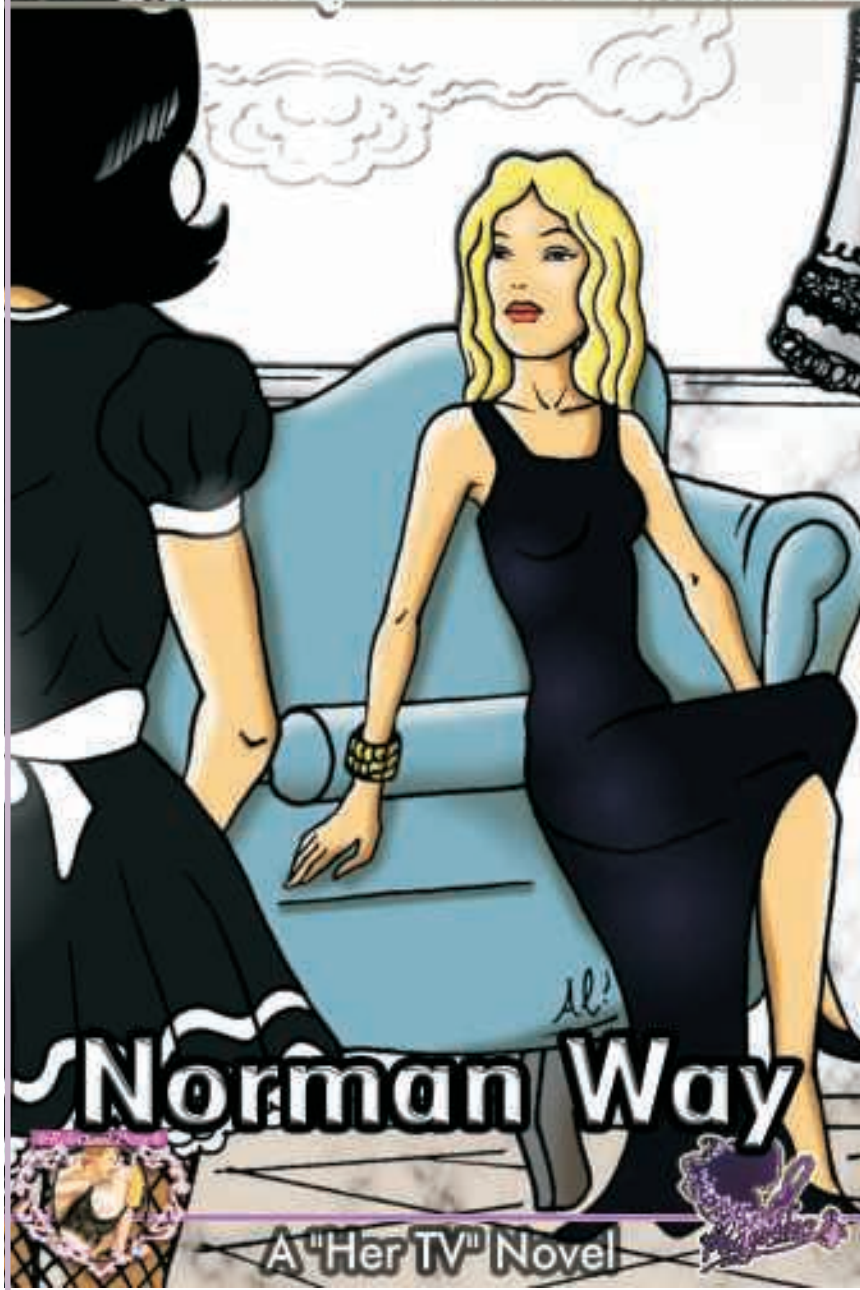


# Funny For Life



**Norman Way**

A "Her TV" Novel

## **Reluctant Press TV/TS Publishers**

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# FUNNY FOR LIFE

By **NORMAN WAY**

“A sense of humor is a good thing to have, my dad once said to me.” He should know since he was in the used car business, which as you know is one type of business without the most sterling of reputations.

He often said “I am not a crook. I am a used car salesman. There is a difference, you know. I have to have a license.” People always had a good laugh over that.

My dad purchased the business from his dad when he retired. He kept the same staff and took care of his dad’s previous customers as well as the new ones who came along.

The business always did well even in economic times that were not so good. Dad attributed that to one thing: “Taking care of your customers.” His success proved that he was right.

