

# Collection of humor

Marcelo Garbine

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# The kick in my nuts

Marcelo Garbine

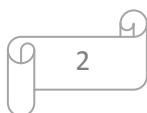
## 1 – The kick

That little Japanese kid was very weird... well... actually, he wasn't. I was. I was the weirdo. And I was bullied because of it. We all discriminate, but when we are the victim, we are quick to champion the cause. I kept to myself, in my imaginary childish corner; when I looked both ways and saw the world that existed, I actually interacted very little, not always in a way I can be proud of.

It was 1983. Little Mingau Ácido was at preschool. During our physical education class, we queued up to practice tumbling on the mat, following directions from Miss Scarlett. The little slanted-eye creature right in front of me kept throwing me dirty looks, looking as friendless as I was. He was not having any of Little Mingau Ácido's taunts.

"Open your eyes, Jap! You're going to miss the mat when you tumble."

"I'm half!"



“You’re Japanese. Hahaha...”

The boy’s eyes, which to me were practically Martian, were so small that they seemed not to exist, and started getting red and bulging. The samurai inside this little Asian began to get annoyed: "where is the dignity of your ancestors, who shouted BANZAI and held grenades to blow themselves up at the end of World War II?" railed his inner self.

The somersaults came to an end. It was time to divide the mischievous boys into two teams. The first in line bent down and ran on all fours under the splayed legs of his other team members until he got to the end. Then at the finish, he stood up, spread his legs, and waited for the next one in line to repeat the cycle. The team whose members could complete the whole circuit of this tunnel of legs would be the champion. Of course, I landed on Banzai’s team.

Little Mingau Ácido watched the children passing beneath him and thought to himself:

“What a bore this game is!”

My little head soon figured out how to spice it up, just as it was the Japanese kid's turn. When I saw this creature from the land of the rising sun—where everyone speaks gibberish and write funny scribbles—passing underneath, in that humiliating position, I had no doubt: I bent down a little bit and prepared my hands in attack position.

The little four-footed “oriental” passed slowly, but his trousers stayed in my hands. A few fractions of a second passed until the little samurai realized what had happened and what a humiliating situation he was in: he was running on all fours... in pink underwear.

The humiliation was great and the joy was widespread. A full plate for a group of six-year-olds. Little Mingau Acido, what have you done?

Nakano was the name of this poor kid. I will stop calling him by these insults before the politically correct police appear to tell me I can't or to accuse me.

Nakano slowly came towards me. Serious body language and pink underpants. Little Mingau Acido was holding his trousers in his hand. Was I supposed to be afraid, or to laugh myself silly? Oh, what a dilemma! Nakano took it upon himself to clear it up for me. A kick square in the crotch silenced my laughter.

“It serves you right, Marcelo,” was Miss Scarlett’s violent judgment.

“Why did you keep hassling Nakano?”

Yes, Miss Scarlett... you were being fair-minded... Later, I would learn in history class about a famous law: “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth....” A pain in the neck for a pain in the neck? Sounded fair enough...

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## 2 – The consequences

“Honey, you are going to need to have an operation! When Nakano kicked you he hurt your little testicles.”

“Really, mommy?”

Although I was only six, I remember it like it was yesterday: I was lying on a stretcher, and half a dozen men and women with green clothes and masks were taking me into surgery.

"What a bunch of cowards," I thought, "Why do they need to hide behind the masks?"

But they were so nice! Seeing that little quiet boy about to have surgery on his scrotum, they just had to be friendly and joke around.

"Hey, what's your name, young man?"

"Marcelo."

"You're going to have an operation on your scrotum, young man!"

"I know..."

"Are you happy?"

"I guess so."

“Then how ‘bout a peck on my nose?”

“I don’t think so...”

Suddenly, the games were over. One of the masked staff, a young woman, came toward me with a gigantic needle.

“No, no! I don't want it, lady!”

The benevolent gazes suddenly lost all their sparkle. They were no longer friendly. Two of them held me down. The young woman came closer holding that syringe with its frightening needle, and another masked man held up his finger in warning, saying:

“Marcelo!”

They thought that they were in front any old scared child, but no, this was Little Mingau Acido!

“I'd rather have the gas.”

“The gas? You’d prefer the gas?”

“Yes, please.”

The lady dropped the terrifying injection and placed a plastic mask into my very small hands. I held it and took two deep breaths. Before I could even enjoy it and say "niiiiice", I blacked out...

Look how cute, people! Little Mingau Acido was so small and already could stand up for himself.

I woke up the following day with a bag of saline running into my arm and complaining about my mom that I didn’t feel so hot.

“Hang in there, son. Now, you can't move.”

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### 3 – Revenge

Time passes, and six years went down the drain. Little Mingau Acido became a boy of twelve. The year was 1989. The little crotch that Nakano had kicked was already had its first bit of fuzz and its residents were already enchanted by girls.

The science teacher divided the class into groups of six to do an assignment. I whispered to four of my classmates in my from group:

“I won’t be in the same group as Nakano.”

