

46. They say that Los Angeles is changing. In the past two weeks, a young woman was shot, and then her body was dropped off on a sidewalk and set on fire. This happened in broad daylight in a nice neighborhood. Another young woman's body was found lying in a dumpster. The decomposed body of another young woman was found in a park.

An 8-year-old girl was standing with her mom in the kitchen when a bullet from a gang member's gun killed her. The little girl and her mom had just arrived in America. The gang member was shooting at other gang members in the street outside. A hospital van driver pushed a paraplegic out of the van onto a Skid Row sidewalk and drove off. A mentally ill patient in a nursing home was slapped repeatedly by a staff member. The staff member's buddy took a cell phone video of the assault. It showed the staffer laughing as the patient cried.

A local TV station reporter went to a huge produce warehouse and filmed a worker urinating on a platform right next to boxes of fresh lettuce. Rats were shown walking throughout the warehouse and nibbling on the produce. Every day, this produce is distributed to hundreds of unsuspecting restaurants and supermarkets in Los Angeles. LA is changing, all right—for the worse.

Vocabulary: assault buddy bullet decompose dumpster gang lettuce nibble platform slap staffer urinate van video warehouse PLUS America body box broad fire found hospital kill laugh markets mom paraplegic park past patient produce rat right shot station street worse

47. It's a big country, but still, how can anything be left of Iraq? When you look at the news on TV, all you see is one explosion after another. Helicopters falling from the sky, and vehicles flying into the sky. Suicide bombers committing homicide, and two deeply religious sects going at each other's throats.

Iraqis are leaving the country as fast as they can, while terrorists are entering as fast as they can. About 30,000 Iraqi civilians are getting killed each year, while 2 million Iraqis have left their country since 2003. The U.S. government, which has caused most of this suffering, has not welcomed these Iraqi refugees into the USA. Less than 800 Iraqis have been allowed to enter this country since the war began four years ago. What is the reason for this small number? The Iraqi people are our friends.

The U.S. government tried to rescue Iraqis from Saddam Hussein and bring them democracy. Now there is no Saddam, but also there is no democracy. In the future, there might even be no Iraq. Many people worldwide, and many Iraqis, think that Iraq was better off before Bush and Cheney decided to "help."

Vocabulary: bomber commit democracy explosion helicopter homicide refugee religious sect suicide terrorist vehicle PLUS better bomber civilian country deep explosion fly future govern Iraq left news reason rescue since suffer throat world

69. Zach drove over to his fiancée's place. She was in China, visiting her parents. Her son Bradley hadn't gone with her. Bradley was a junior in high school. He neither liked nor disliked Zach, even though he had known Zach for three years. Zach was still trying to win Bradley over. He called Bradley to tell him that he was coming over. Bradley said okay. When Zach got there, he checked all of Christine's mail to see if there were any bills to pay. There were none.

He asked if Bradley wanted to drive Zach's car. Bradley had a driver's permit, and was always pestering his mom to let him drive her car. Bradley said all right. Zach told him not to speed, but he could drive anywhere he wanted. Bradley got on the 210 freeway and headed northwest to where it meets the 5. Zach gave Bradley a few driving tips. Don't drive next to big rigs, because you never know when they might tip over and crush you. Don't drive behind pickup trucks with loads, because you never know when something in the truck will get airborne and come flying through your windshield.

On their way back, Zach suggested that they stop at the driving range. He wanted to show Bradley how to play golf. Bradley wasn't enthusiastic. He preferred his video games. But Bradley soon discovered that golf was fun! He hit a large bucket of balls. Zach told him that he had a natural swing. The next day Bradley, for the first time ever, called Zach. He had a few blisters on his hands; Zach said that was normal. Then Bradley asked if Zach would come by next Saturday so they could take a drive and hit golf balls again. Zach said of course, with a happy feeling in his heart.

Vocabulary: airborne blister crush enthusiastic fiancée junior normal permit pester prefer range rig tip windshield PLUS ball bucket China drive golf gone head junior know neither none over speed swing their there win

70. Senator Earl Adams recently admitted that he had been having sex with prostitutes. He claimed, however, that he actually wasn't having sex with them; he was just talking to them. But he did admit that he wore diapers during "some" of those conversations. When the senator got wind that a newspaper was going to reveal his shortcomings, he called a news conference. Apparently, he figured that by "confessing" instead of "getting caught," he would be forgiven faster. The senator announced that God would forgive him because He understands that senators need to relieve their stress somehow.

