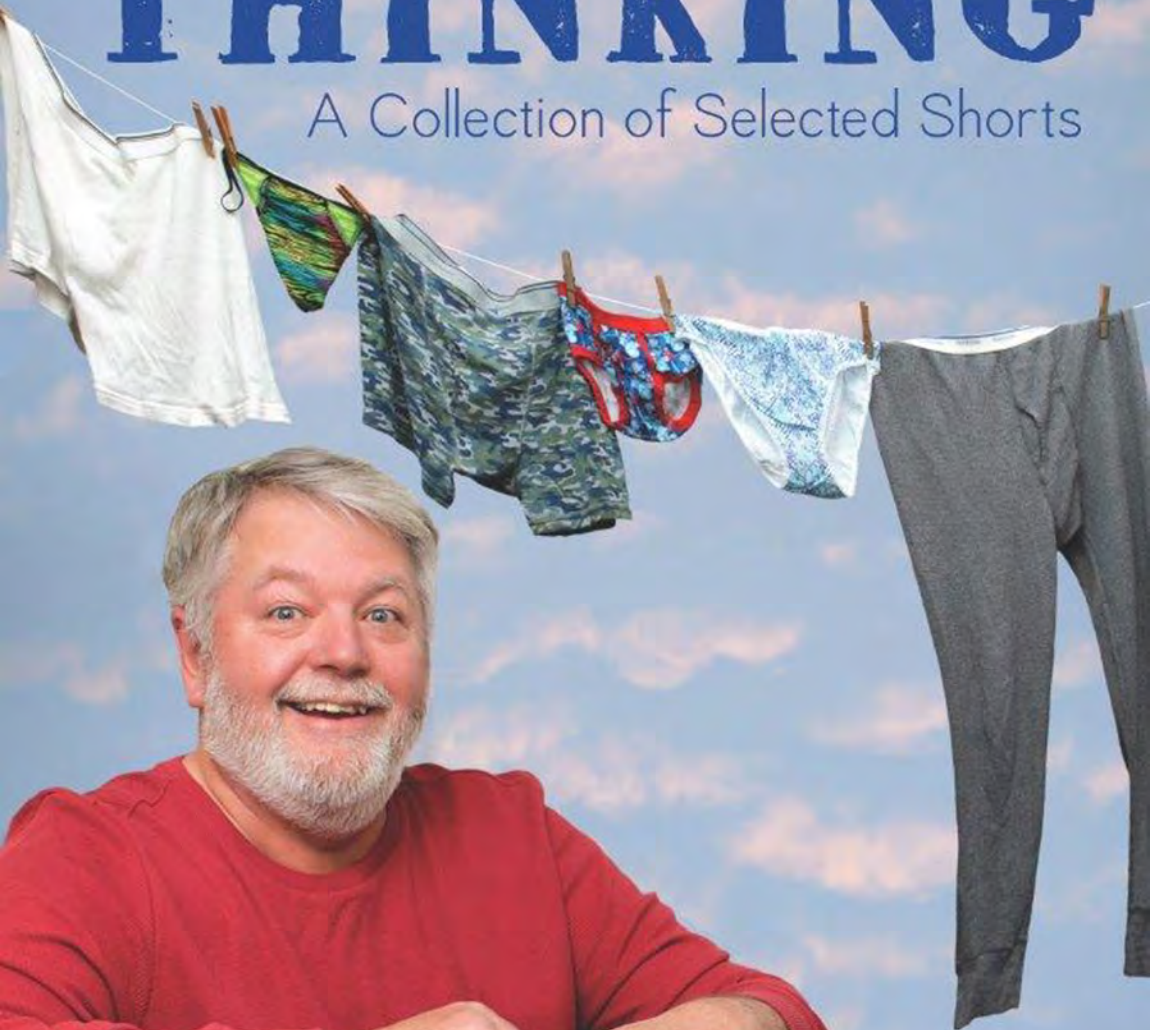


The Perils of  
**HEAVY  
THINKING**

A Collection of Selected Shorts



**Russell Gayer**

The Perils of  
**HEAVY  
THINKING**

A Collection of Humorous Shorts

by Russell Gayer

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Perils of Heavy Thinking: A Collection of Humorous Shorts  
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*In memory of Mr. Terry Thomas, my 10th grade English teacher. The only human being on the face of the earth who could get excited enough about Moby Dick to leap on a desk and scream, "Thar she blows!"*

*And to all the elementary school teachers who read aloud to their students, instilling the wonder and joy of books.*

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# Important Stuff You Should Know

*The following documents contain top secret information which has been withheld from the general public. Even Homeland Security, the TSA, the IRS, are unaware of the content of these manuscripts. Due to the Freedom of Information Act, and at the urging of my publisher, I'm releasing these never-before-seen documents for the enlightenment of mankind. So, if you're fortunate enough to be reading this right now – consider yourself in an elite crowd.*



# Dragonslayer

There was a time when dragons roamed the hills and hollows of Northwest Arkansas. These monstrous beasts slithered around narrow back-roads, forded swollen streams, and roared down one-lane blacktops in search of prey, paralyzing their victims with ominous yellow flashing lights. Only the most courageous, naïve, or ill-prepared youngsters dared challenge such hideous monsters.

Naturally, my mother was eager to sign me up at the earliest age possible.

To promote my God-given talent as a natural for the job, she bragged to the school principal how I had single-handedly destroyed two tricycles and a Western Flyer red wagon. The man was obviously impressed, but adamant that all enlistees be six years old to enroll in the dragonslayer program. Alas, I was forced to sit-out another year.