“Why?” they all asked in chorus.

“Because he kicked me in the balls six years ago and I had to have an operation.”

“Whoa. So you’re sterile,” lamented Christian sarcastically.

“Me? How do you figure that?” Mingau Acido was a bit startled.

“You'll never be able to have kids, and when you turn 18, you'll never get a hard-on,” was James's apocalyptic prediction.

“That's right, Mingau Acido. If I were you, I would try to take advantage of everything you can now,” was Michael's opinion.

“I think Michael's right, Mingau Acido,” concluded William finished.

“And if I were you, I would beat the crap out of that Japanese kid.”

Mingau Acido was innocent and believed everything they told him. The Japanese kid deserved payback: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth... and a crotch for a crotch!

“Nakano, you jerk, this is for my kids!”

The Japanese kid fell like a log onto the classroom floor. Stretched out and with the face of someone who had just placed a load in his own pants, he cried:

“NOT IN THE NUTS, NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!”

Another twenty-five years have gone by. The year is 2014. I googled Nakano and discovered that grew up to raise poultry, breeding little chicks in incubators, who grow up to be what else but cocks..

Such are the vagaries of life...

Mingau Ácido (Marcelo Garbine)

# How to save face and get out of a pinch

Marcelo Garbine

## 1 – The problem

I needed to make a photocopy of some documents the other day in order to take care of some legal issues so I went to the nearby OfficeMax where I ended up standing in the customary line at the cashier to pay. In front of me was this guy, who was probably around five years younger than me, that started up a conversation.

He was an Indian gentleman who had difficulty speaking our language. I don't usually pay much attention to people's small talk but I saw that this foreigner had a bit more depth. As I've always been curious about the history of eastern religions and the cultural differences with cast systems, I started asking him questions about Hinduism. With a radiant smile on his face he went on and on.

It didn't take long to discover that we had the same academic background. He'd taken economics in London. Our initial topic of discussion was the theology of monetary politics but we soon hovered over a universal theme, as always.

Soccer? Uuuuuhhhh... Ya hit the crossbar, buddy! Almost, but not quite!

Just to paraphrase the lyrics of one of my own songs: "(...) with everything I've gone through / My team never scored a goal / I have no team, no umbrella / I hate crime and soccer (...)"

Whatever!!! I admit it – at the risk of being unpopular – soccer's not my thing. So... what was the topic then??? Hellooo!!! Come on, help me out here!

Ok, what is almost as popular as soccer? Simple... Women!

Mahatma Gandhi's fellow-countryman began his narrative of his Don Juan escapades. He said he never went out at night with friends 'cause he wanted to feel free to pick up chicks and not have to worry about finding broads that had friends. Emphasizing his point, he said that just the presence of more than one man could confuse a woman. Hence, he would simply do away with other male companionship in order to guarantee his catch when he was on the prowl and ready to get it off with the next female.

So far, I was learning a little bit more about the complex female world but was starting to get ticked with this Casanova.

I was never like that, ya know. Me and my nerd face, looking like Jack Nicholson.... I even use glasses.... glasses!!!

Just a lame excuse for someone who struggles desperately to even reach – on average - a consumption of maybe a measly four vaginas by the end of a quarter.

Such sacrifice to finally commemorate: "CONSUMATTUM EST!"

And if I were really lucky I could sometimes shout: "CONSUMMATUM EST OEST!"

It's just a little nerd joke that only readers who know a little bit about Latin or the Bible would ever understand. You've got Google!!! Knock yourself out, dude.

At first I went along with the ride as if I were a fellow Don Juan until I broke into a cold sweat and my butt face said it all... I was nothing but a fraud.

Who's ever watched that movie "The 40 Year Old Virgin"? Well... thank God I haven't stooped to such virginal extremes as the actor, Steve Carell, but, compared to this Hare Krishna devourer, I felt humiliated! Crap!!!!

This guy was telling me that he did it with about eight or nine women a week! A far cry from my reality!

"Oh, wretched life of mine!" as my late granddad used to say.

And to top it off, this sleazy dude started to check out the chicks on the street and say:

"Take that one with the sunglasses, I nailed her. That one that just smiled at me too. And the one in green as well, a while ago, like three weeks ago...."

"Stop! Stop! Stop! Stop!" – I say, incarnating Andy Stitzer – "Wait just a minute buddy! Pray tell, thou rejecter of bovine meat but connoisseur of human meat of the female sex, what's your secret for seducing so many vulvas? Come on... spit it out!"

"But you are older than me," – Hare Hare snobbishly fakes an innocent look – "you must have much more experience."

Forget it! I'll pick up my Xerox tomorrow. It's just too degrading when you still want to be taken at least a little bit seriously, just a little bit....

Ya know what, you sorry excuse for an Indian??? Pakistan should invade Cashmire after all, you looser!

