



The Elephant Trainer

By Curtis Smothers

I first met Leon in a cocktail lounge near the Denver Zoo. He was sitting alone at the bar, even though the place was crowded. I sat down beside him and quickly learned why he was alone. Leon stank. It wasn't the normal human stink of sweat or from bad toiletry habits. No it was pungent, permeating, almost acidic.

Leon seemed a bit depressed, so I overcame my repugnance and said, "Hi, I'm Jerry."

Leon brightened visibly, and said, "Hello! I'm Leon. I work in the Elephant House at the Zoo up the street. I train the elephants for their daily show."

"Wow, that's interesting!," I said, warming up to Leon. "Er, did you know, you...uh...sort of, you know, smelled?"

"Yeah," said Leon. "I know. I take about four baths a day, but I can't seem to get rid of the elephant smell."

"Well, that seems strange," I said, "I never knew elephants could smell that bad."

"They don't, normally," said Leon. "But one of my jobs is to give my elephants a weekly enema. They don't get enough roughage in the zoo environment, and they tend to get constipated."

"Eww!" I said, "How does one give an elephant an enema?"

"Well," said Leon, "I use a high pressure hose, a large plunger, some soap, and the back pressure does the rest. The problem is that I can never seem to get out of the way of the spray from their butts."

"My God!" I said. "That's a terrible job! Why don't you quit?"

Leon thought for a second and said, "What? And leave show biz?"