

The Trifling Story of Frank

I'm going to call him Frank. This isn't his real name, but he's still living around the corner from me and I wouldn't want to embarrass the man using his real name. Besides not wanting to embarrass him, I don't really know if he's a violent man and I don't want to take any chances. I was planning on using bits and pieces of his story and I was planning on stretching the truth and changing stuff to make the story exciting.

Frank is no spring chicken. He's sixty-five and on social security now. He used to work for a cafe over on East Tenth Street and got fired, because they said he was too slow to keep on the payroll. He was the dish washer and he'd been at that certain job for seventeen years. He was once good at this job and knew how to make that washer sing, but he'd slowed down a lot over the years and his work suffered as a result. The boss wanted speed and thought homeless people could provide the physical labor he demanded and a much cheaper labor force than Frank provided. Frank went down to get his unemployment and the cafe owner contested the claim. Frank fought that bastard and eventually won.

To tell the truth, Frank is slow as a slug, and all that crap I just wrote about him making that dishwasher sing is just hot air blowing. I put that up there just to keep Frank from getting upset if he happens to read this story. I figure he won't read any farther than that. To tell the complete truth, the man was a slug on that cafe's routine. He was a slug everywhere he went. He broke cups and dishes every day, he left a mess when he was finished and the other dishwasher had to clean up after him. He left crap on the plates and stuff in the glasses and the patrons complained over and over.

I'm sorry, I'm just going to have to stop right here on Frank's story. I can't keep this up. I want to write about Frank, but the events of the day constantly enter into my thoughts and I just can't concentrate on Frank's piddling problems. Frank will just have to wait until all this economic downturn, bailout crap is behind us or until I don't give a tinker's damn any longer.

I would just love to tell you about the time when Frank was taking a shower in the bathroom of his little worn out, rusted, peeling trailer house over in Dixon's mobile home park. The place was so over used, he couldn't lock the front door. He used a chair up against the door knob, but he didn't understand that the door opened out and not in and a guy broke into this place while he was in the shower. Frank could hear this shrieking music and noticed a shadow on the shower curtain and before he could turn off the water, the shadow ripped open the curtain and started stabbing at him with a broken broom handle. Hey! It's just like in that classic scene in the movie "Psycho!" It's really unimportant at this moment, how all that finally came out. I will bring it up when I can concentrate on the "Story of Frank." Right now, I'm using that scene to set the stage for what I'm going to write about.

I'm sitting at home much as you are now reading this story. Nothing out of the ordinary is happening. I've got the Great Bend Tribune newspaper in my lap and I'm trying to find my glasses on the table next to the recliner. I like to read the weird section about crazy, stupid, ignorant and silly people and the crazy, stupid, ignorant and silly things they manage to do to get into the paper. I find my glasses and I hear this shrieking sound like in the movie "Psycho." The way things have been happening in my life lately, I ignored it. I hear a lot of shrieking in my life and I'm living proof it can be ignored.

The shrieking noise, a shadow comes over the room and as I turn the front page of the paper, I am stabbed repeatedly by the headlines. The downward thrust of those headlines felt like a knife to the chest, arms, ears and mid forehead. I fought, but I lost the battle. They used the word Billion. Billions of dollars all stacked in a stack that if placed end to end would stretch for the earth to the moon and back, three times. The total sum of all that money stacked up together came out with the new word, Trillion. Three quarters of a trillion dollars to bail out a bunch of big shot idiots who were making big time profits off of little people who shouldn't have been allowed to borrow money in the first place. There is a word used to describe this term as described above, and that term is the word, "Greed!"

So... I'm being stabbed by the headlines and I suddenly can't feel anything for the Frank story. I tried to write it, but you've seen the results of that attempt. Hey! I know you must be disappointed, but I can assure you Frank recovered and his attacker turned out to be a disgruntled former girlfriend who just wanted Frank to pay the child support he owed to his former wife. She was caught and got three years to life for attempted murder, but the judge dropped the sentence and gave her two years probation. She still threatens Frank by cell phone every day or so, but nothing terrible has happened yet. I'm not going to keep going on about her, because I'm on another subject at the moment and the story of Frank's love life is complicated and like I told you... I'll get back to it when I complete this critical national financial downturn, bailout story.

A trillion dollars! I wouldn't have the slightest idea how much money that could be. I mean I've grown up with the word billion ringing in my ears. I'm sure when I was a kid in the 1950's the national debt was in the hundreds of billions of dollars after the war. It was big, but I'm sure in today's terms it was manageable. Then in the 1980's I hear the word, Trillion. After Ronald Reagan, the national debt was (and I could be wrong, so don't rag me about it) three trillion dollars. Three Trillion dollars just floored me. I'd never heard of such a number in my life. I held my hands to my face and screamed out loud, "Holy shit! How in hell could we get that deep in debt? How in hell is this country going to pay that debt off?" I'm not making this up. I yelled that out in the middle of the night, in the center of the street and set off a domino effect of falling dog howlings cascading down the street.