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## 2 – The solution

And just to think that at fifteen years old – in the heat of the masturbation phase when you’ve got this desperate need to (get that thing out there) dip the stick, I was just desperate, to the point of even promising to marry Mrs. Brown’s daughter.

Mrs. Brown had her daughter, Olga, who was already twenty-three (much too old for a 15 year old kid) penned up at home under lock and key.

The girl was so homely that Mrs. Brown was afraid to let her loose out there for fear she’d get harassed. Poor Olga...

At twenty-three she had never even been kissed. No man had ever hollered “Hey Baby!!!!” to poor little Olga.



But little Mingau here sucked it up! Talking about desperation...

At six o'clock in the morning, when Mrs. Brown left to go open up her rat infested little shop, I would jump the wall of their old house looking for homely Olga.

Not a day passed that I didn't find her crying, devastated that she was the ugliest girl in the neighborhood.

It took a long time to calm Olga down, at least around thirty minutes of preliminaries until she'd give in.

"Don't cry, Olga, you're beautiful on the inside, as wonderful as your name. If men don't see your beauty, that's their problem, not yours."

It wasn't a very good wrap but it worked with Olga. She would stop crying and I would go on the attack. What else could you do? It's all there was to eat. Kind of like buffing the banana... as in serving your country.... Stick that flag in her face and.... wamooo!!!

But the problem wasn't just her Whoopy Goldberg nose, or those Jack Nicholson bags under her eyes. Olga dreamed of going down the aisle with veil and garland. And I had to promise her that I'd be her bow for the rest of our lives. What a line! But Olga believed me ... and would give in.

Olga did have her good qualities. Yes, nothing is perfect but nothing is totally imperfect either. Not even beaten down Olga. I'd close my eyes and think: "It's Sharon Stone," and, voalá!

Let's just say – not wanting to risk falling on the vulgar side – that Olga was talented with her vocal cavity without having to use her voice. All of a sudden, Olga's defects would disappear with a magic touch, or suck.

Her infamous little stature set her labial gorge closely located near the materialization of my predestined drive to contribute to the continuing proliferation of the human race on this beautiful planet earth. What can I say... it made things easier!

With her crossed eyes, this sweet creature would look at me with her desperate and pleading come hither eyes.

Her over-advantageous neck served as a spring which helped Olga to be very fast.

I didn't have to worry about getting hurt either, due to her scarce teeth.

Now her flat head... Well that was an excellent Coke holder.

And those elephant ears Olga had were perfect flappers that I could hold on to, one in each hand, to pump poor Olga and encourage her to pick up speed.

Early on I learned to see the bright side of things. That's why I have this burning desire to write a self-help book. Would you guys buy a self-help book by Mingau Ácido?

Ok, we'll leave the market survey for later and get back to Olga... Sweet Olga!!!

One fine afternoon, Olga was being more difficult than usual. She said she couldn't because she was on her period.

I got goose bumps all up my back. It had been three days since I'd jumped that grimy wall and there was no way I could leave without shooting off a few million spermatozoids.

“Olga, sweet little Olga, is there anything more beautiful in this world than a woman menstruating, Olga? Menstruation is the very essence of womanhood! It's the externalization of the most expressive part and core of a woman.”

Olga's eyes started to shine with the first signs of submission. Olga teeter tottered a bit more.

“Mingau, do you really like me?”

Crap... I'm not an ass, I hate lies. But I needed to, was desperate to consume decadent Olga, at least one more time.

“Olga, sweet Olga, haven't you noticed yet?” – I answered with my sad sack face.

“Aahh, Mingauzinho, come here...”

Yeesss! Mission accomplished. Olga was used for the last time, with class.

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### 3 – Lesson learned

The very next day, while sitting on a bench in the town square, chatting with my homies, all of a sudden I see Olga’s silhouette coming up on the horizon.

She’d put this shiny pink lipstick on. Sick! With highlights in her kinky hair, she wore a red mini-skirt that Mrs. Brown must have bought at the open-air market between ochre and cabbage. And to top it off, she was, unfortunately, donning red heels that were so high that it made Olga almost 5 foot 5.

OMG! How embarrassing....

“Hi Mingau! How nice to see you here!”

“Hi, Olga...” – I said dryly.

“Mingau, isn’t it true you said you like me?”

“No, Olga, I just asked you if you had noticed yet, meaning if you hadn’t noticed that I don’t like you.”

Ok, ok, ok... so I’m not bragging about this. To be honest, I’m rather ashamed of having gone on like this. But, I’d rather break the heart of some reader who might just be in love with me than to ruin the joke, nasty as it may be, but funny.

I do confess that my chest does hurt a bit every time I remember Olga’s little face full of tears.

Heartbreaking are the images I have stored in the back of my mind of those gigantic open pores all over her face – looking more like volcanic craters – and the zits oozing their nectar and her overflowing tear ducts.

But after a half a dozen Hail Marys and Our Fathers, I absolved myself chalking it off by blaming it all on my restless young hormones.

