing into the wall, and a severe concussion. When he came to, they were going to recommend no more jumping for him. Now that he was coming around, Trotter knew his meal-ticket would heed the doctor's advice and quit jumping, but oh how he wished it could be different. He felt a flood of guilt; here the kid was lying there, all busted up, and all he could think about was the money he'd be losing. What the hell was the matter with him? Of course, the most important thing was the kid's health. Just then, Ben's eyes fluttered open, and he just stared at the ceiling, as he tried to remember what had happened to him, and figure out where he was.

"Ww-wwhere am I, and what happened?"

Trotter quickly answered, "You're in the hospital, you took a nasty fall off your motorcycle when you attempted to jump three buses, but you're doing fine." It was a lie, but there was no need to freak the kid out even further.

"Oh, now I remember. Did I clear the buses? I can't remember anything after I hit the ramp. And boy, does my head hurt!"

"Your head hurts because you've suffered a sever concussion," replied Dr. Tallman, who had entered the room unseen. "I'm afraid they'll be no more motorcycle jumping for you, you can't risk another concussion and probable permanent brain damage. I've got to make my rounds, but I'll check in on you after awhile."

Trotter hated hearing the words he knew were coming, but at least he knew it was for the kid's sake. The doctor left, and he said to Ben, "Oh well, your young, and have the whole future in front of you."

"The hell with that," the kid replied, "how soon can you line up my next show?"

Break a Leg--short story

Trotter didn't think he heard the kid's reply correctly. "What?"

"I said when can you line up my next show?"

"But you heard the doctor, no more jumping."

"Ahh, he's just being overly-cautious. Can you get me some aspirin? My head's killing me!"

It was almost time; Ben Haversack took one last look at the river gorge he'd be attempting to jump in his special rocket-car, and prepared for take-off. He would sail across the gorge, deploy his parachute, and gently land the car on the other side of the river. He glanced once more at the T.V. crews covering his historic jump, and pushed the ignition button. He felt a deep rumbling, then the car began its upward trajectory. He saw the end of the ramp slide by, and then he was sailing out and over the river gorge. How tiny it looked! He was atop a missile, flying across the gorge. When he judged he wasn't too far from the opposite bank, he pulled the lever that would deploy the parachute and cut the engine. Nothing happened! His car crossed over the other side of the river, still accelerating, and kept flying. There was no way to stop the damn thing. He was flying directly towards a town, a town some five miles from the river. He was desperately trying to think, wondering where he would end up. They had never even thought of this, the chances seemed almost zero, so he had no idea what he should do! Maybe he'd get lucky and sail over the town, into the wide open desert, where he could gently ease her down, and gently bring her in for a landing. He could roll forever, there was nothing but smooth, hard-packed desert for miles. As he was thinking this, the rocket quit and the car headed down! In a panic, he tried the parachute again. This time, it deployed, but he needed more room for it to take effect. The car was sailing directly for a three-story brick office building. He was going to crash right into it! He screamed, and covered his eyes. So this was the end of everything, huh? He waited for the final impact.

His eyes snapped open and he looked wildly around. The first thing his blurry eyes focused on was the clock on his nightstand. The impending wreck had only been a dream, a vivid one, but a dream none the less.

"Ben, I've lined us up for a new gig; one that will put a healthy chunk of change in both our pockets," Trotter Willow was saying, when he had called Ben later in the morning. Ben was tired, as he'd had the same nightmare for the last 3 nights.

"Ben, let me tell you about it; it's big! Think beyond anything you've ever thought up before. We're going to jump Deep Canyon in a rocket-car!"

Ben dropped the phone in surprised shock; it was his dream, only it was becoming a reality. He retrieved the receiver, and barely heard Trotter saying,

"I say, did you hear me Ben, a rocket-car! We'll make this a media event. They'll be falling all over themselves to cover it. We'll build grandstands, and charge people \$100 to watch it. We'll make a killing on the concessions, alone."

"I wish you wouldn't use the word "killing" when talking about this jump," replied Ben. "I've been having these terrible nightmares about jumping a canyon in a rocket-car. In them, I launch the car, andâ " "

"That sounds scary, but you'll have to finish telling me later. Right now I've got a million things to make sure are covered for the jump. I'll call you later, okay Ben?"

