

The Mood Glasses

By John Roozen

Big Tom—that’s what they call him. Six foot nine inches tall, and a big body to match. So, how tall are you? When you meet Tom for the first time, you step back, just a little, and look up. Yes, he is that big.

But there is a funny thing about Big Tom—he worries. He worries a lot.

For example, every day after work, Tom has to walk four blocks to a parking lot to get his car. He walks faster than usual, and he constantly looks around him as he hurries along. When he passes a person, Tom takes a few steps to the side, so as not to get too close. If he comes to an alley, Tom pauses and then quickly looks down the alleyway before scooting past.

Tom is even more cautious when it is dark outside. He hates the dark, as if there is danger everywhere – and he worries about it.

If you saw Tom, you wouldn’t believe that about him. In fact, everyone else feels safer when they are around Tom. With

his size - there should be no worries. Right? At least that's what his friends think.

On this particular day, while walking to his car, Tom spotted a pair of sunglasses lying at the base of a stop sign next to the sidewalk. They didn't look like ordinary sunglasses. They were ornate. They had jewels all over that made the glasses glitter. And the shape of the glasses was very wavy, and...just different.

You can imagine Tom's first instinct. "It's a trick!" He jerked his head around, back and forth, to see if anyone was lurking about. No one was.

"Maybe they're contaminated," he thought, "germs or poison." Tom really could get loony when his fears took over. He still hadn't touched them.

He eased up to the sunglasses on the ground, paused and looked around for the umpteenth time. Then he picked them up. The fancy glasses just didn't look like something that ought to be left on the ground, and now that he had them in his hand, they didn't seem like trouble. He put them in his coat pocket and walked on.

Driving home, Tom pulled the sunglasses out of his coat pocket and set them on the seat next to him. He glanced at them occasionally. He wanted to put them on. He would look like a dork - he knew that - but for some reason he wanted to

see what they looked like on him. “Goofy, but fun,” he thought, trying to convince himself to try them on.

All it would take is to slip on the sunglasses, quickly tilt the rear view mirror so he could see what they looked like and he would be done - off they’d go again. Tom looked around carefully at the other cars to see if anyone was watching. Then he waited until no cars were around and put on the glasses.

Tom yanked the steering wheel hard to the left – then back to the right. He slammed on the breaks, and then immediately pressed the accelerator pedal to speed off again.

They were everywhere! They were wicked! They wanted to hurt him!

Tom was in a panic. They were standing on the road. They were clinging to the hood of his car. “Oh no!” They were inside of his car! He swung his arm wildly at them – knocking them back.

Then they were gone – disappeared. They were all gone.

Tom tried to slow down his frantic breathing. He drove another mile and finally pulled off onto the side of the road. He was calmer now, or at least he had caught his breath. Tom didn’t dare turn off the car motor. He might have to speed off to get away.

There was no one around the car. He looked in the back seat—nothing. His mind was getting clearer, but he still had no

idea what had happened. His eyes came to rest on the sunglasses, now lying on the floor of his car. He must have knocked them off when he was swinging at the evil creatures.

“The sunglasses. It’s the sunglasses,” he said out loud. Cautiously he picked them up and looked around again. There was nothing – no creatures, nothing unusual. He looked closer at the sunglasses, running his hand over the jewels and decorations. He tapped the glass with his finger. They seemed normal enough.

Then Tom paused, took in a big breath of courage, and again put on the sunglasses.

His reaction was instantaneous. He tossed the glasses back onto the floor. They had been everywhere. The moment he had put the sunglasses up to his eyes, the wicked creatures were right there in front of him.

Tom sped home, his hands tight on the wheel, periodically glancing at the sinister glasses on the floor.

Once home, Tom marched into the house and put the glasses in a wooden box on his bedroom dresser. He only wished the box had a lock—a big padlock with chains wrapped around and around the box. He considered tying it up with rope or maybe duct tape. But he didn’t.

He wasn’t even sure why he brought the sunglasses home. Why didn’t he just tossed them out of the car window?

Tom decided to put some space between him and the sunglasses. He left the bedroom, making sure to close the door.

Fixing himself a quick frozen dinner, mac and cheese, he kept repeating to himself, “They have no power over me. There are no evil creatures.”

To get even further from the glasses, he followed his normal routine by going to a friend’s house to watch Monday Night Football. The group of rowdy friends was a good distraction.

Still, Tom had to force himself to focus on the game. He was not ready to talk about his experience with anyone there. Every time he pictured the sunglasses in his mind, he would shout out something about the game. “Pass the ball! Don’t run the ball every play!”

Eventually, he really did get into watching the football game. The Atlanta Falcons were having a great season, 8 and 1. The incident with the sunglasses seemed far away – almost a dream—maybe not even real.

Then he noticed his sleeve.

His shirt sleeve had a rip. “That rip could have happened anywhere,” he thought, but it was on his right arm—the arm he had been swinging at the creatures in the car. Plus, his right arm felt sore. His left arm didn’t. Tom shivered when he thought about it.

At halftime, Tom said he was going home. “The Falcons have already won this one,” was his excuse. On the way home, Tom envisioned smashing the sunglasses with a large hammer. He imagined the tiny pieces shattering into every direction—and in his mind, the evil creatures were those pieces. He would be shattering the creatures.