Here’s a little tip for you women: take a course in reading comprehension. If not you’ll end up deceive and deluded.

And that's today's lesson from Mingau Ácido on how to save face and get out of a pinch.

Anthony Robbins, James Hunter, Daniel Goleman, John Maxwell and Dale Carnegie watch out. Self-help book market... here I come! Woooow!

Mingau Ácido (Marcelo Garbine)

# Doctor Smith charges \$290.00

Marcelo Garbine

What sets us apart from the animals? Reasoning, of course. I value mine, because of its practical usefulness and because I recognize the effort and the millennia Mother Nature spent developing it through harsh penalties applied to our ancestors before delivering it to me, free of charge, as Charles Darwin tells us.

Are any descendants of the sweet-smelling goody-two-shoes Adam and Eve reading this?

I hope not, because I descended from dirty and smelly apes.

I had the luck to be born in the last quarter of the twentieth century and to reach the second decade of my life excitedly surfing the World Wide Web. But from then on, my friend, things were tough.

How many times did the already-sedentary primate man bang his head against the wall until he found that it was not prayer to the gods but sex that made his animals multiply in the corral?



And why on earth, then, do human prototypes resist using their brain so much, this brain that took thousands of years to come out of the oven? It is there, finished, cute, packaged up in a relatively safe cranial box, ready to be used at any time, whenever necessary. It doesn't waste electricity, doesn't pay rent, and its maintenance is extremely pleasurable. After all, who doesn't like to eat and breathe?

The fact is, the brain is under our command, like a watchman. And when we are always available, we lose respect. Women don't appreciate clingy and thoughtful men (I need to restrain myself) and pseudo-friends think we are idiots when they can count on us at two o'clock in the morning.

Perhaps that's why this subordinated brain is treated as a despicable doormat by a lot of people who are unaware of its evolution... Hey man, give me a break...

That's why they invented such chestnuts as: "he who lives by the sword, dies by the sword", "make do with what you have", "sow the wind, reap the whirlwind" and "he who uses proverbs is full of crap."

But, unfortunately, proverbs go beyond petrified popular wisdom that gets transmitted from generation to generation. There are many critters on the loose

out there who need to install boxes with readymade speeches in the middle of their brains, releasing them like farts every time they talk with other bipeds.

Here I speak through my pen name Mingau Ácido, my unbearably annoying, ironic, and sarcastic alter ego, who I separated and gave another name so I can pretend it is not really me. But anyone who knows me knows that I'm sensitive, romantic, poetic, and that I believe in humanity and unconditional love. Ouch!

So now you have an idea of how much of my income I blow on different kinds of therapies and personal development courses. And the trade-off? Wait a minute... Is it going to rain? It is hot, isn't it? Ok, no need to look at me like that. I'll say it. This business of wasting money on promises of personal development, I try to hide from myself. The benefit yield is shit.

A renowned doctor of neurolinguistics and friend of a friend, who has published dozens of books, recommended a psychotherapist in Philadelphia (I live in New York).

Since it was a recommendation from an author I appreciate and whose entire written output I have devoured, I didn't think twice before committing myself to a weekly visit to the sumptuous office of Doctor Smith, with its bookshelves crammed with books and its sunny balcony overlooking Fairmount Park. I also

committed to spending \$290.00 per session, plus travel costs, to have my appointments with this cognitive behavioral psychotherapist.

“Doctor, any chance we could agree on \$250.00?”

“Go ask your mother for money.”

All right, you’ll see that short and crass answers, with more emphasis on the crass than the short, will be part of my treatment. Let’s begin.

“Doctor, I have a lot of admiration for that guy they call the ‘clown who ran away from the circus’, this circus boy who was born with a disability and when he was eight started his first business and... eighteen minutes later... There was an article about him in Forbes Magazine. He was named entrepreneur of the year.”

Her lips moved downward, but only the left side of her mouth, and, without moving her head, she directed her gaze to the ceiling:

“He is a CASE of success.”

“Doctor Smith, I admire another entrepreneur as well. He had only \$20.00 to buy medicine for his sick daughter, but he decided to buy candy to resell. In less

than two hours, he had in hands his kid's medication and another \$180.00. This happened a year and half ago, and today he gives talks to executives."

She stopped looking at her fingernails and said:

"He is another CASE of success."

"Doctor Smith... I dreamed that I was these two entrepreneurs simultaneously. What does that mean?"

Almost imperceptibly, she shrugged her shoulders:

"It means nothing. Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar."

"You know, Doc, I think I'm not a CASE of success."

With her eyelids opened a bit too wide, she looked at me:

"Sad, isn't it?"

“Doctor, what's the meaning of life?”

She tuned her voice, exaggeratedly, before uttering:

“Ah, eating something around three o'clock in the afternoon is very enjoyable.”

“Doctor, tomorrow is the D-day of my life. I'll have to make the most important decision that's ever been asked of me.”

“Mark, your time is up. Good luck. Next week tell me what decision you made. Let my assistant know if you want a receipt.”