"Oh, sure Trotter, I'll talk to you later."

Break a Leg--short story

Ben hung up the phone, terrified. No wonder he'd been having those dreams, they were a warning to him not to jump; that if he did, disaster loomed! He was scared out of his mind, yet he didn't know what to do about it. He should just back out of the jump, but how ridiculous would it sound to say he'd been warned not to do it by a dream! Everyone would think he was nuts. He racked his brain about what he should do, and suddenly the answer came to him; he decided to visit a fortune teller. If he was told not to jump by the fortune teller, he wouldn't do the thing.

Darwin Truth was at the end of his rope; he had no money, no friends that would loan him money, and bills coming due that he couldn't pay. What was he going to do? What he needed was a new scheme; something that would earn him the money, like yesterday! As he was thinking, he was watching television, only half paying attention. Suddenly, a man appeared who grabbed his interest. It was a show about a sleuth who solved crimes with the aid of a wacky fortune teller, who spouted lame one-liners. It wasn't the terrible on-liners that got his attention, it was the idea; why not become a fortune teller, and charge people whopper bucks to tell them what they'd like to hear?

Ben Haversack was going crazy with worry. He just knew he wasn't going survive the jump over the river canyon in the rocket-car. He was sitting in the home of a fortune teller; sitting across from him was Darwin Truth, who had some tea leaves spread out on the table in front of him. He stared at them, forecasting Ben's future.

"The leaves are a good omen. They tell me that you'll have a successful jump. They tell me there'll be money and fame for you," Darwin, the fortune teller said.

Ben asked, "Are you sure about that?"

Darwin replied, "Yes, I'm very sure. That's the way the tea leaves arranged themselves after I dropped them, and the leaves are never wrong."

Ben got all excited, shook Darwin's hand vigorously, and he said,

"Thank you, Mr. Truth; now that you've read about my future, you took a huge weight from my shoulders. Thank you and I can't thank you enough!"

Chapter 2

Chapter Two:

Darwin Truth smiled to himself. He was \$5000 richer, all because a sap had paid him to see his future. Darwin had figured out the guy wanted to be reassured, so that's what Darwin told him. The old saying was true; there's one born every minute!

Ben Haversack was strapped tightly into the rocket-car, which was pointed towards the clear blue sky. Since he'd had his future foretold, he was no longer worried. In fact, he was downright anxious to get the jump underway. He finally heard the countdown to launch in his headset.

"10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5!" Suddenly, Ben thought of something he had overlooked. He had been so anxious to hear his future told that he had forgotten to ask Darwin Truth from where he learned his trade. *Oh well, he sure seemed above board*, he thought to himself. Anyway, now was not the time for such negative thoughts.

"4, 3, 2, 1, 0!" He was suddenly slammed back in his seat, as then rocket-car took off. It arced out over the river gorge, still accelerating. Wow, was he moving! He saw the river flying by beneath him; it was time to pull the lever that would cut the engines and deploy the parachute. He pulled the handle, and it tore loose from the dash, trailing streamers of broken wires. He had absolutely no way to slow his forward momentum! In his rearview mirror he saw the stands they had set up rapidly getting smaller, as the rocket-car shot over the landing zone, and kept streaking towards a town, just like his dream. But he had been assured by the fortune teller that this jump would be a success! Well! Well, after this he wouldn't put any faith in fortune tellers. Then he thought with a sickening dread, *there probably won't be a next time*.

The car flew toward the city with alarming speed. It was just as he'd seen it in his dream. As he flew the out-of-control rocket over the city, the motor hadn't cut out yet, unlike in his dream. He was going to clear; the dream wasn't a harbinger of the future! He had been worried for no reason; suddenly, he glanced at the horizon and saw a huge warehouse, and the rocket-car was heading right for it. The warehouse hadn't been in the dreams. In a panic, he tried the lever to release the parachute again. It shot out, and began to unfurl. But there was not enough time for it to catch. The car was heading for the brick chimney of the warehouse. It clipped the thing, sending the car end-over-end, until it hit the ground. To Ben, there was an ear-shattering noise, as the car flew apart, then blackness.

