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I'll Jump to My Own Conclusions

by Dick Emmons

I'M A SIMPLE sort of fellow. I don't ask much of life—just three square meals a day, a nice house in the suburbs, a beautiful wife who won't spend a nickel without my permission, a solid, not-too-difficult job, and the privilege of reading novels all the way through without being told how they end.

With about four exceptions, I have achieved all these goals; but the most elusive is the last. I am surrounded by friends who've already read the novels I read.

For ugly instance, take George Baker. George is the kind of guy you hate to borrow books from because before you can get the book home you know the whole plot and don't have to read it.

Just the other Saturday, George returned a plastic golf practice ball I had hit from my yard into his, clipping him on the forehead, while he was lying in his hammock reading.

"What's that you're reading?" I asked, eager to switch the subject away from plastic golf balls.

"This? New novel," George said, his lending instincts rising rapidly. "I just finished it. Like to borrow it?"

"Well, I don't—"

"It's a dandy," George said. "This strawberry blonde, see, falls off a luxury liner and this guy in the black Homburg, who used to be an Olympic diver but who is now secretly employed by the FBI, jumps in after her."

"George, I don't think it's the sort of—"

"Take it. Guarantee you'll love it."

"Well, okay, but—"

"Before you know it, they lower a lifeboat and guess who's in it?"

Rumpelstiltskin? I wanted to ask. "Who?" I said.



"A guy named Virgo, a known gem thief who the diver has been surreptitiously watching. Well, one thing leads to another—"

"My wretched golf swing is leading me back for more practice," I chuckled, trying to ease away.

"—and pretty soon they're on an island together—the diver, the blonde, and the gem thief."

"Listen, if I'm going to read the book, don't, for goodness sake, tell me the rest of the plot," I begged.

Nothing stops George, though. In five minutes I knew the whole story, including the end.

Besides Plot Revealers, I am also a favorite target for Movie Whisperers. The main trouble-causer here is my wife, who simply loves to see the same movies twice. The second time is always with me, somehow.

"Watch now," she said in a loud whisper the last time we were in a theater, "he's going to kiss her!" He kissed her. "Now her husband is going to walk in on them!" Her husband walked in on them.

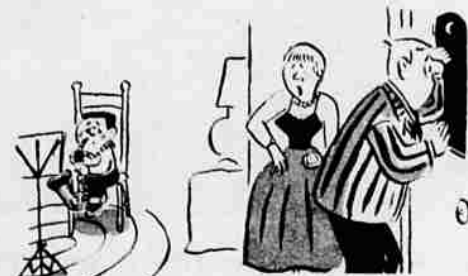
"You know what's going to happen next?" I hissed back at her. "I'm going to find a seat someplace else."

"Good!" said a voice behind us.

I didn't like the picture very much anyway, so we went home soon. My wife was silent all the way. "Look, I didn't mean to hurt your feelings," I explained, automatically flipping on the TV. "It's just that, once in a while, I'd like to finish something myself without—"

"Why they're showing 'Lilacs in the Spring.' I remember seeing that way back in high school. There's this girl from the swank Eastern college, played by Sheila Volupta, and she falls for this chemistry instructor. See, there they are. Now, in just a moment, she's going to tiptoe out of her dormitory and—"

Just as Sheila Volupta tiptoed out of her dormitory, I tiptoed back to mine.



"We can't keep him up much longer. What do you suppose is keeping them?"