“Dr. Smith... my name is Marcelo, not Mark.”

“See you next Thursday, Marcelo.”

I confess that I returned to New York a little annoyed. I don't like to complain about things but it wasn't quite what I was expecting. I tried not to think so much about what happened.

I remembered, then, an ex-girlfriend of mine that I lost, though I don't know why. We had everything going for us to work out together.

Everyone who gave me advice when she broke it off told me "what is to be must be." Ouch!

The spiritualists told me "it was you who asked to reincarnate in this condition"; the evangelicals, "it was the Lord's will", and the atheists told me "life rolls the dice."

But there were many spiritualists, many evangelicals, and many atheists who uttered the same revelations. Did they conspire? No, no, pushing too hard doesn't suit my style.

When I got home, I called my friend. That one who is the friend of the famous neurolinguist.

"Hey, Peter, man, I went to see that psychologist in Philadelphia, but I didn't like her that much."

After half a dozen seconds of silence, he said:

“If you can’t take the heat, get out of the kitchen.”

Mingau Ácido (Marcelo Garbine)

# The vaginas that appeared on my face

Marcelo Garbine

This business of always thinking too much, being lost in my own world of thought, it costs me way too much. There is only a little time left over for me to take care of the basic tasks of everyday life, like keeping my house clean, having a beer, saying hi to my neighbors, and taking a shower.

I was getting changed to go give a talk somewhere one day when I noticed that there was not a single damn pair of clean underwear in the drawer. My house is dark, because the burned-out lamps don't get replaced. Often I find myself sitting on the toilet, swearing when I am surprised to find that the stock of toilet paper has run out. A single devouring thought takes over my entire being: if God took such great care to design such a perfect human body, why the hell didn't he just go a tiny bit farther and give us intestines that could make feces with a better consistency, rubbery, maybe, that would not make a mess?

And what can I possibly say about such a complicated task as shaving? What? Not complicated, you say? It can be annoying, but tasks that are easy for everyone else are incredibly complicated for me.



My beard is really thick and grows too fast, which is why I've gotten into the habit of contracting this job out to third parties. I have completely lost my ability to maneuver a Gillette.

They say nothing is healthy in excess. In my experience, this applies to dedication to the "big things" like reflection, composition, and creation. And maybe it also applies to more modest efforts, like shaving.

A barber is a very useful specialist. Thanks to this person, I avoid the disgrace of having to display a collection of razor slits resembling vaginas all over my face every time I try to exercise a skill I haven't quite mastered yet: expertly maneuvering a razor blade. But I just need the barber to be a barber: no going overboard and being a barbarian, or worse, a butcher.

Fifteen or twenty dollars is nothing. I'd pay fifty for a shave. If this kind of professional existed, I would even pay for somebody to brush my teeth.

When I was in school for economics, I learned that difference between the fifty bucks I would willingly pay for someone to mow my face and the fifteen or twenty they actually charge me is called the consumer surplus.

Since I always look on the bright side, when I pay my barber, I don't feel like I'm spending twenty dollars. I remember the consumer surplus, and the way I see it, I am gaining eighty (I hope my barber isn't reading this). So, I am killing two politically-correct euphemisms with a single barb: my baby face is saved from an invasion of vulvas created by my own inept hands, while at the same time I am making eighty bucks. Woohoo! It may be a silly thing to be happy about, but at least I admit it.

The problem is not paying for this service, no matter how much it costs. The question is, what do I get in return for my hard-earned money? And the reality is sad: no matter how much we pay, it is very hard to find a skilled technician, in any area, who leaves us feeling that we've spent our money well.

Employees in those hotels we always stay at, and think we are going to get a little respect, not just because we are paying, but because we go there all the time, those employees are rude.

It doesn't matter that I have stayed there at least ninety times over the last three years. The maid will knock on the door exactly at noon to ask me if I'm going to get a move on or if I am going to pay for the night. And there's no point in arguing. It makes it worse. Pointless stress, no sir.

One time the woman working the desk at a hotel where I used to stay regularly wagged her finger at me and scolded me for coming in with dirty shoes.

"I wasn't paying attention to my dirty shoes, sorry if I made work for you. Please, forgive me. But with all respect, you don't need to yell at me! After all, it's not like I'm staying here for free, I'm a paying guest, and this room is expensive!"

She looked at me sarcastically and said,

"Ha, ha, ha. You have no idea what expensive means, dahling." I don't know if she was trying to sound like a Boston Brahmin or Joan Rivers, but she was trying to out-snob me.

This lack of return on money we spend, dreaming of getting good service, seems to be a widespread misfortune.

Like when you are at some rest stop on the highway and want to have a miserable burger and a warm coke (no ice! machine out of order!) but the wretch behind the counter won't let you pay with your debit or credit card, claiming that you have to spend at least twenty dollars, you swear you will never step foot in that lowlife craphole again. But over time, I've noticed that I've made

this promise about dozens of places where I have been chased out, at no extra charge.

