

From Strange Interlude
By Don Zolidis

DIMBUS, 30ish, a bulimic human cannonball.
DOLE, 30ish, the igniter. His lover.

(A radioactive waste dump somewhere in the salt flats of Utah. The site of a run-down circus, behind the Big top. Enter DOLE and DIMBUS in the middle of an argument. They look something like Oliver and Hardy. DIMBUS is rather spherical, half-bald, and wearing a metallic orange jump suit. DOLE is thin and wears a matching outfit lime-green in color.)

DIMBUS

Can we stop walking please?

DOLE

Why?

DIMBUS

I'm tired.

(DIMBUS sits on a bench.)

DOLE

Well maybe if you weren't so fat you wouldn't get tired.

DIMBUS

What are we going to do, Dole?

DOLE

What do you mean?

DIMBUS

I don't think Lothar is doing a good job with the circus.

DOLE

You're not paid to think, Dimbus.

DIMBUS

I don't think I'm paid at all.

DOLE

Right. I don't know, Lothar thinks that by camping out on this radioactive waste site he can induce some of the women to have mutant children. We've really been running

low on freaks, lately, ever since the three-armed man left for Hollywood.

DIMBUS

I liked him.

DOLE

Actually, I can't see Lothar doing any worse with the place than the last guy. It's not like we're ever the star attractions anymore.

DIMBUS

Us personally?

DOLE

No, I mean the whole damn circus. We used to be in all the big tops... now we're in... I don't even know what the name of this place is.

DIMBUS

Utah.

DOLE

I know that you idiot. I mean the town.

DIMBUS

We're not in a town.

DOLE

But if we were in a town, it would probably have a name. And I don't know it.

DIMBUS

Because we're not in a town.

DOLE

You're a complete idiot, you know that, Dimbus. I've been shooting you out of that cannon for far too long. Your brain has turned to mush.

DIMBUS

It has not.

DOLE

What's two plus two?

DIMBUS

Four... (*looks at DOLE*) Teen.

DOLE

Right.

DIMBUS

Do you think Lothar is going to do a good job with the circus?

DOLE

I don't know. He's mostly deranged.

DIMBUS

Maybe we should go, Dole.

DOLE

Shut up, Dimbus.

DIMBUS

Why do you always tell me to shut up?

DOLE

Because you're an idiot, that's why.

DIMBUS

I think we should leave the circus altogether.

DOLE

Why do you say that?

DIMBUS

Do you know how long the careers of most human cannonballs last, Dole? It's easy when you're just the igniter, all you have to do is light the wick—I have to be the one shot out of the cannon every day; it wears on me.

DOLE

Maybe if you weren't so fat—

DIMBUS

I'm not fat.

DOLE

I can't even hardly fit you in the cannon anymore, Dimbus. And even if I can do that, which is a big if, you don't even

make it to the net. Last night you got wedged in there so tight, you didn't even move, or have you forgotten so quickly?

DIMBUS

Sometimes I forget things.

DOLE

Yeah. You used to be a star, Dimbus. And now look at you! Look at you! You're a blob, you're so dizzy all the time you can't even remember what happened the day before... and you're telling me it's time to quit? It's not time to quit! We stay here until you get back into shape! Until you resemble the man I fell in love with!

DIMBUS

It hurts, Dole—

DOLE

Oh yeah it hurts—sometimes the truth hurts, Dimbus. Sometimes the truth about yourself. I remember when I first met you. The smell of gunpowder in the air—I was in the audience in Cincinnati, and who was the human cannonball?

DIMBUS

Who?

