

Cautionary Tales

for the

New Millenium

a PHP Short



by **Eric Nielsson**

Illustrated by **Jay Munro**

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PHP Shorts

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Divine Lawsuit



The Reverend Allen Harkin Worthington hurled his personal, ornate, gold-embossed and kidskin-covered bible (“autographed by Jehovah himself,” the Reverend liked to joke) at the television set by his desk. The screen imploded with a loud pop, accompanied by fire-and-brimstone flames shooting out of its innards.

“Fuck!!!” the Reverend cursed loudly, in a very unChristian, but very human response, to the news report that had just aired on CNN, announcing that the entire town of East Quogue, Long Island, was suing the popular television evangelist for six-hundred million dollars, on unspecific charges. “Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! Fuck it all!!!”

His tantrum was over seconds after it started. After all, the Reverend couldn’t have and hold an audience of 27 million loyal, born-again viewers by venting secular, scatological rantings and ravings on air. His style was more towards patriarchal oaths and epithets, in which he called down Old Testament wrath and retribution upon unrepentant sinners and unbelievers in his booming, proph-

et-like sanctimonious stained-glass voice.

He reached over and flicked the intercom switch. “Get me legal. Now!”

A long, long twenty seconds passed before the speakerphone rang. It was John Engstrum, chief legal counsel of the Service in Christ International Ministries of Virginia Beach, Virginia.

“Did you see what these New York heathens want to do to me? Six hundred million dollars!”

“We just got the subpoena faxed to us, and —“

”And what?”

“I advise you to settle immediately, before it gets more expensive and does your ministry further damage.”

“But why?” the Reverend whined. For the life of him, he couldn’t see where he had done anything wrong. He had never been to, didn’t even know where East Quogue was.

“Let’s go through this logically, Al,” Engstrum counseled. “Point one: there was a Force 4 hurricane last summer that wound its way up the east coast.”

“Sure. Hurricane Francine.”

“Point two: our Virginia Beach headquarters and television studio were in its direct path, right?”

“Right.”

“Point three: did you not go on the air and pray —“

”I asked all our viewers to beseech the Lord to make the hurricane veer away, and He did. We were spared, praise God!”

“No, Al, that’s not quite what you told them to do, is it?”

Puzzled, the Reverend thought a moment. “I don’t remember the exact words,” he replied honestly.

“Well, let me refresh your memory, Al. You told viewers to — and I quote from the broadcast transcript — ‘to pray to the Lord that He protect His loyal servants by sending the storm away, towards the unbelievers.’”

“O.K., if you say that’s what I said, that’s what I said. So what?”

The lawyer sighed. “Point four, Al: it just so happened that the hurricane did veer to the east at the last minute, and eventually crossed land in Long Island, causing many millions of dollars in damage and destruction.”

“So what’s the point?” the televangelist asked.

“They got us dead to rights,” Engstrum sadly concluded. “If we agree and admit that it was a simple act of nature that turned the storm, you’d be telling all your viewers that God had nothing do with it, that no miracle occurred. You’ll lose millions of followers.”

“And the alternative?”

“But if the Lord indeed listened to their supplications, then you’re guilty as charged, and East Quogue will probably win its lawsuit.”

“But what’s the complaint? What did I do?”

“You are officially charged with “Flagrant and Malicious Misuse of Prayer,” and frankly, the sinners on Long Island have one hell of a case against you.”

END OF EXCERPT STORY

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Please turn the page to meet Eric Nielsson (author) and Jay Munro (illustrator) of ***Cautionary Tales for a New Millennium,*** and the publisher Pixel Hall Press.

About Eric Nielsson



In early 2001, Eric Nielsson dropped out of the corporate rat race, to follow wherever highways and byways led him — always with a notebook and pen in hand. He claims that he has left technology behind, and doesn't even have an email address or cell phone. Eric is always writing, and has promised to deliver a new series of quick humorous sketches of modern life that will make you smile, then wince with recognition — any day now.

About Jay Munro



Jay's been cartooning since high school, looking at the world in a slightly twisted way. He's currently working as a tech writer, but also indulges in cartooning, photography, motorcycle riding, guitar playing, electronics tinkering, and wine making. He, his wife Kathy, and Frankie the cat live in the Northwest trying to figure out how to retire and spend their time riding the roads. More of Jay's 'toons may be viewed (and purchased) at www.Tech-Toons.com.

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