In a 1998 magazine interview, his wife said that Adams was as faithful as a puppy dog. She added, however, that if she ever did catch him cheating, she would divorce him. In 1999, Adams told CNN that President Clinton should resign because of his affair with Monica. He was "unfit" to remain in public office after his "shameful behavior."

Senator Adams, however, said he would remain in office. To resign would be to let down the people who had voted for him. His wife announced that she loved him and would stand by her man.

The U.S. Senate contains 100 of the most powerful people in the United States. They are elected because of their integrity, intelligence, and leadership. Yet here is a senator who regularly cheats on his wife, who doesn't realize that an escort service keeps phone records, and who dresses in baby clothes. The man is a joke, but he will have the last laugh—when the good people of California reelect him!

Vocabulary: admit announce apparently cheat claim confess contain diaper divorce elect escort faithful figure integrity intelligence prostitute puppy realize regularly relieve resign reveal senator shortcoming PLUS baby forgive God joke laugh news office sex stand wind

114. Chet and Eliot had been running around all day. It had been hot. They were unshaved, and wearing shorts, T-shirts, and flip-flops. At about 6 p.m., they felt like eating something. They were on south Lake, which had several restaurants. Eliot suggested that they go to the Mediterranean restaurant. "The food is good and there's lots of it," he told Chet. It was refreshingly cool inside the restaurant. They were seated at a table near the front door.

Their waitress was a young, pretty blonde. Chet hit on her immediately. "Could I have you for dessert?" he asked, with a big grin on his face. She smiled, but said nothing. Chet told her that he was a famous heart surgeon, and if she didn't give him her phone number, he would have to operate on his own broken heart. She smiled again. When she asked Chet and Eliot if they wanted appetizers, they both realized that English was her second language.

Chet asked her where she was from. She said she was from Russia. Chet told her that her English was very good. She thanked him. They had a delicious meal, and Chet left the waitress a big tip. She thanked him, but she still refused to give him her phone number. "I have husband," she explained.

"Yes, and he's the luckiest man on Earth," Chet told her. She smiled.

Outside the restaurant, Chet kidded Eliot. "You didn't say a word in there to her. How do you expect to get anywhere with women if you don't talk to them?"

"I didn't want to spoil your chances," Eliot smiled.

Two months later, Eliot was substitute teaching for a U.S. Citizenship class. When the class ended, one student lingered. It was the blonde waitress from the restaurant. She talked to him for about five minutes about George Washington. Sensing that she had something else on her mind, Eliot asked her to join him for a cup of coffee. She said she would love to.

Vocabulary: appetizer blonde citizenship delicious dessert flip-flops grin kid linger Mediterranean operate realize refreshingly sense shave spoil surgeon waitress PLUS anywhere around been chance coffee Earth English famous front heart hit hot husband is language like lots meal pretty restaurant run Russia second sense several smile student substitute teach thank tip were young

115. He was her university teacher. He was smart, confident, and had a great sense of humor. And he was rather good-looking, too. The fact was, she had fallen in love with him. She sensed that he might like her. She had caught him looking at her more than once. What to do?

At the end of the semester, she waited till all the other students had left. She said she had a gift for him. He said that was very nice of her. Then he looked around for a wrapped package. Where was the gift, he asked. She said it was still at the store. She would pick him up and take him there that Saturday, if that was okay with him.

She picked him up at the Starbucks near his apartment. He was enjoying the mystery. He asked her: Was it an alarm clock so that he wouldn't be late for class? Was it teaching materials, like markers and erasers? A new briefcase? An extra ink cartridge for his computer for when he printed handouts? She said that she couldn't comment.

They got to the mall and went into Nordstrom's. "I hope it isn't a suit, " he joked. "I never wear suits."

"No, it isn't. But it's something that you always wear with a suit."

"A tie? Why would I wear a tie if I never wear suits?"

"Not a tie, silly," she said, as they walked into the shoe department. She had noticed that he always wore the same pair of shoes in class. She had guessed that he wore size 11, and had picked out a nice two-tone casual model by Clark. She hoped that he would like the shoes as much as she did. The shoes fit perfectly, and he did like them. When they left the store, he offered her his hand, and they walked out to her car hand in hand. She was tingling. "Let me at least buy you dinner," he suggested as they got into her car.

Vocabulary: alarm briefcase cartridge casual comment confident eraser extra gift humor ink marker mystery package semester sense suit tingle tone wrap PLUS be buy caught Clark clock could department end enjoy fact fall good got is left love mall nice once perfect pick rather shoe size smart them tie tingle university wear