That was more money than I could ever imagine any country ever owing for anything. I thought that our stately and wise congressmen, now that they knew, would somehow come up with a sensible plan to start paying some of that back and getting all those creditors off our back. Then Bill Clinton came along and started reversing the spending effect by balancing the annual budget and building up a tiny surplus of millions or maybe billions of dollars. We may not be close to getting out of debt soon, but at least the process was going in the other direction.

It was just like when Frank finally got his new car paid off and he had some extra cash which he thought for a moment about spending some of this surplus on this back child support. His girlfriend at the time was sucking his dick when he decided to take a trip to Las Vegas on a free-for-all weekend to spend the money. She thought it was a great idea, except Frank took off one morning and didn't take her with him. She swore she'd get back at him. Yeah, Frank was going in the right direction, but his brain put a stop to that, just the way it happened to Ole Bill with Monica between his legs in the oval office. He lost that one big time. The surplus didn't grow much after that.

Then Ole Bushy-Wacker makes it to the big house, by some good ole bushwhacking and the good ole boy system and plenty of oil revenue and plenty of Arab friends and that's the end of the surplus and the world billion. No one ever uses the word billion any longer unless they're just telling a joke or fooling around.

The national debt went from the three trillion (almost refreshing to hear these days) to six trillion. Let me stop and get a gasp of air here. I suddenly feel faint from the blood rushing out of my brain.....Six trillion bucks! It's so hard to grasp the sum of six trillion that I feel faint hearing it. I can grasp the word billion. There are lots of billionaires today in the world, but I don't think there is a Trillionaire any where... Well, maybe Bill Gates!

I mean, what the hell is a Trillion anyway? It sounds, maybe like a thousand billion dollars, or a billion, billion dollars or maybe three times that much to make up for the use of the syllable "Tri" in that god-awful word, Trillion. And now this country is in the middle of a Wall Street meltdown and the words Three Quarters of a Trillion dollars will be needed from the taxpayers pockets to pull it off. Poor old Frank would crap his pants if he were to hear this news.

I bet Frank forgets about when his girlfriend tried to kill him and starts worrying about how far his Social Security check will stretch when he finds himself paying out that kind of money. Yeah, Frank is going to wet his pants when he finds out how much of his hard earned money is going to help some sorry assed CEO who just screwed the world from the deck of his gleaming white houseboat off the shore of Florida.

Maybe Frank will start to think about all that food he stole from the cafe. They left him alone at the end of the day to clean up and expected him to close the door tight. Sure... Good ole Frank did that and more. He stole enough food to feed Namibia. He'd back his car up to the back door and shoveled it right into his trunk. Frank had a nice little stand set up in the Public Library parking lot on "Farmers Market" days. It was good money without the overhead. He took that food right out of other people's mouths just like the Congress was going to take food out of ours in a couple of weeks. No one knows who dropped the dime on good ole Frank, but a good guess would be his former wife, because things got shaky toward the end and Frank stopped bringing eggs and milk to her back door once a month.

The free lunch was over for both of them. She didn't get anymore free commodes and Frank got fired and that was actually a lucky thing, because the boss could have done much worse to him. The only reason Frank got off so lightly was for the same reason all the big boys are going to get off this latest economic bust that is occurring today. The people bringing up the charges and pointing the fingers were dipping from the till themselves. Frank's boss was stealing from a government food distribution program and selling his surplus in another "Farmers Market" under the table. Frank got fired.

Sorry for getting off track again. I will be glad to have all this under the table and out of my life, but I've been hearing the rumors that the national debt will be pushed to the unbelievable figure of nine trillion dollars..... I have to take another breath here. Nine trillion dollars is a number I can't comprehend and before I'm able to end this story I hear the number eleven trillion and I'm floored. Who in hell could pay off a debt like that? Who in hell would be able to accumulate a debt like that? I mean I was writing about the fact that Frank had accumulated a personal debt of sixty-eight thousand

dollars of credit card debt and then he got out of it by declaring bankruptcy and pulled it off. Can our Federal Government do that? Would China and Japan stand for that? How in hell is this country going to pay a bill like that? I mean what would it be like to get a bill like that in the mail every month? Who the hell pays on that thing and is any of it going to the principle or is it just on the interest owed?

I was going to mention in the story about Frank, that Frank just loved that Peter Seller movie, *The Mouse That Roared!* It was a great flick about a tiny little European country beset with financial problems and decided to invade the United States. The theory was that they were to declare war, invade and lose the war. In this way, they would receive foreign aid, have the national debt dissolved and everything would turn out rosy. Maybe that is what the United States is planning. I wonder who we're going to invade? I think it might be the former Soviet Union. We just sent the former soviet country, Georgia (the boyhood home of Stalin) a billion dollars to rebuild their army after a brief, but costly conflict with its former oppressor, Russia. Maybe we'll invade Russia, lose the war and everything will be hunky-dory.

I'd love to tell you how all this will end, but I simply don't know. Frank's story ends with a sad note, but then of course, his whole story was on a sad note. I'm not going into Frank's outcome. I can't simply because I can't concentrate on those trifle matters yet. Notice the "Tri" in trifle, how it echos to the sound of Trillion?