Mom was an English teacher who loved music and the theater. She worked in the small dealership

part-time during the school year and full-time over the summer.

They made a good team and the employees were happy to be working for them, resulting in almost no turnover in the time that they were in business.

I started working there too when I was twelve years old. After the mechanics checked out the cars that Dad had purchased and the ones that had come in on trade, I washed the outside, vacuumed and cleaned the inside to make them ready for sale.

There were a few exceptions, the ones that dad called “junkers” which he promptly sent to auction to become someone else’s problem.

Dad always sold the mid-level price range in used cars, never the top or bottom end. That helped in maintaining a good customer base which of course brought in plenty of referrals.

Learning to deal with customers was something that would have to wait until I was older and worked in either the customer service department or in sales.

I did sit in on one sales training session. I remembered a number of humorous anecdotes that the speaker included before he asked the sales people to fill out the endings of two stories.

Humor is always an important part of these training or motivational type of talks.

The first was about a man who came home from work to find his wife sitting on the couch. She was sobbing hysterically. He asked her what was wrong and she pointed to the basement.

Cautiously he walks down the steps, remembering the previous summer when their scientific genius of a son had tried to turn their old canister vacuum cleaner into a 37mm anti-tank gun like the one he had seen on TV but with near disastrous results.

Fortunately the accidental discharge that punched a hole in the back door of the passing squad car did not injure anyone. Both officers were quite cordial and understanding when the man explained and said that it wouldn't happen again.

In the basement the man finds himself confronted with a large, black steel cylinder bolted to the floor ticking ominously.

He is now greatly concerned as he hadn't ever encountered anything like this before.

Taped to the side of this thing was a note from the genius son asking the father to call him at the toll free number in Zurich so he can renegotiate his allowance.

The P.S. Read: "Please call before 6pm CST." It is now ten to six and Dad was not handy with tools.

"Think fast, sales people, and write down how you would handle this."

The next story dealt with a real estate salesman returning from a convention in Las Vegas. His flight was delayed and he arrived home late at night. Tired, he showered quickly and went straight to bed rather than unpack.

The next morning he was up early and went immediately to the open house he had scheduled. Upon returning home that evening, he noticed several boxes,

his tennis racket and golf clubs sitting on either side of the front steps.

At the front door, his key didn't work. It suddenly opened and he was faced with his wife who had a very angry expression on her face. She extended her right arm.

Dangling from her index finger was a pink thong. He took it off her finger and on the label it read "Abe's adult emporium, Las Vegas, Nevada." Beneath that was "Size 6." The last time the wife wore a size 6, she was in junior high. He knew he should have unpacked his bag himself.

"Think fast and write down how you would handle this," said the speaker with a grin as laughter filled the room.

"Before I leave, you should remember that in sales you should always expect the un-expected. Like the lounge lizard in Vegas who sits down next to an absolutely drop dead gorgeous blonde at the bar. He orders a drink then looks over at her and smiles.

"First time in Vegas?" he asks.

She shakes her head no.

"What do you do?" he asks.

"I am a witch," she responds.

Somewhat taken aback, he takes another sip of his drink.

"I see. So you are into that casting spells, bubble, bubble, toil and trouble thing?"

"Sometimes,"

“Tell you what. Why don’t you take me back to your place and turn me into the best lover you ever had?”

“Sure. I could do that,” she responds as she finishes her drink.

Holding her fingers in front of his face, she snaps them twice and everything goes black. When the man opens his eyes again, he is shocked to find he has breasts and he is wearing a short-hemmed cocktail dress and high heel pumps. His fingernails are long and pink. In front of him is a purse. He opens it and in the mirror on the flap he sees he is wearing pink blusher, lipstick and has long blonde hair.

Astounded he looks over at her.

“OK TOOTS. Grab your purse and come back to my place with me so I can turn you into the best lesbian lover I ever had.”

Once again the room was filled with laughter.

The speaker collected the sheets the sales people had filled out and left.

I thought the man’s presentation was pretty good. Maybe sales wasn’t the kind of job I should get into. There always is a down side to everything. At least I had lots of time to think about my life’s work.

Dad had very few problems with any of his customers and maintained a good relationship by treating them properly. I had never heard of anyone bad-mouthing him.