DOLE

You were! You were, you idiot! Oh... I remember how you slid your firm muscled body into the shaft of the cannon... and those goggles... silver like the fake chrome moon that hung in the Big Top—you were the star... and then the hushed gasp as that man lit the fuse... I felt it sizzling up my spine... szzzz... BOOM! You erupted out of the taught opening like Prometheus falling from Olympus. I nearly wet myself watching you fly through the air like a rainbow in human form... I vowed, right then, to follow you to the ends of the Earth, if only to get one chance to fire you out of the cannon. I was a real estate agent, successful, and I joined this wandering freak show for you. For you! And now you're a wreck. You're a bloated ogre of a man, with a brain like a roll of toilet paper! You make me sick. Leave the circus? And go where? Go back to being a real estate agent. I don't think so. All I know is the cannon. Huh? Are you in there? Are you in there at all?

DIMBUS

Stop making fun of me.

DOLE

I'm not making fun of you! You're making fun of me! My whole life was just to light that fuse, and when I reached it... It fizzled.

DIMBUS

I'm sorry, Dole.

DOLE

Do you remember that first night?

DIMBUS

Which one?

DOLE

The first one you moron! Once I got hired by the circus! You didn't even know me and I stuffed you into the cannon—It was love, Dimbus, when I lit that fuse. They cheered our love. You knew it too, I know you did. They all knew... the whole crowd stood on the edge of its seat, they could see it in my eyes, in the way I held the match, they wanted to see if you would accept it. That's what they were waiting for, it wasn't to see you fly through the air or anything, it was to see if our love was true. You fired up like a rocket. You tore right through the net, ripped right through the Big Top and you didn't land for three miles. Luckily, that cow broke your fall. That was our first meal. Every night we made love and thousands of people cheered us on. Now... What do we have? Memories and powder burns.

DIMBUS

You know how old I was the first time I got launched out of a cannon? Six months. I knew how to fly before I learned how to crawl. My Mom says it was cause of the velocity I came out of the womb... I just shot right out, the umbilical cord snapped like a rubber band. By the time I was four I had been shot out of everything from a battleship to a bomb-bay door. I was a child prodigy. They said I did it better than anyone they'd ever seen. I had a special kind of gunpowder they used, I used to snort it for extra effect... my future was unlimited. I took the gold medal in the '72

Olympics when I was twelve. The youngest man ever to medal. The sky was the limit. I got arrogant, Dole. I got scared that people would find out I was faking it. I wasn't faking it, then, though—I had talent, I'd do somersaults in the air, sometimes, if my pants caught fire from the explosion, I'd twist around to spell out words. I started using fireworks... I don't know where it went wrong. But it did. I got cocky—I started eating, first it was just a ding dong or two, then some swiss cake rolls, finally I was devouring entire lambs before performances. I was seventeen years old when they couldn't fit me in the cannon anymore. I went crazy—who was I if not a cannonball? Just another faded out child star... I tried, there was a time when I got the fever back—I puked my way back into shape... binge, purge, the whole bit, that's when you saw me. But... It started to get to me, Dole. All the explosions. All the landings. Thousands of them. The cheering crowds. The noise. I felt my brain being jellied in my skull. My bones turned to powder. My soul pounded into dust. I began losing my mind. My neural impulses misfired, shooting in random directions like rats fleeing a kicked garbage can. My mind was rubble. I began to hallucinate.

DOLE

What did you see?

DIMBUS

I began to think I was pregnant. With a cannonball. Our cannonball, Dole. It grew erector set arms with pincers for hands, and it sawed its way out of my stomach in the middle of the night. And then it talked to me.

DOLE

What did it say?

DIMBUS

It said, my name is Steven. And then it left.

DOLE

Where did it go?

DIMBUS

Well there was an eclipse of the sun. And I realized that the sun wasn't a sun, it was a cannon pointed right at me. It was the open hole of the cannon.

DOLE

But where did Steven go?

DIMBUS

Who?

DOLE

Our love child.

DIMBUS

Dole, we're both men. We can't have children. I'm sorry.

DOLE

Aaargh! You're a moron!

DIMBUS

Sometimes I think I was born with the soul of a clown.
Then I get hungry.

DOLE

Dimbus—I'm going to leave you.

DIMBUS

Do you like pie, Dole?

DOLE

I had an affair with Yoreeba, the half-man half-woman.