

## The *MisAdventures* of Guy

By Norm Cowie

Thurman sipped his beer and tried to watch the blur of Umberto's fingers on the frets. After a moment, he gave up and turned his attention back to the television. Umberto had exactly three talents. He was a physics whiz, he could wiggle his ears and he could play Guitar Hero like no one else.

Umberto's fingers flew with the speed of gas stations raising prices through the twin power guitar solos of DragonForce's *Through the Fire and Flames*. Though his fingers were going at warp speed, his face was serene and blissful.

"Know what, man?"

Okay, Umberto had a fourth talent. He could have a regular conversation even while shredding his way through some of the most insane guitar riffs in music history.

"No, what?" Thurman asked, taking another sip of his brewski. His eyes widened as Umberto frazzled his way through a particularly insane twist of chords. The extremely well endowed female demon on the screen pumped her fist in animatronic exultation.

"I was playing around with some stuff in the lab the last few weeks."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah. And I think I made a breakthrough."

"Uh, huh." Thurman wasn't really interested. Boring science stuff. He was way more interested in the female demon.

"Really, it was like we overlooked the absolute easiest way. I'm surprised no one thought of it before."

“What’s that?” Thurman asked disinterestedly.

“Alternate fuel.”

“Alternate fuel?”

“Yeah. I discovered a solution that would totally enable us to replace fossil fuel. And the supply would be cheap, clean, environmentally friendly and work with an internal combustion engine.”

“What are you talking about?” Thurman said, finally interested. Even someone as marginally aware of events as Thurman knew how much a gallon of gas cost.

“Oil, man. We can get rid of oil.”

“Get rid of oil? But, but ... how would the people at Exxon get by without their thirty nine billion dollars of annual profit?”

“Oh, poor Exxon,” Umberto snickered.

“Are you serious about all this?” Thurman asked.

“Yeah. It’s all in the transfer agent. All we had to do was find a plentiful energy supply and a way to transfer the energy.”

“So what’s the energy supply?”

“Cortisol.”

“Cortisol?”

“Yeah. Stress hormones.”

“What the heck are you talking about?!” Thurman asked, exasperated.

Umberto took his hand off his guitar and pointed triumphantly at Thurman.

“That!”

He resumed his song without missing a note.

“What?!”

“Stress hormones. Your adrenal glands secrete a stress hormone. And it has major mojo, man.”

“You can run a car off of stress hormones?”

“Yep. It was easy. And all of the energy would go from your hands to the steering wheel and then to the motor.”

“Wait. Are you saying that you can use anger to power a car?”

“Well, not quite anger. It’s stress, but the two emotions are a lot alike.”

“Wow. American’s are pretty stressed. We’d have plenty to power a car with.”

“Not only that, but it would keep drunks and potheads off the road, since they wouldn’t be able to get stressed enough to power the car.”

“Cool.”

“And it would keep families together. You’d need your teenager or toddler in the car to get your stress levels up high enough to power the car.”

“And if another driver pissed you off it would actually improve gas mileage?”

“Exactly.”

“Wow! What a perfect invention.”

“Yep. And best of all, Big Oil would be out of business.”

The door suddenly slammed open.

“Hah, you wish, insignificant and obnoxious American students!”

Thurman shot up, and with a herculean effort managed to keep from spilling his beer,

“Oscar?!”

Oscar looked pleased, “Ah, stupid American Goth creature, you remember me.”

“How could I forget you, you slimy seal-killing rodent?”

Oscar gave a mock frown, “Oh, you’re so right. I am a seal killer. I’m so sorry that ever happened.”

“You’d better be,” Thurman growled.

“Yes. It was a total waste of oil. I deplore the loss of the Exxon Valdez and its cargo. But I care not about the wildlife or beaches.”

“You dirt-bag!”

Umberto, whose incredible multi-tasking ability enabled him to keep playing his game, finished off his guitar solo with a flourish and watched the female demon jump triumphantly into the mosh pit.

Then he finally looked up at Oscar, “Who is this joker?”

“His name’s Oscar. He’s Big Oil,” Thurman said through gritted teeth.

Umberto’s eyebrows shot up, “really?”

“Yes, really,” Oscar announced, drawing himself up importantly.

“What are you doing here?!” Thurman said darkly.

“I’ve come ... for him,” Oscar said, pointing at Umberto. A drop of oil fell onto the carpet from Oscar’s long black slicked back hair.

“For me?” Umberto squeaked.

“Yes. This invention of yours. We must have it.”

“How’d you know about it?” Thurman asked.

“Our spies are everywhere. We know everything.”

“So what do you want from me?” Umberto asked. His eyes were darting back and forth nervously looking for a bull’s-eye to hit.

“Oh, don’t worry brilliant but obtuse American.”

“He isn’t fat!” Thurman cried.

“Obtuse, not obese,” Oscar said, his voice dripping disdain. A drop of disdain landed with a splat on the oil that he dripped a moment before. A small stink rose from the puddle.

“Oh.”

“Anyway,” Oscar continued, “We wish to purchase the rights to your invention.”

“What?” Umberto asked.

“Purchase it. For one billion of your American dollars.”

“Which with inflation are worth only about half that nowadays,” Thurman said.

Oscar grinned, “this is true.”