About half of his customers were repeat customers or friends or family members so it really paid off to



treat people right in the dog-eat-dog used car business.

At school I got by easily. I did spend some time studying but I managed to pick things up quickly without much trouble. I guess you could say that I had it a little easier than some of my classmates who had to really buckle down to understand things.

In addition while I was never the “class clown” so to speak, I always tried to find the funny end of things to keep my spirits and those of my classmates up.

Most of my friends thought I was funny though the teachers didn’t always appreciate what I thought was humorous.

Like the time a state senator visited our 6<sup>th</sup> grade class. He was well-dressed and gave us all a big smile. When the teacher introduced him, she mentioned she had been ahead of him in school.

After answering several questions about running for election and what a state senator’s responsibilities were, I thought I had a more important question so I raised my hand. The senator pointed at me.

“Senator. Miss Parks said she was ahead of you in school. I was wondering how large a group was ahead of you. Two-thirds? Three-fourths?”

Miss Parks looked a bit uncomfortable as she bit her lip and the senator tried to stifle a grin as the class chuckled at my question.

“Ah. Well, I don’t recall exactly but we did attend the same high school and college.”

I guess I wasn’t surprised at his answer, typical for a politician, though not giving me an exact answer. I

mean if the guy wanted my vote, despite the fact that all of us weren't of voting age, he could have been, at least in my mind, a bit more precise.

The senator quickly pointed to another student and answered his question.

At the conclusion of the senator's appearance, we all applauded when he left the room. It seemed only my classmates thought I was funny.

Years later at the semester break of my freshmen year, the school closed early. There had been an infestation and about half the building was going to be fumigated, "to kill the bugs," the teacher said.

I raised my hand and when the teacher called on me, I was quick to explain.

"Actually it doesn't kill the bugs, it just sterilizes the males,"

"Really! I didn't know that," she replied.

"Yeah. The female bugs like it because no matter who they hook up with, they can hump all night and don't have to worry about laying eggs! In fact it has a sort of peppermint flavor," I added and winked to the blond girl sitting next to me.

When the laughter died down, the somewhat red-faced teacher dismissed us.

Once again the class thought I was funnier than the teacher did. I always felt good about my ability to get a few laughs.

The next year in hygiene class the instructor, a registered nurse was explaining the importance of not only personal cleanliness but protection during sex, stressing the increase in various STD'S.

She intoned that this was some serious stuff and we should not take any of this lightly.

I raised my hand and when the nurse called on me, I asked what I thought was an important question with of course a touch of my own brand of humor which to date hadn't been really appreciated by any of my teachers.

“If a person is unclean and they have sex with another person who may or may not be clean they may, in addition to what is called VD or STDs, contract something called creepy crawlies or crabs, correct?”

The teacher nodded as she said, “Yes, among other things, that is a possibility,”

“Well, in order for the crabs to reproduce they have to mate, right?”

“Yes I suppose so,” she answered.

“Well if they mate in this unclean environment, what do they get? They are already crabs.”

The room filled with laughter as the instructor appeared to be a bit tight-jawed.

“Well, I don't know exactly, but I do know it is important to keep yourself clean and use protection,”

Okay, once again I thought it was funny but not the instructor.

I spent the summer working at the dealership.

I much preferred working there over school. I didn't have any idea what I wanted to do in life but working in a used car dealership didn't thrill me too much either. Nevertheless I applied myself and worked hard.

That fall in English class we all had to give a speech about how we had spent our summer.

When it was my turn, I talked about my job at the car dealership as well as my unpleasant experience at the dentist.

“I was sitting there all numbed up, waiting for the dentist to come back. After paging through a magazine, I glanced at the wall where the dentist had all those diplomas and embossed certificates. They all looked so official. It suddenly struck me that there was no transcript.”

“I was going to ask him about that but then thought better of it. I mean if you could see cavity drilling: A, tooth extraction: B, root canal” C-, would you really want to know that?”

The class seemed to enjoy my joke but the teacher’s face remained impassive.

“I was thinking the same thing about the doctor’s office when I had my annual physical before coming back to school,” I continued

“You’re sitting there in your gown and between the diplomas is his transcript: Physical exams: A, appendectomy: B+, tonsillectomy: A, Vasectomy: C-. Thank God I was there for a physical.”

Once again the class enjoyed my humor but the teacher didn’t think I was that funny which I believe resulted in me getting only a B for the course.