So there we have it, the unhappy dilemma: do I starve, or do I break my promise to myself and go crawling back to that same craphole, tail between my legs, and put up with the smirking clerk with his crossed arms, looking down at me like he's glad to see me back here, begging him to sell me a hamburger and paying in cash.

Keeping this in mind, it is clear that a barber's services would be no exception. Harold was the barber closest to my house. He was an old man, almost 80, who was just starting to show the effects of Parkinson's disease. It's not that I was crazy, going to a place like this... but if I didn't have the time to even go to the supermarket and regularly spent an arm and a leg doing my shopping at the little bakery around the corner from my house, do you think there is any chance I would look around for a better barber? This is what I've got, and I'm sticking to it.

So I wanted to get rid of the stuffed animal that had sprouted all over my cheeks and the surrounding area.

"Harold, can I get a shave?"

"What can I do for you, sonny?"

"HAROLD, CAN I GET A SHAVE?"

"Aaaaah... I hear you."

Harold rolled up his sleeves, did his best to straighten up his stooped back, and raised his terrifying straight razor up high. And this is the part when I started to hear the Alfred Hitchcock music playing in the background. Was this old fart going to stick the damn thing in my eye? And then Harold brought down the axe, uh, I mean, the razor.

He crooked his neck back and stuck out his tongue, raised the razor above his head and brought his hand down with a whoosh and then, yikes.

He could have taken a wad of fluff off my face, but what did he do? He took it off with the skin too. My terrified eyes desperately did not want to see that scene, but Harold had no pity, he granted no mercy, and down came the blade again, whoosh, and yikes!

The sound of the blade moving downward sounded like something out of Loony Tunes, when the coyote goes over the cliff. And with it came one more slice on my face.

Harold might be old, senile, crippled, and half dead, but he was not a bad guy. Seeing the fear on my face, he used all his senile psychology, overcame his catatonic state, and tried to distract me by asking what I thought about the election (this was 2000, and George Bush had just won the presidency, at least according to some).

Considering that Harold was just slightly older than God, and feared that God just as much as he hated pinko commie hippies, I would be crazy to comment that I was not exactly thrilled with Bush's election and Al Gore's loss.

After all, Gore had a lot going for him, in my eyes; he had the youth, he was an environmentalist, hell, the man invented the internet.

In my defense, I had no idea that for years to come we would say the name "Al Gore" when we wanted to refer to someone who doesn't know how to have fun or has no sense of humor. Or that he didn't invent the internet. I wanted to say that the election had been stolen from a really forward-looking thinker, who went to Princeton with Tommy Lee Jones. But I was not that crazy.

And if Harold was already slicing me without provocation, imagine what he would do if I told him that even Robert de Niro had wanted Al Gore to win.

"Harold, I think it is great that Bush was elected, but I'm a little more concerned with the scars that you're leaving on my face."

"You're bleeding like a pig, but that's normal. The scars will go away, sonny. I got hit by a car and I got this scar here, but it's almost gone now."

"How long ago was that, Harold?"

"Almost thirty years ago, sonny."

"Harold, here is a hundred bucks, let me up, for the love of God!"

And so it was thanks to Harold that I found myself getting excited in front of the mirror, like a narcissist, looking at all these protruding vaginas that were sprouting up on my face.

What I had tried to prevent, by not dealing with my own beard and hiring an expert, happened anyway.

I decided to relax and go with it, since I was basically screwed.

And really, truly, I tell you this was good for something: soon after this traumatic episode, I had to travel to participate in a course. Since I was in a serious relationship at the time, and I'm an extremely loyal guy, that trip was a long eight-day dry spell. But even so, every time I went to the bathroom, I could look in the mirror and take pleasure in the seven vaginas Harold had left on my face.

And that occasion, I even wrote a little rhyme to amuse myself. I don't remember it now, but it definitely involved slits and tits.

It was just me, doing my own face in the mirror, in that sleazy hotel bathroom. But it was great.

“No, don't stop! Don't stop! Aaah!!”

Mingau Ácido (Marcelo Garbine)



# **The day the itching attacked me in the rear**

Marcelo Garbine

I still had two and half hours before Ethan would get back to me about what time that afternoon's meeting would be. Anything could happen. My clumsy steps down Seventh Avenue only didn't attract attention from passersby because people have other things to do; watching a bald bearded man walking aimlessly among the sea of people is not a very pleasant pastime. My book project was equally likely to work out or not work out.

Instead of wallowing in my anxiety and reinforcing my paranoia by checking my watch every two minutes, I decided to enjoy one of my favorite activities: the movies! Not everyone has the luxury of going to see a movie on a Tuesday afternoon. What a delight. And not everyone is bald, anxious, and distracted, but also being assailed by a fleet of angry pinworms and still thinks that they will be able to concentrate enough to watch a movie.