Tom opened the front door to his house and stopped. There on the couch was his roommate wearing the special sunglasses. His roommate, Bernard, was smiling and laughing. Bernard was always that way, but this was far different. This was ecstasy. This was hilarious laughter and delight.

Tom walked over and yanked the sunglasses from Bernard’s face. Bernard looked surprised, but then began smiling again. “Where did you get those sunglasses, man. Those are amazing,” Bernard said.

Tom was puzzled. “What did you see when you put on the sunglasses?” he asked.

Bernard began the story with how he went looking for scotch tape in Tom’s room. “I just found the sunglasses in a box - tried them on in front of the mirror. Everything became brighter, as if the light had been dim before—or as if I hadn’t had good vision before.”

Bernard went on, “I would take the glasses off – and the magic would go away. Put them back on, and the colors were

deeper and richer, and things seemed to come alive. I am telling you, Tom, it was almost as if the house was alive and friendly.”

Tom jumped in, “Is this the short version of the story?”

“Wait Wait!” Bernard said, “You have to hear it all! Then I made dinner—mac and cheese—and it was as if the mac and cheese wanted to be eaten. It was happy to go in my belly. And I swear, Tom, I’m not making this up, it was as if there were spirits or something in the house making sure that I was safe and happy. I didn’t see them, but I knew they were there. The feeling was so great.”

Tom listened in amazement. Then he told the story of what he had seen through the sunglasses. He described it as well as he could in great detail so that Bernhard would understand how terrible it was.

At Bernard’s encouragement, Tom agreed to put the glasses on again. “Maybe the glasses have changed,” was Bernard’s theory. Tom put the glasses up to his eyes and ripped them back away. The look on his face convinced Bernard of how terrible it was for Tom. Bernard put on the glasses. Smiled and said a long, “Wowwww!”

Tom pulled the glasses off of Bernard’s head. “It wasn’t fair.”

The two began to talk through what they had experienced. Tom had an explanation. He said, "Bernard, you are always happy, and so you see happy things. I think there is danger around every corner, and so the glasses make me see scary things."

"No Way!" Bernard questioned. "You... you worry that the world is dangerous? If I had your gladiator body, I'd strut around like the top dog. I'd sneer at people just to watch them run away."

"You would not." Tom shook his head. "You'd apologize to people for looking tough. You'd wear a dress, just so you wouldn't scare any kids." They both laughed.

"Ashley!" Bernard said. "Ashley. Describe her to me in one word!"

"Hypochondriac," Tom responded. "What's your point," though he was already starting to realize where Bernard was going with this thought.

"Yep, Ashley has more aches and pains than an old lady," Bernard said. "She thinks that every headache is a brain tumor and every pimple is a deadly skin disease. If we are right, and Ashley puts on the glasses, she should howl with pain."

They called Ashley and asked her to come over. She resisted - had muscle spasms, or so she claimed. But they

begged and she finally gave in. Besides, she only lived a few blocks away.

Ashley arrived and sat down on the couch. Bernard handed her the sunglasses and said, "Here, put these on."

Immediately she started to convulse as if violently sick to her stomach. Then she moaned, "I'm dying!"

Ashley leaned over and lay on the couch. The guys held her steady. "My arms! My arms!" she screamed, holding them out for the guys to see. There was nothing on her arms.

"I can't move my legs. I'm paralyzed!" she cried out. There was so much panic in her voice that Tom pulled the sunglasses from her face.

It took Ashley a full fifteen minutes before she could speak a single word. All the while, Tom and Bernard tried to explain the sunglasses and what they had each experienced.

Eventually, Ashley said, "You used me as a guinea pig?"

"Yeah, we kinda did," Bernard admitted. "But we had to! We couldn't tell you about the glasses beforehand. It would have scared you. We had to know how you would naturally react."

Ashley said again, "You used me as a guinea pig?" The guys couldn't look her in the face as she repeated that phrase over and over.

The three of them sat quietly for a while, staring at the glasses on the coffee table. Suddenly, Ashley raised her arms over her head and brought both hands down in a pounding motion, smashing the sunglasses.

Tom and Bernard were shocked. They had both been thinking about what to do next, how to use the glasses. Who should they show them to? Should they go to the police, find a scientist? Maybe they could even make money with the glasses. Now the glasses were in pieces.

“It had to be,” Ashley said sternly in response to the look on the boys faces. “Those glasses were dangerous – maybe even evil. They had to go.”

Bernard began picking up pieces of glass and squinting to look through a broken piece. Nothing happened. He desperately tried looking through each and every one of the pieces. Nothing.

Ashley stood up. “I have to go.” As she was going out the door, she stopped and examined the bottom of her fists. “I could have deep bruises from hitting those glasses. Maybe even—glass poisoning.”

Once Ashley had slammed the door behind her, Bernard said out loud, “Glass poisoning?” They began to chuckle and then laugh at the thought.

Meanwhile, Tom carefully swept the glass into a garbage bag, tied it in a knot and put that bag into another bag before taking it out to the garbage can on the sidewalk curb. His eyes scanned the neighborhood as he walked quickly back to the house. It was dark out there.

The End

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