Trotter Willow had watched the rocket-car tumble, end-over-end, until what was left of the car came to a stop, finally. As the rescuers ran to the crash sight, Lumpy was running close behind. When he got there, he was thinking, *poor Ben, the kid never had a chance*; the firemen were working feverishly on Ben. It couldn't be! No one could have survived that wreck, and yet they were pulling Ben from the mangled wreckage of the rocket-car.

"Is he alive?" Trotter inquired of the fireman who appeared to be in charge.

"Barely," came the man's answer. "We're doing everything we can," he then added.

Trotter woke with a start. Where was he? He looked around at the gray carpet, white walls, and then he remembered; he was curled up on a couch in the waiting room of the local hospital. Against all odds, Ben somehow clung to life. He'd suffered another devastating blow to the head, and was in a coma. In addition, he'd suffered several broken vertebrae; several more broken ribs; cuts and abrasions; and both of his legs were broken. Trotter had vowed not to go home until the kid's fate was decided, one way or the other. But he was regretting that decision, as others waiting in the waiting room tried to suppress their gag reflex; for after three

Break a Leg--short story

days of not showering, how he did reek! And he was surrounded by a small mountain of various potato chip and candy bar wrappers, and empty soft drink containers from the vending machines. But, he wanted to be there when any answers on Ben became apparent.

Later that night, Trotter was trying to decide between another candy bar, or another bag of stale potato chips; neither sounded good; when there came from the battered form on the hospital bed,

"Wwwaaattt hhhhaappppppeennneeeddd?"

Trotter turned, and found his gaze being returned by a now-awake Ben.

"Hey, buddy, it's nice to see you awake. For a while there, it looked pretty dicey."

"Yuck, my mouth is so dry. Where am I?" asked a fully-conscious Ben.

"You're in the hospital once again. You had another little accident with the rocket-car."

"Not again! From now on I'm sticking with things I'm comfortable with, like motorcycles."

Trotter thought he'd heard incorrectly. "I thought I heard you say you'd like to keep on jumping motorcycles, but I know that's not right. After the accidents you've been through, you're more than justified quitting the business."

"What, and give it up just because I had a little bad luck? No way, if it's one thing that Ben Haversack is not, it's a quitter!"

It was good to feel cold steel underneath him again. Ben Haversack felt the same thrill he always did climbing aboard a motorcycle. This was the first time in several months, as having both legs encased in a cast made the things he was able to do very limited. Trotter Willow had somehow lined up a pay-per-view special on which Ben would jump over a small town, and now that he was able to ride again, Ben would attempt to do so. It was good to be back!

Trotter Willow had been waiting forever it seemed for Ben Haversack to heal. He'd had this jump lined up for weeks, and now that Ben was up and around again, he was chomping at the bit; chomping at the bit to become *rich!* He'd reached an agreement with the B.A.A.D. Television network to air the jump live, on a pay-per-view basis. Viewers would be charged \$35 a pop to be able to watch. And he and Ben's share of that would be \$20. At first, executive for B.A.A.D. T.V. had offered him only \$5, but he had been adamant, nothing less than \$25 would get them to sign on the dotted line. The executives had been outraged, but eventually they agreed on a compromise of a \$20 for him and Ben, \$15 for the network. His argument had been that since Ben was taking all the risks, and all the network had to do was put it on the air, it was only right they should get the bigger share of the profits. And when they had heard it put that way, they network reluctantly agreed.

Ben sat above the take-off ramp, looking down on the sleepy little town that he would be attempting to jump. It was tiny, as towns went, but still, it would be quite a jump. A little bit ago, and he had been told that 100,000 people had signed up to watch, which added up to one huge payday for them. Ben did some quick arithmetic in his head; *let's see, we get \$20 for each person, and 100,000 have paid. 100,000 X \$20 is, ah, isâ€ \$200,000, divided by 2 is a profit of \$100,000 each! Wait a minute, he was sailing clear over a town, going well over 100 mph. \$100,000 dollars hardly seemed worth what he was risking. He should be getting more, say \$150,000.*

Break a Leg--short story

Trotter Willow had never made so much money, so quickly. As he was waiting on the take-off ramp with Ben, waiting to get the go-ahead from the network, Ben had turned to him and said,

"Trotter, I feel like I'm getting short-changed with our arrangement."

Trotter cringed.

"We're going to make \$200,000 bucks for this, and I feel as the one risking his health, I should get the bigger part. I'd like \$150,000, or I'm not doing the jump!"

