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No Foam, No Cheerios

Frank Zahn

Ted Breslin was ready for romance, sex actually, but Elaine, his wife of twenty-three years, was more responsive if he called it romance. He turned off the television after *Late Night with David Letterman* and hurried upstairs to his and Elaine's bedroom where she lay under the covers on her side of the bed with her back to him.

Inside the bedroom door, he dropped into a chair, kicked off his shoes, and pulled off his socks. Jumping to his feet, he hurriedly stripped off his clothes, tossed each item over the back of the chair, and turned out the lights. Then he crawled into bed, snuggled next to Elaine's warm backside, and placed his hand gently on her shoulder.

"It's Friday night," he whispered in her ear.

"Yeah, but we're out of foam," Elaine said.

"How'd that happen?"

"How do you think? We used it all up."

"So why didn't you buy some more when you were out shopping today."

"I forgot."

"How could you forget something like that?"

Elaine chuckled. "You mean how could I forget it among all the other things I had to remember?"

Ted rolled over on his back and took a deep breath. "Christ!"

"Just go take a cold shower, come back to bed, and go to sleep," Elaine said, rearranging herself. "It's not the end of the world. I'll get another can of foam tomorrow so that you can do your thing tomorrow night."

"Oh, so it's just my thing?" Ted said. "Are you forgetting how much you pant and moan and snort and claw at the sheets while I'm doing MY thing?"

"For God's sake, Ted! You don't have to be so graphic?"

"I was just trying to jog your memory. I don't want you to forget anything else."

"You are making a mountain out of a molehill. So I forgot the foam. Surely you can control yourself until I get another can tomorrow."

Ted lay there for a moment, staring up at a hairline crack in the ceiling. For him, the day began with a military shine, shit, shave, and shower. After getting dressed, came breakfast at seven sharp with Cheerios and coffee. He had to have lunch at noon, a gin martini with two giant, stuffed, green olives at five-thirty, and supper at six with no delays. Cancelled or delayed flights at the airport knotted up his insides, making him miserable for days, sometimes weeks. And no sex on Friday nights after *Late Night with David Letterman* was the ultimate frustration.

“What the hell?” he muttered and then rolled out of bed and headed for the bathroom. Inside, he flipped on the light switch, but instead of turning on the shower, he hesitated. Then he turned and headed back to the bed. The light from the bathroom door cast his moving shadow across the bed and onto the far wall. Standing at the foot of the bed, he fixed his gaze on Elaine, who had pulled the covers up over her head to block out the light.

“This is too much, Elaine,” he said. “And a cold shower won’t help. I’m not going to be able to sleep.”

“Well then be quiet so I can,” Elaine said from underneath the covers. “And turn out that light.”

“I’m not turning it out. I want to talk about this. Friday night is supposed to be our time together, our time for meeting each other’s needs for what you insist on calling romance. And let me tell you—”

“For God’s sake, Ted!” Elaine snapped as she tossed off the covers, turned over, and raised up on her elbows. “What else can I say? I’ll get another goddamned can of foam tomorrow!”

“It isn’t just the foam. You have been forgetting a lot of things lately.”

“I have not!”

“What about the Cheerios?” Ted said. “I checked. We’re out. There isn’t any for breakfast?”

“Good Lord, Ted. It’s after midnight, and you’re standing stark ass naked at the foot of the bed, yelling and complaining about my memory. Can’t we talk about this at breakfast?”

“What breakfast? We’re out of Cheerios!”

“Okay, okay. I get the message,” Elaine said. She kicked off the covers, jumped up, and headed for the bathroom. Moments later, she emerged and got dressed.”

“What are you doing?” Ted asked.

“I’m going out to get the foam and your goddamned Cheerios.”

“That’s not necessary.”

“Oh yes, it is. If nothing else, it’ll give me a break from watching you work yourself into a tizzy fit.”

“There’s no place open this late at night.”

Elaine headed for the door.

“Wait,” Ted said. “I’ll get dressed and go with you.”

“Like hell you will!” Elaine shouted and slammed the bedroom door behind her.

Ted watched at the window as Elaine backed out of the driveway and drove down the street toward an all-night shopping center not far away. Then he collapsed on his side of the bed and lay staring up again at the hairline crack in the ceiling. “God dam it!” he said to himself. “A guy is better off not saying shit. And with her in a foul mood, the foam she gets will not do me much good, not tonight anyway.”

He thought about jerking off to relieve his frustration, but didn’t want to do that in case Elaine returned with the foam, and by some miracle, her mood had improved. And so he waited, but by the time she returned, he had fallen into a deep sleep with visions of naked women chasing him and begging for his essence.

Elaine opened the bedroom door and walked over to the bed with a can of foam and box of Cheerios in hand. She looked down at Ted, who lay spread-eagle and still naked on his side of the bed. His hands sheltered his ample endowments, and there was a wicked smile on his face.

“Ted, wake up!” she demanded.

Ted’s smile gave way to a frown. Still asleep, he rearranged himself into a fetal position, mumbling, “No foam, no Cheerios. No foam, no Cheerios.”

Elaine ripped open the box of Cheerios and removed the tab from the can of foam. With a finger of her right hand on the trigger of the can and the box turned upside down with the other hand, she showered Ted with foam and Cheerios.

“I’ll give you plenty of foam and Cheerios?” she snarled.

Ted awoke in a daze and scrambled to the other side of the bed. “Wha . . . Wha . . . What the hell are you doing?”

Elaine emptied the can of foam and box of Cheerios, then tossed them onto the bed. “Now that I have brought you the foam and Cheerios you wanted, I’m sleeping on the couch,” she said. “And if you want more foam and Cheerios tomorrow, go to the goddamned store and get them yourself.” With those words, she stomped out of the bedroom and slammed the door behind her.

Ted looked down at the foam and Cheerios that littered the bed. He gathered up the bedcover,

sheets, and pillows and tossed them on the floor. After wiping off the foam that still clung to his body with a towel from the bathroom, he took a pillow and blanket from the bedroom closet and bedded down on the mattress.

Looking up again at the hairline crack in the ceiling, he waited to fall asleep. “Well, I guess I know for sure now that I’m not getting laid tonight,” he mumbled to himself. “But what the hell am I going do for breakfast?”