

BUILDING WALLS

By Jeff Dunne

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CHARACTERS

DANNY

A close-minded, emotionally-stunted man who is about to discover that everything he believed was horribly, irreparably wrong.

SETTING

Just outside heaven, although it appears to be outside some kind of border crossing station on Earth.

DANNY

Here, let me scoot over for you. Just got here? Hope you ain't in no hurry. I been waitin' here goin' on three weeks. Three damn weeks, while they review my application. Review my... credentials. Damn border agents take their own sweet time. They don't care. You know, I got family over there, but they don't care. Far as they concerned, I could wait here three *months* and it don't matter.

You got family over there? Enjoyin' the good life, right? My kid's there. Had a place about thirty minutes from me, but then moved on over there about ten years ago. You got kids? Smart choice. They're just a pain in the ass. You give 'em everything, and they just don't appreciate it. All they wanna do is whatever you tell 'em not to.

Oh, look at that! They let her right through! I'm sitting here for three weeks, and she just strides right through! I swear, this ain't fair. I bet she's rich or somethin'. Rich always have it easy, don't they?

Where was I? Right. Kids. Me and Jimmy did okay when he was little, but then when he turned eleven it was like somethin' flipped in his brain, and everything was no, no, no. Thought he knew better 'bout everything. Here, get a load of this. When Jimmy turned ten, he was over five foot two. *Five foot two*. At ten years old. And he had that wiry strength, you know? Kid was born to be a basketball superstar. He could run, shoot, the whole nine yards. Then he turns eleven, says "I don't wanna play no more". Can you believe that? He wants to just chuck it all. Years of practice, and he just wants to chuck it all away. Scholarships... Million dollar salary... And he don't wanna play no more.

I tried to talk sense into the boy, but he don't never listen. After that, it was just one fight after another. I remember one time when—

Oh, wait wait wait. I gotta watch this. Been waitin' for this. See that queer fella there. I been waitin' three weeks for this. He's gonna walk up to that gate, and they gonna tell him to go take a seat. Just you watch.

There. See? What did I tell you? He's takin' a seat just like I said. They ain't gonna let no queers past the gates. Says in the bible that bein' queer's a sin, and I just knew that if I waited long enough I'd see one of them tryin' to get through.

(Calling out...) Hey, fruit cake! You might as well just turn around and go downstairs! They don't let gays into heaven! Everyone knows that!

(Back to his conversation victim...) You can always tell the gays, you know. Way they dress, way they walk. It's all how they brought up. Take that one. If his parents just beat a little sense into him when he was a kid, he woulda turned out straight as an

arrow. But nowadays all these people just let their kids do whatever they want. It's lazy. They don't wanna take the time to teach 'em right from wrong.

My neighbor, he was always lettin' his daughters do whatever, always talkin' about how he wants to be *friends* with his kids. I tell him all the time, Len, your job is to raise your kids to be proper, and you can't do that if you're always trying to be a friend.

Take Jimmy. He would talk some crazy horseshit, but I'd never let him get away with it. Like this one day when he was fourteen, he comes to me all quiet and nervous, and he says, "Daddy, I don't feel like Jimmy's a good name for me." So I says, "That's fine. You want me to call you Jim? Or James?" And he says, now get this, he says he wants me to call him Janie. Janie! Can you believe that nonsense? He says he thinks it's a better fit for him.

Now my neighbor, he probably woulda just said fine, called him Janie, and the boy woulda spent years all messed up. Not me. Not a real parent. No-sir-ee. I said, "Jimmy, what's that you got between your legs? Hmm? Is that a pussy? No. So don't let me hear no more horseshit like that outta your mouth." And you know what? That was that. Not another word about it. That's what a parent does. They draw borders for their kids. Tell 'em what's right and what's wrong. Otherwise, they get up here to the gates of heaven, and they're stuck like that queer over there. Never getting' in, and too late to do nothin' about it.

Yep, that's what it's all about, you know. Drawin' borders. That's what life's all about. Drawin' borders. Separatin' right from wrong. Otherwise, how do you keep the sinners out? You gotta have walls. Strong walls. And that means makin' sacrifices. Like take me and Jimmy. When he left home, I never heard from him again. Some people woulda got all upset about that, but I knew I did what was right. I set him on the right path, and that's all what matters. So I didn't get to see him no more. That was my sacrifice, my sacrifice to do what was right.

Sure, I woulda like to have known how his life went, if he had a family or whatever. I woulda liked to know that. Would like to have known how he died. Who don't want that? But we don't always get what we want. Not 'til we get to heaven. That's when we get our reward. Before that, all we can do is live the way we're supposed—

Wa-wait. Watch this. They're callin' the fruit cake back up. They's gonna tell him he can't get in, that it's too late and there ain't nothin' he can do about it.. This is where you gonna see justice happenin'.

What the... (*Now calling out towards the gate...*) What the hell's goin' on?! Don't you see that he's a queer!? What you lettin' him just walk right in for!?! Gays can't get into heaven! It says that in the bible!!

(Turning back to his conversation partner...) This is horseshit! I don't understand! Been waitin' for weeks for this, and I don't understand. The bible says that gays don't go to heaven. I mean, everyone knows that. Ain't it one of those chapter verse things? Everyone says that gays don't go to heaven, so how come they lettin' him right in while I'm still waitin'? I was here first.

This ain't right! This ain't how it's supposed to work. People who make sacrifices are supposed to go right in, and the gays and the other sinners are supposed to be turned away. So how come they let him in while I'm still...

While I'm still...

No. This can't be right. Everyone said... everyone said that... No. We're supposed to build the walls... to guard the borders... to separate the... to separate...

Oh, no. No no no no no no NO!!

(Turning back to the gates, desperate and pleading...) Please! Please! My son's in there. You have to let me in! Please! I have to tell him somethin'... I been waitin' for ten years to tell him somethin' when I got to heaven! Please! I have to tell him... tell him that...

(Lights out.)