Trotter was elated, as the kid was no math wiz, but replied,

"\$150,000? Oh well, what choice do I have? You've threatened to walk if I don't agree. I'd have a contract drawn up, but there's not enough time to have it written up and be back here before you jump."

"Ah, I trust you. I don't need anything but your handshake."

"Well, okay then, you drive a hard bargain, but we have a deal!"

Ben sat back on his bike, feeling like he was on top of the world, and looking down on the town he was attempting to jump, it *looked* like he was on top of the world also! He'd hated to do that to Trotter, but after all, business was business. He was taking all the risks, and *he* should reap the benefits. After this jump, he would be able to afford to buy the mobile home he'd had his eye on, with cash!

They had been given the okay to begin by the network. Ben took one last look at his take-off ramp, and the small town he'd be jumping over. It had one street, and only two houses on the part he'd be jumping, one on each side of the street, so it wouldn't be that difficult or far to jump it; it was a doable jump. Just in case something went wrong, and because the B.A.A.D. Television Network didn't want to pay several huge lawsuits, they had charged a young assistant producer with notifying all the residents, warning them there would be a dangerous stunt taking place in the air over their town, and B.A.A.D. Television wanted them to leave for one hour. Therefore, the town would be unoccupied when Ben made his leap.

An hour before Ben's jump, Sandy Hook had set out with a very important mission, warning the townspeople about the upcoming jump. The first place he stopped to tell was the City Tavern. He knew he shouldn't, but it wouldn't hurt to have just one beer. He was dangerously overheated, and it wouldn't do to pass out later, on the job, so he gratefully felt the air-conditioned coolness of the interior, and ordered himself a cold beer. When the bar-keep placed it on the bar in front of him, Sandy immediately chugged it down. Oh, it was ice cold, and tasted so good! Maybe he'd have just one more.

A short time later, when Ben had gotten the go-ahead, meaning the residents had been notified and the town was now deserted, he got himself ready for the jump. The network had been unable to contact their young employee to make sure, but seeing as how he had left over an hour ago, and because they'd lined up many advertisers, they made the call that it was safe to begin. They didn't want to miss out on all that money, and if the jump didn't take place when scheduled, the advertisers would back out, taking it back. So they had given the go-ahead.

Ben revved the engine after getting the go-ahead, and started down the ramp. He quickly reached his take-off speed of 115 miles per hour, and prepared to pull up on the front end. He was fast approaching the end of the ramp, when a soccer ball bounced onto the ramp. What the hell? As Ben watched, a small boy started to climb up onto the ramp in pursuit of the ball, saw Ben's speeding motorcycle bearing down on him, and dove out of the way, screaming. Ben had been in the process of a panicked braking and swerving to avoid the kid when he

Break a Leg--short story

reached the end of the ramp, going much too slow and at the wrong angle. As the cameras rolled, Ben's motorcycle shot off the ramp, sailed over the heads of astonished townspeople and skimmed off one house, and flew across the street, plowing into the house directly across the street. Luckily, the residents were out, otherwise they would have been amazed as a motorcycle, with no apparent rider, smashed through the roof, and dug a trench as it plowed into the living room floor. The bike was rider-less, because Ben had long ago jumped and left the bike, and was flying towards a vacant lot, where he smashed into a small cabin and mercifully blacked out.

Trotter Willow was once again sitting at the hospital bedside of Ben Haversack, after he'd been once again critically injured attempting a jump. He hated to think this, but waiting in hospital lounges was becoming routine for Trotter. This time, Ben had really busted himself up, suffering yet-another coma-inducing blow to the head, both of his arms were broken, both his legs were broken, he had several deep lacerations to his face (never pretty to begin with, these cuts wouldn't help his looks any), and this time he had broken his back. If he woke up, he faced months, or maybe years, of intense rehab, and jumping bikes again was out of the question, the doctor had told Trotter emphatically, not that Lumpy was thinking that way. No, the kid should hang it up before it was too late; besides, Trotter had made enough off this last jump to let him live comfortably for a long, long time.

Ben was coming around, slowly. "Wwwhhheerrreee aaamm III?"

Trotter replied, "You bit it again, and you're in the hospital."

"Who did I bite? Are they alright?" asked Ben.