I finished my junior year and two days later, my dad dropped dead of a heart attack. Following the funeral and the settling of the estate, Mom put the business up for sale.

The year before Dad had expanded the office space, added another bay to the service department and put in a new central heating and cooling air unit. It was expensive but a necessary move as the building was quite old and the increase in business demanded it.

Several of the employees got together and decided to buy the dealership themselves. It was a good deal all around for them as well as for us.

After the sale was completed, there wasn't much left after the construction debt was settled but a portion of the proceeds was given to me. Mom insisted I not spend any of it and save it for the future.

I continued working that summer but Mom thought it would be a good idea to find another job, especially one that I could work during the school year as well as during the summer.

A shoe store at the mall advertised for part-time sales and stock work so I applied there. The job required some weekends and some night hours which was fine for me.

That night I got a call that I was hired so I gave the dealership two weeks notice. This job paid better and except for unloading the occasional shipment from the warehouse, it wouldn't be too physically taxing.

I picked up on things right away and soon was very comfortable waiting on people though I wasn't too crazy about the ones with kids. I much preferred to wait on men.

Some of the women were difficult as they were fixated on the size number on the box compared to what the Brannock measuring device indicated their true size was.

The manager explained that when a woman was sixteen and got a date to the prom, Mom took her to the formal apparel store to pick out her dress and accessories.

To compliment her dress she gets her first pair of high heels. A pair of 3” heel silver pumps, size 6.

Now it’s thirty years, two divorces and four kids later. She is sixty pounds overweight, working twelve-hour shifts in a factory and she comes clomping in the store wearing a pair of steel-toed 6” boots she needs in her factory job. She is still looking for that size 6 pair of heels.

“Suck it up and let them try on all the sizes they want,” cautioned the manager. “The woman will finally acknowledge the pair that fits even though she doesn’t like or agree with the number on the box.”

A woman’s comment that “The company must have changed the size system” should be ignored as she accepts the correctly-sized pair. Do not explain the truth to her that most shoe companies haven’t changed their size system in a hundred years.

Except for a couple of bumps in the road, I got along well with my customers and got the new stock out and properly shelved in good order.

It was an enjoyable job from the standpoint that every day was different. Each customer had something in mind that was different from the last one so the time went fast.

At school I was getting good grades and enjoying myself. I enjoyed the friendship of my classmates and got along well with others.

During the year I had numerous opportunities to crack a joke or find the lighter side of something and of course as you might expect, my humor was more appreciated by my fellow classmates than by the teachers.

In my psychology class the conversation got around to relationships. One of the girls made the comment that all men were liars.

I felt I had to defend myself as well as the other males in the class so I had to speak up.

“Just a minute,” I began. “Women wear perfume and makeup so you look better and smell better than you really do. You wear high heel shoes to look taller than you really are and of course those garments so you look more enhanced than you really are and then you hate men cause they are all liars,”

The room filled with the boys’ laughter but not of course with the girls and the female teacher’s. Once again I found myself on an island with my male classmates.

Later that week as I left the store at five, I saw one of the girls in my class. She and her grandmother were standing in front of a large display in the center of the mall.

This display depicted the changes in women’s fashions over two hundred years. The display contained both underwear and outerwear.

As I got closer, her grandmother made the remark about how difficult it was to get into the garment they were looking at. It was a long bra and girdle all in one garment.

I couldn’t help myself.

“If you think getting into one of those is difficult, try getting a woman *out* of one of those. A couple of drinks, dinner, a couple of drinks, movie, a couple more drinks, bolt cutters, Sawzall. Not exactly a day at the beach for men either!” I quipped.

The woman shot me an icy glare but my classmate seemed to take it in good humor. I walked away, feeling once again that only half of the parties involved seemed to enjoy my sense of humor.

For some unknown reason the party that most didn't think I was funny were older women.

A week later, on a Saturday afternoon, I walked out of work and as I passed a large department store, I saw a female classmate at the perfume counter.

I went into the store and walked over to her to say hi. Then I gave her a little advice, unsolicited of course and with my own brand of humor.

“I know you want to attract a real man so since this is the Midwest, ask the sales clerk if she had anything that will make you smell like beer and onions with just a hint of French fry grease.”

She giggled but the middle-aged woman behind the counter never blinked. Obviously she lacked a sense of humor so there I was again, seeing my joke appreciated by only half the people present.

