

Short-short: based on the “Mad Libs” style exercise in late September. The prompt was write a story involving: a vampire, a garbage-man, a boat, a hat, and a sultry glance.

The Vampire of Acapulco
-OR-
The Garbage Man of Acapulco
By Randy Lubin

Bob, known by many as, “The Vampire of Acapulco,” was hungry for blood. His nickname is a bit misleading, though, as he only spent his winters there, when Denver became too cold. He liked Acapulco not only for its gorgeous scenery and cheap margaritas but also for the endless supply of drunken tourists, which made for easy prey.

It had been several days since Bob had eaten, and he could feel himself growing weak. The last few pitchers hadn’t helped, as the alcohol thinned what little blood remained in his system. He stumbled out of the bar and into the street. Though it was well past midnight, there were plenty of tourists still rotating through the numerous bars and clubs. Bob ambled to a nearby alleyway to wait for an easy target.

A few blocks away, Jim was beginning his workday. He was known as “The Garbage Man of Acapulco,” at least to his mother-in-law, who despised him and his lack of ambition. He really didn’t mind the job; it paid well enough and the hours freed up most of the day to relax and enjoy the sun. Furthermore, the pre-dawn routs allowed him to pursue his avocation: vampire hunting. His

mother-in-law looked down on this too; there is neither money nor glamour in hunting vampires. His hobby's risk of death, however, appealed to them both.

Over the years, Jim had heard rumors of Bob's existence and was always on the lookout for proof. While looking for vampires, Jim would wear the "Hat of Quetzalcoatl." He bought the hat from an Aztec mystic when he first started vampire hunting, because she told him it would weaken any vampire nearby. In fact, the mystic had found it in the backseat of her taxi, left by a rude Australian man who had a half a bottle of absinthe in his belly. The style of the hat is unimportant; suffice it to say, it was very ugly and made Jim's head itch.

Back in the alley, Bob spotted a plastered partygoer who was shooting sultry glances at all she passed. When no one was looking, he grabbed her arm and pulled her into the shadows.

"Why hellooo there," she slurred, "you're suuuch a great dancer! Isn't that club the greatest!"

Bob *never* attended clubs nor did he dance; vampires lack any sense of rhythm and he personally preferred jazz-rock fusion to club-music. He opened his mouth and his fangs gleamed in the moonlight.

"Ooh, are you 'The Vampire of Acapulco'?" inquired the inebriated reveler. This deeply bothered Bob. He hated the name and thought it belied his complexity. True, he was a vampire, but he also was an avid gardener and a generous philanthropist. He despised the presumptions that come along with

the label “Vampire” and expressed his anger by biting into his victim’s neck with even more force than necessary.

Moments after breaking her skin, the sound of an approaching truck interrupted Bob’s feast. Ever the cautious type, he chucked his meal into a nearby dumpster and jumped in after her. He landed amidst leftover food and broken bottles, a second before headlights illuminated the area.

Bob resumed feeding but was soon jarred, when the dumpster started moving. Jim’s truck had hooked on to the dumpster’s exterior and was preparing to empty it. Bob leapt out and landed beside the truck, square in the center of Jim’s side-view mirror. Jim noticed this and quickly jumped down from the driver’s seat, not knowing that Bob was the “Vampire of Acapulco,” but sensing that something was awry.

As soon as Jim’s feet hit the ground, he noticed Bob’s fangs and tightly grasped the “Hat of Quetzalcoatl” to his brow. It itched furiously. Bob sneered and lurched forward, thinking Jim would make for a much harder meal than the woman in the dumpster. As Bob neared, Jim lowered his head and then charged, hat first, toward him.

The hat connected with Bob’s jaw and the vampire quickly toppled over. While Jim would credit the hat’s power with his victory in his many retellings of the story, it had nothing to do with his success. Bob’s first victim had been Roofied earlier in the night and there was enough in her blood for him to feel it. His head hit the pavement and he lost consciousness.

Jim couldn't believe his luck. He removed his hat and kissed it, but immediately regretted doing so as it tasted of sweat and mildew. He then lifted up Bob and tossed him into the back of the truck. After closing the garbage truck's rear, he climbed back in truck and accelerated out of the alley.

Jim skipped the remainder of his route and sped straight toward the harbor. On arrival, he drove to the edge of pier 27, where a garbage barge waited to ship the refuse up the coast. He quickly emptied his truck, along with a still unconscious Bob. Before driving off, he removed his hat and cast it upon Bob's face.

An hour or two later Bob awoke feeling weaker than ever. The stench of garbage made him want to vomit, something he hadn't done since his time as a mortal. His face also itched fiercely; he lifted Jim's hat off just in time to see the sun rising above the Acapulco skyline.

The early rays of dawn set Bob alight and the fire quickly spread the length of the barge. The scent of burning trash filled the bay, keeping all but the most congested tourists barred up in their hotels.