I was solving more than one problem a a time, and felt an enthusiastic feeling of relief. I could watch a good movie and scratch my nether regions in the dark without embarrassing myself in public. One fewer shame equals one fewer trauma to add to my collection, and fewer unwanted memories in the future. Not

that I am worried about what people think of me, but I don't need to lose my cool. Protecting yourself from time to time can be fun.

Most of those strangers were never going to see me again, and those who did would probably not remember me. Even with this in mind, I'm a guy who tries to be normal. I try to avoid sticking my hands in my pants and making adjustments, to the joy of some people and the disgust of others.

Coincidentally (or maybe there was some universal cosmological synchronicity), there I was, just at the corner of 45th Street. Not even the itching could remove my sense of contentment at being close to my second home.

The AMC theater is one of those rare places in the craziest part of New York where you can feel free from the manic obsession with schedules and urgent commitments. It's an oasis right in the middle of this asylum we call a city.

I went in and bought a ticket for Woody Allen's "Blue Jasmine", which in my opinion, was the best movie of 2013. There were thirty-eight minutes to wait before I could go into theater number four, where it was showing. Just nineteen more furtive glances at the clock, a few twitches to the left and a few more to the right to shut up the insufferable pinworms, and soon enough I would be in the pitch dark, where I could scratch wherever I pleased.

But look at that beautiful blonde! And she's alone! If it weren't for these anal invaders, I would go over there and talk to this beauty. But today, alas, is not my day. I would be satisfied just to be able to pay attention to the movie and, of course, if Ethan called me later with good news about the book. Oh no! That blonde was not coming this way. Say it isn't so..... Oh yes, she was.

"Hi, is this the line for 'Blue Jasmine'?"

"Yes, miss, it is."

"I've read good reviews, I have high expectations for this movie," she said with an inviting smile.

I wanted to say I also had high expectations, not only for the film, but also for the fact that she was there with me, but what could I say if I was solely and completely focused on not embarrassing myself in front of a beautiful woman? I used the time-tested technique of interlacing my fingers behind my head to control my hands. It worked, but it was tough going.

My rear end was burning, it was on fire. I couldn't utter a single word. I thought she was starting to assume I was an idiot who didn't know what I was doing there, but this was disproved by the sparkle in her eyes. She really seemed to be interested in me.

"I think I know you from somewhere. Aren't you a writer?"

Oh, no. The last place I wanted in a situation like this was to be recognized. I was about to deny it, but I was too weak to pull off any kind of character.

"Yeah, I write."

"I knew it! It is you!"

The usher walked towards the velvet rope blocking the door to the theater. He would let us in any time now. And what could be worse... my phone started to squawk. What the hell. Who on earth would be calling me now?

"Hello?" "Who the hell is it? I mean, hello, Ethan?"

"Could I please speak to Marcelo?"

"What?"

"My name is Olivia, I'm calling from Bank Northeast...."

"Olivia, I'm sorry, but I can't talk right now."

"Marcelo, you've been selected for a special line of credit...."

"Olivia, you have to be kidding, special lines of credit are absolute ripoffs."

"Not at all, Marcelo! We have special rates and you can even get special rewards depending on how much you spend!"

"Listen Olivia, I am not interested. I know your special rates are heading toward the stratosphere the first time I even blink. Then you nail me with special fees."

"But, Marcelo, you have nothing to lose. This is a special opportunity, and you can always dispute any fees."

I have a real hard time cutting people off. I hate to be rude.

"Olivia, I know this is all just some scam to rake in 200% interest per day the first time you forget to send me the bill on time. The only thing I can think of that is more annoying than worrying about some shady credit card scam is having pinworms."

Olivia laughs. "Marcelo, you have a great sense of humor."

"I'm not sure it's always a good thing, Olivia."

"Oh but surely it is, Marcelo. And you don't have to worry about it being shady, you can use your Bank Northeast card with pride!"

"Olivia, I don't usually tell the general public about my athlete's foot, do you really think I will let people know that I have some shady high-interest rate card?"

Olivia laughs again. "Oh Marcelo, you're just too funny."

Oh, no. I had hoped that would have been the last straw. I wasn't out to get Olivia. Well, actually, maybe I was. But I was much more interested in getting into this delightful blonde who was smiling at me, and Olivia was being a bit of an impediment.

In my mind, I was a bit more concerned with getting it on. But everything else was getting in the way. There was a whole list: Ethan still hadn't called, my damn worms were itching like hell, I was about to miss this movie I really wanted to see, I was afraid the blonde was going to lose interest, and now this!

Olivia was squirming into the middle of all this to get me to sign up for her ridiculous credit card. And what did I expect? Who the hell was I to consider getting into someone's pants when my own pants had been invaded by this horrible itching parasite at my own back door? And there was the problem: I was hit with the perfect storm of simultaneous problems. All of these factors had gathered, arranged, planned, and constructed an entire conspiracy against me. And Olivia just kept it coming...

"Marcelo, another thing you may be interested in is a credit protection program, that way if you are not able to pay your bills you are protected."

