
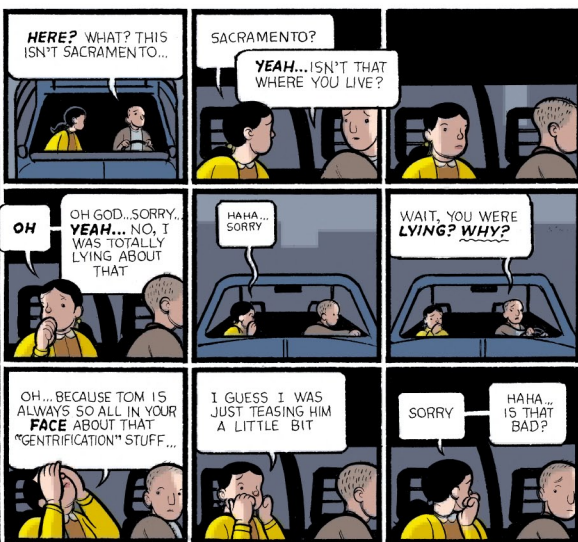


I 3:26.06 The Funny Pages



...SO THEN THE PLUMBER FINALLY SHOWED UP AND--

OH WAIT! HERE... IT'S LEFT HERE... SORRY SORRY...



HERE? WHAT? THIS ISN'T SACRAMENTO...

SACRAMENTO?

YEAH... ISN'T THAT WHERE YOU LIVE?

OH

OH GOD... SORRY... YEAH... NO, I WAS TOTALLY LYING ABOUT THAT

HAHA... SORRY


WAIT, YOU WERE LYING? WHY?

OH... BECAUSE TOM IS ALWAYS SO ALL IN YOUR FACE ABOUT THAT "GENTRIFICATION" STUFF...


I GUESS I WAS JUST TEASING HIM A LITTLE BIT

SORRY

HAHA... IS THAT BAD?



WOW, IT IS NICE... THAT'S SOME BEAUTIFUL STAINED GLASS...



...PROBABLY BUILT AROUND 1900 OR SO...

MAYBE EVEN 1895...

ARE THE CEILINGS 11 OR 12 FEET?

CEILINGS?

UM... OH-- I DON'T KNOW... THEY'RE...

HIGH...

YOU CAN COME UP AND SEE THEM, IF YOU--

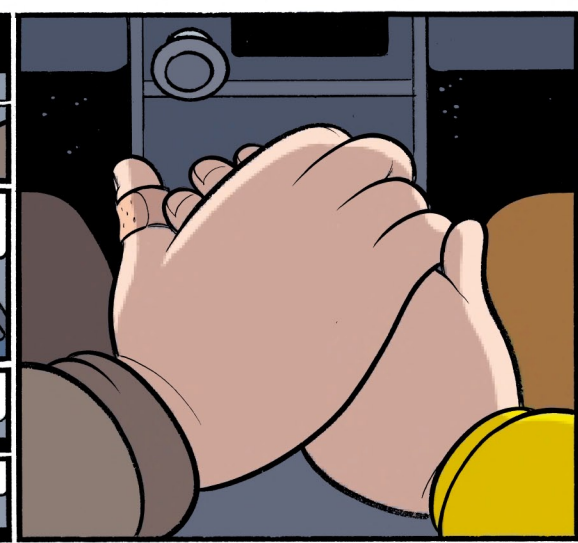
I MEAN, YOU DON'T HAVE TO... I'M SURE YOU'VE GOT TO GO...

IT'S LATE


YOU'RE TIRED

I'M AN IDIOT

HEY



A large, detailed illustration of a hand, possibly a finger, with a yellow sleeve visible.



WE SAT THERE SILENTLY FOR A FEW SECONDS, MY PULSE THUMMING IN MY EARS... SLOWLY, MY FINGERS TURNED UPWARD TO FIND HIS DAMP PALM... I WAITED, BUT HE DIDN'T PULL AWAY, AND A WARM, REASSURING WAVE SWEEPED OVER ME, SNAGGING MY BREATH AND STOPPING IN MY THROAT...

STILL, FROM EXPERIENCE, I'D LEARNED TO EXPECT THE WORST...

I KNOW...


...YOU *ONLY WANT TO BE FRIENDS*...

HA HA

NO...


NO?

SOMETHING... A TIME-LARGE TULIP... BLOOMED IN ME, SOMEWHERE IN THE VICINITY OF MY LOWER ABDOMEN...



SURE


I THINK IT'D BE REALLY FUN TO GO OUT WITH YOU



"REALLY?" I SAID... "REALLY?" AND HE ADMITTED THAT IN SCHOOL HE'D ALWAYS LIKED ME BUT THAT HE'D BEEN IN AN EXTREMELY LONG TERM RELATIONSHIP (WHICH, ACTUALLY, HAD ONLY RECENTLY ENDED), SO HE WAS STILL VERY EMOTIONALLY CONFUSED BY THE WHOLE SITUATION, EVEN THOUGH HE KNEW IT WAS THE RIGHT THING TO DO...

IN SHORT, HE SAID HE JUST DIDN'T WANT TO JUMP INTO ANYTHING RIGHT AWAY, BECAUSE IT WOULDN'T BE FAIR TO ANYONE, ESPECIALLY ME, WHICH I AGREED WITH... I WAS SO IMPRESSED BY HIS MATURITY, HIS KINDNESS...

I JUST NEED A COUPLE OF WEEKS, THAT'S ALL...




10:54

OKAY

BUT AT 10:54 PM, TWO SATURDAYS FROM NOW I'LL EXPECT TO HEAR FROM YOU, MR. PHILIP HUENAGLE

GOD, I SAID SO MANY STUPID THINGS... I KEEP PLAYING THEM BACK IN MY MIND, WISHING I HADN'T LET THEM OUT...

IF I'VE LEARNED ONE THING, IT'S NOT TO APPEAR OVEREAGER...



YOU SWEAR


I SWEAR I WILL CALL YOU

CROSS YOUR HEART AND HOPE TO DIE AND STICK A NEEDLE IN YOUR EYE?

WHAT YOU SAID

Sigh:

THIS DAY HAS BEEN SO WEIRD



Y'KNOW?

ARE YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT TO COME UP NOW, ANYWAY?