"No, no, you didn't bite anyone, it's only a figure of speech. You crashed again, fell off your motorcycle, and were in a coma for the last week. You also broke several bones, including your back. You're going to be laid up for awhile, and when you get better, no more jumping for you. This time, I agree with the doctors. Unfortunately for you, (*fortunately, with the lousy way you ride, he was thinking*) this was your last jump."

Ben didn't argue, because trying another jump was pushing his luck. "Oh well, at least I made enough money on this jump to retire in style!"

Trotter felt about 2 inches tall. Here he was raking in a small fortune, and the kid who'd suffered terrible injuries was happy thinking he would only get \$150,000.

"Listen kid, I---". He couldn't do it. How do you tell someone you were ripping them off?

"What were you going to say?" asked Ben.

"Oh, I was just going to say get better soon."

"Thanks Trotter. A guy couldn't ask for a better friend."

Trotter felt the dagger of guilt again go right into his heart.

When, later that day, he visited Ben again, he said, "How are you feeling?"

"Why, did my getting all broken up take money somehow out of your pockets, you greedy b*****d?" Ben angrily replied.

He knew! "Listen kid, I was going to come clean about the uneven split of the money. You deserve the truth."

Break a Leg--short story

Ben answered, "You're damn right I do! I've been laying here doing the math in my head, and it turns out I was way off on my calculations. The way the actual total works out, I figure I should get another \$50,000."

Trotter couldn't believe it, somehow, the half-wit had again done incorrect math. He felt even more guilt when he replied,

"Sure kid, that's exactly how much more I was just about to tell you you'd be getting. I feel terrible about not telling you the truth. Can you ever forgive me? This guilt is something I'm going to have to live with for the rest of my life!"

"Sure I forgive you, we all have momentary lapses in judgment."

Trotter still felt guilty about what he was doing, but he'd rather have rich guilt than poor.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3:

Darwin Truth sat back in his recliner chair, after Mrs. Drewsy left: he thought, *Mrs. Drowsy would have been a better name*; man the woman ever *boring*; HE was bored!

He needed to get away from the bulls**t world of 'fortune telling'. He was constantly amazed by the sheer amount of idiotic

people who'd throw their money away to have their 'fortunes' told, by him, a guy who, since he'd gotten out of prison,

had been floundering, until he saw an insipid T.V. show about a moron who solved crimes with the aid of a fortune teller. He had decided

that was a great con, and started advertizing in soap opera magazines and the like, passing himself off as a 'fortune teller', even though the

only 'fortune' he could see was his own. Man, where there some desperate-a** losers out there, and Darwin was more than happy to take

advantage of their desperation. He decided that what he needed was a break from all the crap he was spewing to morons who looked at him

with hope in their eyes, so he'd come here, to the Bygone Arena, to see a stunt-riding show. These stunt riders, on their motorcycles, were

amazing. He had watched with wonder as rider after rider jumped ever-increasing distances. All the jumps had lead up to this; some idiot

was going to attempt to jump 10 hearses parked side by side; 10! This show was sponsored by Dark and Deep Mortuary; hence the

hearses. This, he had to see! A dude jumping an incredible distance *overhearses!* The moron would be lucky if he walked away from the

jump on the *outside* of the hearses, and not *inside* of one!

Darwin gulped the last of his 8th "Stunt-Dog' beer, ground out his last cigarette, and gazed at the take-off ramp. He saw the stunt rider

sitting on his bike; there was something familiar about the guy, but he couldn't remember.

"Ladies and gentlemen, would you please give a warm Bygone welcome to BEN HAVERSACK!" Ben Haversack? As he watch the guy

waving to the audience, he suddenly remembered where he'd seen the dude before. His very first idiot; who he'd told some bulls**t about

Break a Leg--short story

'seeing' a successful landing in a rocket car. Just before he'd moved, he'd heard the guy was mangled in a horrific wreck. *Bummer, dude!*

Ben glanced over to where his manager was sitting, but the face looking back wasn't Trotter Willow, it was his new manager, Burse