"Olivia, I am not married and I have no kids."

"Sorry, I don't follow you, Marcelo."

"Why would I want a credit protection program?"

"It's for your own security. If you had an accident or weren't able to work, your balance would be paid, and you wouldn't have to worry."

"Olivia, if I had an accident or wasn't able to work, I would shoot myself in the head."

(Silence) "That's a terrible thing to say, you have your whole life ahead of you..."

"Olivia, I'm not that young, and even if I were, what's the point of being young and disabled?"

Finally, I managed to get Olivia to thank me on behalf of Bank Northeast and wish me a great afternoon. And I didn't even need to be stupid. Well... I may have been a bit controversial, but I was still classy. Of course. Now, finally, I



could talk with the ... Wait a minute, where did the blonde woman go? Well, who knows, maybe I would find her inside the theater.

I held out my ticket to the usher in his black uniform; erect and overly serious, he was planted at the entrance to theater four, oblivious to the comedy that was happening right in front of him, a comedy that only I could perceive. In the darkness, I couldn't see any blond hair in the light cast by the screen.

Good for me. That way I didn't have to feel like a loser for thinking it wasn't a great time to get it on. And I could sit way in the back, in the corner against the wall of this small and empty theater, which was how it should be on a Tuesday afternoon. Contradicting what I had said to Olivia, I had two kids now: the film, and my pinworms. And like any good father, I needed to divide my attention equally between the two. I paid a little attention to the film, and then turned to my pinworms. But it was to the pinworms that I sang:

"One way or another, I'm gonna getcha getcha getcha getcha, one way or another, I'm gonna find you..."

I just left out all the parts about winning them over.

Mingau Ácido (Marcelo Garbine)

# **Mrs. Jones doesn't want to flush**

Marcelo Garbine

Watching TV the other day, I heard one of those phrases that you hear more and more often lately: "World War III will be fought over the little water that remains on planet Earth. We need to save water so it won't run out in 2044".

Great, let's all clap ... for bullshit!

It's easy to understand that waste leads to shortage in some places. Waste today, deal with the consequences later. But this wasted water will be heated up by the sunshine and evaporate. Dark clouds will fill the sky and that same water will rain back down.

The drain in my shower does not send this precious water to another dimension, or to heaven or hell, or to the four elephants and gigantic turtle that hold up the flat medieval world.

Just to clarify, this generic confusion about river pollution has nothing to do with me keeping my shower on longer than I really need to.

I mean, really? And who exactly is going to tell this to Mrs. Jones?

She fell for it! And now she's telling her husband and four children that they don't have to flush the toilet every time they pee.

Two drops of Pine-Sol in the toilet will solve the problem. Every ten pees, they are finally allowed to flush. But not every time, no way! Poop, all right, but not for pee.

Mrs. Jones's youngest son asked her, "Mom, isn't it better if we just not flush when the pee is clear, and flush it when the pee is yellow?"

But Mrs. Jones is a tough lady. "Shut up, kid. You're not the one paying the bills."

And wouldn't you know, a well-known journalist from an eco-friendly New York radio station came to interview Mrs. Jones, and her words spread through the airwaves to houses all across the five boroughs.

Mrs. Joneses started to multiply like rabbits all over the city, and houses everywhere started to smell like cheap bars.

And imagine how happy housewives were to imagine that not only could they save money on the water bill while helping to prevent World War III, their husbands could spend more time at home, because they wouldn't have to cross the street to indulge themselves at the local watering hole. If they closed their eyes, their noses told them they were already there.

The reporter had added: "Mrs. Jones, besides controlling how much water you use in your own home, you also encourage your neighbors to do the same."

Mrs. Jones! Mrs. Jones! Not only are you stinking up your own home, you have to hassle your neighbors, Mrs. Jones? Go watch the weather forecast and see if it will rain in the Sahara, Mrs. Jones!

I don't know if there will be World War III in 2044, but whoever makes Pine Sol is probably feeling pretty good. Only the guy that owns that sleazy bar around the corner is unhappy.

Poor guy, lost eight customers, it will be hard for him to pay his water bill...

I already ordered a gizmo I saw on the shopping channel: a toilet silencer. That way, Mrs. Jones's disciple who lives next door won't be ringing my bell and bothering me.

Let me flush in peace!

Okay, Mrs. Jones? Did you know that some guy on TV said it was healthy to eat crap? Imagine, you could kill two birds with one stone: better health and even fewer flushes!

Mingau Ácido (Marcelo Garbine)

# Translation

"The kick in my nuts" – "Doctor Smith charges \$290.00" – "The vaginas that appeared on my face" – "The day the itching attacked me in the rear" – "Mrs. Jones doesn't want to flush"

Writer: Marcelo Garbine Mingau Ácido  
Translation: Tracy Smith Miyake

"How to save face and get out of a pinch"

Writer: Marcelo Garbine Mingau Ácido  
Translation: Linda Canetti