

*The Jentacular Experience is a bonus story from "1001 Nights in the Trans-Arabian Corporation's Boardroom", a book by Robert Godden; designed to unleash and expand your strategic thinking about your business and/or your career. An explanation of the messages contained in this story is available free of charge from the website.*

## **The Jentacular Experience**

Snorky was a lexiphane.

The two most interesting things about Snorky were his nickname, and his standard introduction, which was "Hi, I'm Snorky, and I'm a lexiphane."

Rarely did someone fail to ask at least one of either burning question that this sentence provoked.

"A lexiphane," he would declare, "is someone who uses unnecessarily complicated words – and the ironic thing is, you can't really use the word without being one."

Or he would explain "my friends think I could talk underwater, so they call me Snorkel, or Snorky for short."

There were many things that were important in Snorky's busy young life, such as his desire to stand out and his penchant for antique headwear, but his favourite was helping out after school at *Post Prandial Interludes*.

His Uncle Lex – really Brian, but you can guess why he called himself Lex – ran the late night bar, and every day he would reward Snorky with both two hours' pay and a new and exciting word.

One Thursday, the word was very, very good, and Snorky was destined to remember it well.

"Jentacular", said Uncle Lex, as he handed over the cash. "Concerning Breakfast."

Snorky went home and let himself in, as it was still many hours until his mother returned from her shift.

That night his mother was about forty minutes late. He was starting to wonder where she was when he heard the car pulled up; looking more tired than usual she came through the front door.

"Come with me, Sebastian", she said. "Your Uncle Brian has been in an accident".

By the time they got to the hospital, it was too late. Lex, whilst crossing the road, had been struck by a speeding motorcycle. He'd simply lost too much blood by the time he was rushed to the Emergency Department of the local State Hospital, where his sister happened to be the on-duty doctor. She'd stabilised him before she's gone home for Snorky, but in just that few minutes, he had slipped away.

"He said to tell you something, Sebastian," said a nurse who had tried to save his life at the end.

"Fame is a vapour; popularity an accident; the only earthly certainty is oblivion."

"What does that mean?" asked Snorky's distraught mother.

"It's a quote, Mum. Mark Twain. It's on the wall above his desk in the little office at the bar."

"It means he's left me the bar, Mum."

"Don't be silly," said Snorky's Mum.

But he wasn't being silly – Uncle Lex, whose significant other left him a year ago and who had sired no progeny, had left him the bar, his books and a cash deposit – eighty grand, available when he turned eighteen.

An on-line collaborative dictionary project got a sizable donation – the word "lexiphane" now had a banner which read "*Posthumously grubstaked in perpetuity by the subvention of the altruistic Brian "Lex" Farthing*".

His two sisters got the house and various ancillary items, including his collection of beer mats, which fetched a surprising amount at auction.

The first problem Lex had was that though he could own the bar, he couldn't work in it once it had opened, because he was still a minor. Also, with the late night bar opening from seven p.m. until two a.m., it would play havoc with his schooling.

But it was a thriving business, and he convinced his Auntie Maureen – Brian's other sister - to give up her job at the local council and operate the bar under his ownership.

Snorky was in his final year at High School, and as luck would have it, most days he had afternoon lectures only.

Since *Post Prandial Interludes* was on a corner, he was able to remove a storeroom and then section of a small part of the premises, complete with its own entrance. It became a separate establishment, but with a shared kitchen with the main bar.

Armed with his talents as a pancake chef (second prize in the local show last year) and his friends Boingo and Octopus, he opened The Jentacular Experience.

From six-thirty until ten-thirty each morning of the working week – and until noon on the weekends – the three friends served an excellent menu including Breakfast Cornucopia, Caretaker's Fable and Panless Cake, along with twelve other dishes names after literary references, anagrams and the other sorts of nonsense you get from the young and keen intellectual set.

In particular the Panless Cake – a pancake cooked on a griddle – was popular, and every day the trio would come up with a new word to share with their customers. Boingo, who was a talented artist, would create the word with a piece of wire, which would be used to brand the breakfast.

The Jentacular Experience quickly rose to become the most popular breakfast restaurant in the small town. After a few months, it was so successful that a place across the road, *Rather Eat Out*, was struggling.

Derek Jones – known privately by his competitors as ‘Dense Joker’ because the kids spent way too much time working out anagrams - realised that *Rather Eat Out* (or the “The Area Trout”) was not attracting the bright and energetic young crowd that *The Jentacular Experience* was, nor was it likely to. He also suspected that the takings from serving alcohol at *Post Prandial Interludes* probably provided a source of ready cash for the enterprise across the street.

So Derek hit back.

He divided his establishment in two, and obtained a liquor licence. He called his bar “*Drink*” and his café “*Eat*”.

Both *Drink* and *Eat* had simple plain fronts with the name in large neon letters. The menu at *Eat* consisted of as few words as possible – Fresh Fruit, Cereal, Eggs&Bacon. Mischievously, he had a brand made up and had “It’s just a Pancake!” burned onto his pancakes as he served them.

With plain fare and low opening prices, he lured a bit of business away from *The Jentacular Experience* – his menu was more or less the same – and even when he lifted his prices, he kept some of the business. Both establishments ticked along.

Derek’s new bar – *Drink* – did quite well, though it’s bright, minimalist interior did little to lure the patrons of the softly lit, ambient *Post Prandial Interludes*.

Then, the school holidays hit town.

Boingo had flown to Amsterdam every school holidays to stay with her Dad, and whilst reluctant to leave the others short-handed, she didn’t want to miss this annual pilgrimage. They all figured it would be quieter over school holidays anyway, since the opening of their breakfast café had seen an explosion of teens fortifying themselves with a cappuccino or breakfast tea, and many of them would not venture forth anywhere near as early on a non-school day.