McElroy. No, that backstabbing rip off bastard Willow was in the wind, somewhere. After taking him to the cleaners, after his last jump, a

pay-per-view special for which Ben's math had been way off, Trotter had skipped out. Ben hadn't realized he'd been ripped off until

mentioning the money to Burse, who at that time, was just an event promoter. When a laughing Burse McElroy had told him how the

arithmetic should have worked out, Ben had bitten through his bottom lip, he'd been so upset. He had been *justa* little bit short on his

arithmetic. 100,000 times 20 wasn't \$250,000 bucks. Trotter had sat there and looked Ben right in the eye, knowing full well Ben's

multiplication error, and had agreed to Ben's faulty sum. Looking back on it, where the hell had \$250,000 come from? There wasn't a 5

anywhere to get that number. Oh well, time to shake off the crappy past, and concentrate on today's jump; he had given it up for awhile, but

thrill seeking was in his bones (granted, his many *broken* bones), but his bones none the less!

Burse McElroy couldn't believe how stupid his newest client was. As he sat in his seat, watching Ben Haversack preparing to jump 10

hearses, he chuckled to himself. He'd told Ben he'd gotten him \$5000 dollars for this jump, when it had really been \$50,000 bucks. Sure, it

wasn't much money, but Burse figured he'd better get as much out of this idiot as he could, so he's tampered with Ben's speedometer, so it

would tell Ben an incorrect speed, when his actual speed was much lower. He had taken out a life insurance policy on Ben, with himself as

the beneficiary. Then, when Ben was killed, he would clean up! Look at him, at the top of the take off ramp, looking confident, like he was

jumping boxes on his BMX bike; like it would be nothing!

Ben Haversack thought over his plan. Did Burse actually believe he was stupid enough to fall for his understating the amount due him?

He would get him, but right now, he had to concentrate on making this jump. He looked down the take off ramp, and out at the hearses lined

Break a Leg--short story

up, seemingly beckoning to him. The black hearses looked like stationary vultures, waiting to pick his bones clean. Ben angrily shook off

that image, and the P.A. announcer announced his jump, and a hush fell over the watching crowd.

Darwin Truth watched as Ben Haversack gunned the engine and sped down the take off ramp and suddenly, the bike was airborne.

Ben's hit 100 mph as the motorcycle hurtled down the ramp and flew off the end, and he had a great view of the tops of the hearses, as

they rushed up to meet him, and he knew there was no way he was going to come anywhere close to clearing them. He counted 5 hearses,

and then he hit, bouncing high into the air.

Darwin Truth heard those around him gasp as Ben Haversack's body sailed high into the air, hit the top of one of the hearses, and flew

onto the dirt tack, somersaulted several times, before coming to a halt, and lying still, looking like a deflated balloon hanging from a tree

branch.

Ben swam out of a dense white fog. Where was he? He heard a voice say,

"Hello Ben, I'm Doctor Asswhippay, and you're going to be fine."

Great; know if he only knew what the hell this guy was talking about? And there was something he should be laughing about; what was it?

Oh yeah, Dr. Asswhippay? "Eh, ha, ha!"

"What's so funny?"

"No-th-ing."

"Well, in case you're wondering where you are, you're in the hospital. You suffering from several broken bones, and a lacerated kidney,

in addition to a severe blow to the head."

Again? The last time he'd been knocked unconscious, he'd.. he'd...well damn, he couldn't recall. He was so tired; maybe he'd just close his

eyes for a second.

When he awoke, blinking and looking around, Dr. Asswhippay was looking at a chart, and scowling; "S**t!" he exclaimed.

"What is it, Doctor; tell it to me straight."

Break a Leg--short story

"Oh, you're awake; it's nothing to do with you, I'm trying to figure out how I'm going to come up with \$50,000 bucks; damn that spindle-

legged kicker for the Vikings; How in the hell do you miss an extra point? All he had to do was make it, and I would have won \$500,000

dollars and been so out of here!"

"Oh; I thought you were frowning because of my chart."

Damn, he lived! Burse thought to himself. Well, there was nothing else to do but sneak into the hospital and finish what the jump should

have; he wanted that insurance money!

He figured he would sneak in, and smother Haversack with his pillow.