I didn't think that there was anything wrong with me. It must be that these older woman just couldn't take a joke or perhaps had no sense of humor at all.

My senior year was nearly done and I still wasn't sure what to do with my life. Both my mom and my counselor weren't happy about the fact that I hadn't registered for college or the local tech school.



I told both of them I wanted to continue to work for a while before I decided what to do. I saw no harm in that since I didn't want to borrow money to get a degree and then find out the job market sucked and I was saddled with a lot of debt.

That decision would have consequences that I never dreamed possible.

In fact there was no way that I or anyone could have foreseen what was going to happen to me and change my life forever. It would almost be like something out of a movie... and not a good movie either.

She walked into the shoe store on a Saturday night just before we closed.

I had just finished straightening the women's section and hoped that she wasn't one of those women who had to look at every shoe in several sizes before making up her mind, especially this late in the day. Maybe I would be lucky and she would just browse and then leave.

I noted that she was wearing a sharply tailored jacket over a plain white blouse and a skirt as she approached me walking with cat-like grace and confidence in her high-heeled pumps

Her hair and makeup was impeccable. Her face was without expression as she picked up a New Balance running shoe that was on display

"I would like to try on a pair of these in a nine or nine and a half," she said in a soft voice as she smoothed her skirt and sat down.

I knew better than to measure her foot with the Brannock device. The manager had said once,

“Women always know their size even if they don’t, which is all the time.”

I went to the shelf and came back with both pair and set them off to one side.

Kneeling in front of her, the point of her high heel pump was just inches from my face. I began lacing up both the size nine running shoes and then the size nine and a half.

For some reason I felt a bit uneasy as I knelt in front of her. I guess, to be honest, I almost felt a little intimidated by her commanding presence as she looked down at me lacing up the shoes.

“Subservience” would best describe the way I felt. This was something I had never really felt before with any other customer, male or female.

When I finished, I slipped off her high heel pump and put the running shoes on, first one foot and then the other. She tied the laces and stood up. As she walked away from me, I once again was struck by her catlike grace as she walked down the aisle, then back again.

Taking her seat in front of me again, she shook her head.

“I would like to try the nine and a half please,” she said.

Taking off the size nines, I replaced them with the nine and a half size. Once again, for some strange reason, I felt like a servant doing his bidding in front of his female master.

When I finished, she stood up again and walked away from me. She came back and sat down again. She still hadn't smiled.

"These will be fine," she announced.

I unlaced the running shoes and put them back in the box as she slipped her high-heeled pumps back on.

At the counter she paid for her purchase, then handed me a pink card. I took it from her and looked it over as she put her wallet back in her purse.

"If you're looking for some additional part-time hours, please give me a call. There is a new business opening in the other concourse soon and I could use some experienced help getting the place ready,"

I watched as she left the store, sort of mesmerized by her catlike graceful walk. I wondered what it would be like to work for someone like her.

"Cassandra's Salon" was in black letters across the top of the card.

The next line was "Margaret Hanson, Manager". Below that was the line "High quality makeup, skin care and wigs."

The third line read, "Appointments preferred." Next to that was a hand written phone number.

I put the card in my wallet. There were no other customers that night.

Back home, I took the card out and looked at it again.

It seemed rather odd that she would want to hire me. This salon was a women's place and I certainly didn't know anything about wigs or makeup.

Returning from work on Sunday, I found my mother dead in the basement. Apparently she had been doing laundry and collapsed. The ambulance came but they couldn't revive her.

The next week I took off to get her estate settled, then returned to work. In my spare time I got rid of her things and prepared the house for sale. Her attorney worked with me and made sure everything was in order.

After work one night, I remembered the card. I didn't really need the money but another part-time job would fill in the time gaps and keep me busy.

I called the number and got Ms. Hanson's voicemail. I left my name and number. After supper that night, I drove back to the mall and walked to the other concourse to see where the salon was located.

The store front was still covered. The banner overhead read "COMING SOON! CASSANDRA'S SALON." There was a large picture of the German supermodel Cassandra Siegfried on the right side. I left the concourse and went home.

The next day, Margaret Hanson called me back.

"I want you to come in and fill out an application. Please tell me your work schedule for the next month."

I gave it to her but was curious to know why she had to know my schedule a whole month in advance.