Business dived to the point where it was barely worth opening. Snorky and Octopus decided to stay open until 11:30 a.m. to catch some late breakfasters. This just cost them more money – the clientele simply spread out.

They considered opening for lunch, but didn’t want to dilute the brand of their breakfast restaurant. So they took another tack.

They had signs made up. And shirts. And a special menu. And a stack of other stuff which is too extensive to list here, but basically, they thought of everything.

So after *The Jentacular Experience* closed at 11:30 the next day, they had a mad half-hour: they changed shirts, and menus, and all the other stuff, and hung a big sign over the front of the café.

“For Six Weeks Only – THE TRENCHERMAN.”

With hearty lunchtime stews right through to really big baguettes, they served quite magnificent fare. It took only three days before lunchtimes were buzzing.

They even had a small sign on the front which said "Evoke Merry Duo." Had anyone bothered to ask or even noticed it, they might have pointed out it was an anagram of "Your Move, Derek."

Derek didn't notice the sign, but as his restaurant was called *Eat*, he figured he might as well just open at lunchtimes as well. And he did.

Derek wasn't as successful at lunchtimes; possibly because *The Trencherman* had a countdown to "Closing Forever" the Saturday before school went back.

Both establishments coasted along, doing quite well, but not really making a killing, for a few weeks.

So Derek approached Snorky.

"Sebastian, let's be realistic," he said. "There's not enough business for both of us. Why don't I buy the out?"

"Sorry, Derek," replied the youthful entrepreneur. "I'm having too much fun. I've decided not to go to university this year, but run the restaurants full time."

"Well, how about I close my café and you close your bar, so we each can run at a healthy profit."

"I couldn't do that. It was my uncle's."

"Well, Sebastian, that could mean it's war."

The next day newspaper went up at the windows of *Eat* and *Drink*, and a sign saying "Coming Soon... *The Edible Moods*". Much banging and crashing and sounds of renovation could be heard.

Derek was over again a day or so later.

"That sound you can hear – I bet you're wondering! Exotic furnishings, bold colours, fancy fittings? You know, I have enormous cash reserves."

"But I've decided to give you one last chance. Before I sink millions into beating you, let me buy you out. It makes no sense to have two cafes and two bars here. But I'm a hundred thousand down, and I'm not going to lose that investment."

"Let me know by the end of the day."

Even though it was Snorky's decision and his alone, he consulted his mother, his aunt, Octopus and the newly returned Boingo.

His mother was all for it. "You're eighteen next week; you can go off to university with a huge wad of cash behind you."

His aunt said she loved running the bar, but it was his decision to make. Boingo and Octopus had a similar position.

Snorky asked Derek over the next day.

The pair sat with Boingo and Snorky pulled out a two page document.

"Derek, this is an offer to buy your businesses and take over your leases."

"Today is my eighteenth birthday, and I have already seen great deal of success. I know how good I am. This town needs some interest, something unusual, not your offering, Derek."

"Here I have eighty thousand in cash, and here's a pen. It's not quite the hundred grand you spent, but it is my offer. Take it or leave it."

Derek looked stunned. "No way!"

"Think about it, Derek. Do you want to spend another five years up against us, losing more money, or get out now?"

Derek picked up the contract. "I'll let my lawyers look at this, and get back to you." He left the café.

Derek called late in the day.

"I'll sign. I'll see you tomorrow in the offices of my lawyer, Eve Bunco-Doyenne, 214 Short Street, at 9:30 tomorrow morning."

Snorky put some champagne on ice when he arrived at The Jentacular Experience the next morning. He told his two sidekicks what was happening.

It was a very quiet morning, so Snorky was easily able to get away. He duly trotted off to the lawyers, and found a simple rented room with a cardboard sign outside, and a desk inside.

Derek was already there and introduced him to Eve.

Back at *The Jentacular Experience*, Boingo was on a break, and sat in the window sipping a coffee. With her usual notepad in hand, she did what she often did. She worked out anagrams. She started on the new name across the road, The Edible Moods.

Suddenly she gave a cry of disbelief.

She screamed at Octopus, much to the amazement of the few patrons. "Get Snorky on the phone now!"

Octopus called Snorky, but his mobile phone was turned off for the duration of his meeting. Boingo jumped on her bicycle, pulling up outside the office as Snorky had just emerged, whistling and carrying his contract.

"Look!"

She pointed to where Derek and Eve, having removed the cardboard sign, were jumping in a car. And within seconds they had sped off.

"The Edible Moods!"

Boingo was panting from exertion.

"It's an anagram!"

"To be Demolished!"

She pointed to a wrecking ball and demolition trucks, heading past in the direction of the main street.

Snorky unrolled the contract. There was his signature, and two others. Derek had signed 'The Dense Joker.' And 'Eve Bunco-Doyenne' had signed 'You've been conned.'

Snorky is still a lexicaphane. His café, now called "*Too Clever By Half*", is a modest family business run by Snorky and his wife Boingo. Their young children, Rudyard and Oscar, help out on weekends and after school.

Not so long ago, Snorky was in another state at a scrabble championship, and in the street outside, he bumped into Derek Jones. Derek looked a little shabby, and when he realised who he'd run into, a little guilty.

"You look a little potatory, Derek," said Snorky, shaking his hand vigorously and thereby removing the possibility of escape from Derek's options.

"It's been eight years, and there's been something I've been meaning to say to you."

Derek didn't look happy.

"Thank you, Derek."

Snorky dropped Derek's hand, raised his porkpie hat in salute, and went on his way.

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