The hospital was eerily quite, as McElroy emerged from the storage closet he had been hiding in for several hours. The hallway was

dark, and weird shadows were cast by the few lights that were lit, albeit muted. Down the hallway, the duty nurse was on the phone, talking

softly. The quiet beeping and whirring of hospital life could be heard as he snuck silently to room 232, the room listed as Haversack's room

on the chart he had sneaked a peak at earlier. He tiptoed over to Ben's bed, and grabbed the extra pillow. He couldn't see much in the

darkness, but he was glad for the cover it gave him. He placed the pillow over Haversack's mouth, and pressed down hard. Haversack

started to thrash and made pathetic attempts to yell, but McElroy kept his overwhelming downward pressure. Suddenly, he felt an

unbearable electric jolt, and he could no longer control his muscles. After a few seconds of feeling like a moth in a bug zapper, the electric

jolt ceased, and he slumped down, falling on top of Haversack. The lights came on, and McElroy saw that the man he'd been trying to kill

wasn't Haversack; it was the wrong guy; he'd been trying to smother the wrong man! He also saw a big policeman holding a taser, and he

started to speak;

"And just what did you think you were doing? Trying to kill a mob informer with a cop protecting him?"

A mob informer? "What happened to Ben Haversack?"

"If you mean the patient who was in this room, he switched rooms with us; this room is much easier to guard."

Break a Leg--short story

Oh.

6 months had passed, and Ben was walking without too much of a limp. It had taken months of grueling physical therapy, but he'd made

it! He had decided to give up motorcycle jumping; a guy could get killed!

Darwin Truth gazed at the sloping forehead of Mrs. Dial, who wanted to know if her lucky lottery numbers were really lucky. Oh boy!

"I see a big mansion, several servants, and *(you,nakedandrollingaroundonabedcoveredwithfirs! They're both fantasies; one*

yours, and one mine!) you're about to go for a ride in your Jag, so I'd say keep playing those numbers; they'll pay off, big!"

Mrs. Dial was a fox!

The End

Chapter 4

Chapter 4:

Now what? Ben had decided to give up motorcycle jumping, because so far at least, he sucked at it. His broken-up body was a constant reminder of that fact, but he really didn't know what he wanted to do instead. Something a lot safer, and a lot less painful. He sat on this bright, sunny morning, and scoured the help wanted ads. Nothing; nothing that intrigued him, it looked like a waste of his time--wait, here was one;

"Wanted, a young man to deliver important documents to business offices around the city; must have your own transportation, and a valid driver's license. Interested parties please contact Marcy Gellar, at Import-Doc. 555 Deliver."

Hey, perfect! At least he'd still be riding his motorcycle.

And so, he'd called, and been hired. He learned where most of the businesses were located, until by this time, he didn't have to worry about finding them; granted, the pay wasn't much, but at least he was riding; albeit at slightly more boring speeds!

One morning, he scarfed down his cold cereal, got on his Crotcher 800 motorcycle, and headed for work. He was already bored with the job, but at least he was out in the weather, riding his cycle, AND, he got paid for it. Sure, it didn't have the thrill of possible death, but still! His first delivery was legal papers of some kind, he needed to deliver to a new business he wasn't too sure about the location, so he left himself plenty of time to find the address; Zenith Talent Agency.

He had found the agency right away; so he had some time to kill before they even opened. He was sipping a coffee he had walked to the mini market across the street and purchased, and was half-heartedly watching as employees of Zenith began to arrive. There was a hot-looking blond secretary; man, look at her! She wiggled her way up to the front door, where a man he hadn't seen arrive had just unlocked the door. Ben was almost too distracted to hear,

"Good morning, Mr. Willow, thank you," said Blondie, as he held the door open for her.

Willow? No way! Ben dropped the coffee, got off his bike, and started across parking lot. Surely, Trotter wouldn't be so stupid as to stay in the area, but then again, Trotter was terribly arrogant. Sure enough, the man looked familiar from the side, but he needed to be sure.

"Willow, Trotter Willow?" he called out.

"Yes?" answered the man, turning to face Ben. Shock registered on his face, and then he took off running. Ben ran after him, intent on making him pay for ripping Ben off.

"Stop, Trotter!" he shouted, but it didn't make the fleeing man slow down at all. In fact, it seemed to make Trotter run even faster. He ran to a motorcycle, parked in its own parking space, hopped on, started the machine, and zoomed back towards Ben, on its way towards the exit; causing him to dive out of the way, to avoid being run over. From the ground, Ben watched helplessly as the motorcycle carrying Trotter Willow squealed away down the frontage road, in a cloud of burning rubber.