Thurman pointed at him, “mostly because of you.”

Oscar’s grin widened, “this is true as well.”

“A billion dollars is a lot of money,” Umberto said speculatively.

“Don’t do it!” Thurman cried.

“Why not?”

“Dude. Think about the economy, the environment, and how much your invention would help everyone in America.”

Umberto’s eyes slid to Oscar but skidded off since Oscar was so oily, “What will you do with my invention if I sell it to you?”

Oscar gave a mock bow, “We would lock it away.... forever ... or until we could figure out a way to capitalize on it.”

Umberto's eyes hardened, "then I can't sell it to you, dude."

Oscar's face didn't change, "that's okay."

Thurman blinked, "It is?"

"Yes. For I didn't really intend on paying you. I will hypnotize you, steal your secret, and then wipe your memory clean of the invention and my involvement."

Umberto did a shriek thing that belonged more on a teenaged girl.

Thurman stood up whipped out a Sears Craftsman hammer and assumed a Thor stance.

Oscar's eyebrows went up, "A hammer?"

Thurman growled, "No, this is my wand. I would think you remembered it."

Oscar's eyebrows went back down into an angry scowl, "Yes, I do remember it."

"Well, hopefully you remember what I did to you last time you threatened us."

"You put big American breasts on me. Yes, this I remember. That was unpleasant."

Umberto's eyes widened, "you put breasts on him?"

"Yeah. Nice ones, too."

"Um. Could you, like, do it to me?"

"Huh?"

Umberto gave an embarrassed grin, "Just for a few minutes I mean. To look at."

"What are..."

"I don't see so many breasts," the science geek said apologetically

Oscar interrupted, "Believe me. You wouldn't like it."

"He's right," Thurman growled.

Then Thurman shot a glare at the oil mogul, "And you'd better get out of here before I do something worse to you."

“No, I don’t believe I will,” Oscar said. He didn’t seem concerned.

“Oh, yeah? How about I magic an elephant’s trunk on you?”

Umberto gave about as fierce a stare as a geek could manage, “Or a ...”

He faltered.

There was a moment of silence as everyone waited for him to continue.

“Or a what?” Thurman asked.

Umberto turned red. “I dunno. I had hoped to have a witty repartee by the time I finished the sentence.”

Thurman snorted, “It doesn’t matter. I’ll get him!”

“Boo hoo. I’m scared,” Oscar said sarcastically.

“Okay, don’t say I didn’t warn you.” Thurman started waving the hammer in the air like a Gothic god of thunder. Wisps of purple magic started pooling on the business end of the hammer.

Oscar watched it serenely, “Fine. I won’t. But I won’t warn you.”

The hammer faltered in air, and Thurman had to duck to keep from being brained. Or more like de-brained ... or smush-brained.

“Huh?”

“I’m not going to warn you,” Oscar repeated.

“Warn me of what?”

“This.”

And Oscar stepped to the side. Behind him a college kid stepped up. He had an incredibly wide forehead, a huge pocket stuffed with pencils and a graphing calculator in his hands. Well, the wide forehead and pocket of pencils wasn’t in his hands. The graphing

calculator was and his fingers were dancing on the calculator like a hyper Riverdancer.

“You see. I have my own scientists,” Oscar hissed.

“Huh?”

The college kid punched a bunch of buttons.

“And we sort of learned something about dimensions.”

“Huh?”

“Goodbye stupid American sorcerer,” Oscar snickered.

“Huh?”

Thurman felt the pull of energy on him. It was as if he were a huge Tootsie Roll Pop getting sucked on by a monstrous giant. He tried to shrug it off and he frantically called for his magic to help him.

It tried ... it really did.

But while it had enough power, it didn't have enough time. So Thurman could only watch helplessly as the room disappeared.

Well, to be more precise, Thurman disappeared, but from his perspective it was the room that disappeared. In the end it really didn't matter which one actually disappeared because the net effect was the same.

He was gone.

“How does one lose a magician?” Beth asked.

“He's not a magician. He's a sorcerer,” Seth said, not looking up from his Game Boy.

“What’s the difference?” I sneered. Okay, I was cranky. I’ve never been comfortable with the talk of sorcerers and stuff.

Seth finally looked up, “Of course there’s a difference.”

“What?”

“Duh. Sorcerer starts with ‘s’ and magician starts with an ‘m.’”

Beth looked at Wendy, “So when was the last time you saw him?”

Thurman’s girlfriend Wendy is a cute, plump redhead warrior whose womanly curves make her karate moves look, if not stellar, pretty interesting... at least to us guys.

“Yesterday morning. I remember because he got honey from his breakfast all over the counters...”

“He hasn’t been missing very long,” Beth said thoughtfully.

“... and the bathroom, the sofa ...”

“What about the bathroom and sofa?” Beth asked.

“He got honey on them, too. And on the stereo, refrigerator...”

Seth nodded sagely, “Yeah, honey can really be messy.”

“... the drapes, my eyeliner ...”

“He got honey on your eyeliner?” Knob chortled.

Knob’s our resident elf. He isn’t really an elf, but he does have some pretty weird abilities. Still though, he’s not an elf.

Take my word for it.

And ignore it when he talks with animals and trees and stuff.

And forget that he has heightened eyesight and hearing.

It’s not really happening.