Finally...the big day came. We stood by the mailbox and waited.

Armed with an oversized three-ring binder and a four-pack of number two pencils, I prepared to do battle with the dragon. Mom insisted I wear my finest armor for the occasion, the outfit she affectionately referred to as my “new school clothes.”

Off in the distance, we could hear the monster approaching. Twelve months of anticipation faded in the early morning fog. Anxiety took up residence in my stomach. It twisted my organs into knots and gnawed at the very core of my being. I clutched



the binder close to my chest and squeezed Mama's hand. The day of reckoning had come.

Forty feet long and mean as a scorned woman, it came charging toward us. Skidding to a halt within mere inches of my trembling body, it threw open its gigantic mouth and bathed us in carbon monoxide.

"This is Russell," said Mom, wiping the dust from her eyes. "He's going to be getting on here from now on. Make *sure* he's home in time for chores."

"Yes, Ma'am," said the voice at the top of the dragon's staircase-tongue. "Hop aboard, young man. We've got plenty of good seats."

Cautiously, I climbed the steps and heard the monster's teeth slam shut behind me. It had already consumed eight or ten kids, none of whom I'd ever met. I plopped down in the first row, unaware of the terror I was about to behold. Time after time, the beast stopped to gorge on unsuspecting youth until it could hold no more. Once full, it made a mad dash to a large cinder block building on the east side of Fayetteville.

We had barely arrived at Root Elementary School when the dragon became violently ill and began throwing up in front of a large double door. After expelling about one third of us, me included, it slammed its mouth shut and roared out of sight.

A couple of ill-tempered adults barked orders and herded us into the building. It was utter chaos. People were screaming, crying, and hollering for their mamas, and that was just the faculty and staff. All the children knew where to go and what to do – except me.

I wandered about like a zombie looking for an apocalypse. From out of nowhere, a little blonde-haired girl grabbed me by the arm.

"You look lost. What grade are you in?"

"I'm starting first," I said, in a weak tremble.

"Then you need to go to this table," she said, dragging me across the auditorium. On the way, she informed me her name

was Shawn and that she was accustomed to helping ‘little’ kids. I gave no argument. After all, she was in the second grade.

After a lengthy enrollment where I was forced to repeat my name, address, and next of kin fourteen times, I was escorted down a long hallway to the last room on the left. My guide introduced me to the teacher who would be responsible for pounding knowledge into my pea-sized brain.

Mrs. Sticklebottom was a petite, homely woman with a no-nonsense attitude. After inspecting my binder, notebook paper, and number two yellow pencils, she informed me that I did *not* have the proper supplies for first grade.

In those days, parents had no Walmart to run to, so the school operated a supply store on the premises. This is where I received my first academic lesson involving logic and the human anatomy.

The size of one’s fingers and hands is inversely proportioned to the size of the required writing utensil. For example, if you have fists like King Kong, your pencil should be no thicker than a toothpick. On the other hand, if you have fingers like Tinker Bell, you are forced to use crayons the size of a baseball bat. How they expected you to color within the lines when you couldn’t see the paper for the crayon was beyond me.

The writing pads issued to first graders featured a series of bold and dashed lines. The lines resembled oversized music staves. There were only three staves per page, assuring the supply store of repeat customers. The lines were spread far enough apart that even legally blind teachers could review homework without eye strain.

The most important supply was a twelve-inch wooden ruler. I soon discovered this teaching instrument was not used for measuring, but to administer corporal punishment to those who broke the silence during nap time.

Upon being fully equipped with the tools of the trade, I was returned to my cell block.

A lady wearing an apron stopped by twice that day with trays of small milk cartons. She demanded we all cough up two cents apiece for cow juice. This was my second academic lesson – economics. You can make more money milking students than you can milking cows. Maybe there was something to this education stuff after all.

Late in the afternoon, a bell sounded, and the cell door yawned like a bear awakening from a long winter's nap. I dashed out the opening with the rest of the herd, thundering down the hall toward the cafeteria. Several parole officers corralled us in the courtyard and escorted us to the dragon feeding grounds. The yellow monsters were lined up nose to tail, smoking and belching fumes that burned my throat and eyes.

"What's your bus number?" asked the kid next to me.

"Number?" I froze like a pillar of salt. *Dragons had numbers?*

"Your bus number," he said, pointing to the big black digits near the dragon's mouth.

"I don't know. This is my first day."

"Well, you better find out." He flashed a grin. "I gotta go. Good luck."

I scanned the lines forming in front of each dragon's mouth, hoping to recognize at least one poor soul who had shared my morning ride in the belly of the beast. There was Shawn, waving her arms and beckoning me to climb aboard number thirteen. Swatting superstition and two black cats aside, I bounced up the stairs and found an empty seat near the front.

There was a constant roar inside the dragon as we caromed down the highway. The poor beast soon developed indigestion again and began spitting us out at irregular intervals. I crouched behind a seat and waited patiently for a chance to escape. An eternity later, the dragon charged down the hill toward my mailbox and home. Racing to the front, I grabbed the dragon by the throat, forced its mouth open, and leaped to safety.

I marched up the driveway, threw open the front door and stomped into the living room like a victorious knight returning from a crusade.

“Take off your school clothes,” said Mom. “It’s time to do chores.”

I hung my head and sighed.

*What, no pie?*

Dragonslayers just don’t get the respect they deserve.