Ben determined to confront Willow, and he'd located Willow's home address by scouring the white pages. Now, he was sitting across the street, keeping an eye out for any sign of Trotter Willow. He really didn't

Break a Leg--short story

expect Willow to be stupid enough to return home, but it was his only hope.

6 hours had passed, and he was rapidly losing any hope that Willow would make an appearance. S**t, he'd been THIS close! At the same time as he was admitting failure to himself, here came Trotter Willow's motorcycle into the driveway. Unbelievable!

Willow looked suspiciously around him, and went through the door; Ben snuck out of the shadows he'd been hiding in, and quickly approached the door. He watch through the window next to the door as Willow grabbed a bunch of money, and started back towards the door. Ben hid behind a nearby hedge, and when Trotter came out the door, he sprang out and started to say,

"Hold it right there, Willow; the game is up---", and quicker than he thought possible, Trotter lashed out, and his fist caught him unawares, knocking him backwards into the hedge, and he took off running towards his motorcycle.

As Ben struggled to clear the cobwebs, he heard the bike roar to life, and Trotter squealed out onto the road, and screamed down the street. Dang it! Ben sprinted to his own bike, but feared Trotter was already gone.

As he finally managed to pull his bike out on the street to follow, he didn't have much hope. It would be a miracle if Trotter wasn't gone, yet-again.

Ahead, he saw his miracle; traffic was halted by an open drawbridge. It was slowly closing, but no one was moving yet. Ben rode his motorcycle between parked cars; he knew it was highly rude behavior, but considering the circumstances, it was well worth the dirty looks and obnoxious comments screamed out of rolled-down car windows. Suddenly though, one angry driver did a little more than yell or give him a dirty look; he swung open his car door, and Ben had to slam on the brakes and stop.

"Huh, screw you!" he shouted at Ben, his face bright-red and twisted with anger. Ben was totally frustrated, but had no choice but to wait for traffic to slowly begin to move forward, which eventually it did. He could see Willow rapidly accelerate and begin weaving in and out between cars, so he had no choice but to do the same. He ignored the dirty looks and pornographic hand gestures from angry motorists and went after Willow. Across the bridge they raced, leaving cars behind them in the dust. Out of town they went, until they were riding on a country road which soon began to climb a mountain. Ben didn't seem to be gaining on Willow at all; in fact, he was falling farther behind. His Crotcher 800 was screaming, going as fast as possible, but apparently, Willow's was bigger, because he was pulling away.

Over the top of the pass they flew; Ben desperately looking for a way to go faster. He knew that Willow was going to get away. The road headed downhill into a series of switchbacks, and Ben came up with a crazy idea; what if he could jump off a switchback, and get ahead of Willow? He didn't think about wiping out and getting hurt or killed, he just went for it. He swerved the bike towards the edge, and suddenly he was airborne; sailing down the hill towards the roadway snaking below him. The bike landed, and it was all Ben could do to hang on, but he somehow managed to, and down the hill he flew. Ahead, he saw a sewer, and luckily there was a fallen log, with a flat piece of wood lying across it. Ben quickly steered his bike towards it, and was airborne again. He landed on the roadway and slammed on the brakes with all his might. The bike flew across the road in a cloud of dust, and into the sticker bushes on the far side. Ben got mangled, with blood dripping from multiple scratches, but he came out the other side still aboard his motorcycle. He was now going slow enough to turn and go around the stickers and back onto the roadway. Sure enough, his maneuver had gotten him ahead of Willow, who saw Ben, and tried to stop; but he tried to stop too quickly, for he lost control of the bike, and went skidding off the roadway and into the grass, and promptly fell from the bike and kept skidding across the grass. Ben jumped from his bike and ran over to where a struggling, cursing Trotter Willow was trying to disengage himself from the wreckage of his mangled bike. He looked up at a grinning

Break a Leg--short story

Ben, and said,

"NOW you jump without biting it!"

Ben watched as the forlorn image of Trotter Willow sat gazing out the back window of a police car, facing fraud charges. Ben had flagged down a passing car, borrowed their cell phone, and pressed charges against Willow. Well, time to return to Import-Doc and see if he still had a job!

The End

Break a Leg--short story

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