

A PRIVATE CONVERSATION

"Sounds like thunder."

"What?"

"I said it sounds like thunder."

"I don't hear anything."

"Really? It was faint, but I definitely heard it. You didn't hear anything?"

"I didn't hear any thunder."

"You're right beside me. How could you not hear it?"

"What did it sound like?"

"Well, it was kind of a series of short rumbles. Like boom, bloom, boom, bloom."

"Oh. That wasn't thunder."

"You don't think so? What was it then?"

"Uh, it was me."

"You?"

"Me."

"What do you mean?"

"What do you think? I was ...farting."

"You're kidding! That rumbling sound? I swear it sounded like thunder."

"Take my word for it. It wasn't thunder."

"I don't think I've ever heard farts like that before."

"No one else ever said my farts sounded like thunder."

"It's an honest mistake, if you're not used to hearing it. I mean, they do sound different, like a rumble. Maybe it means you have to go."

"No."

"Well, sometimes when somebody farts a lot it means they have to go."

"I don't have to go. I never go in the evening."

"What, never?!"

"Never."

“You sound pretty sure of yourself. Is this something you refuse to do?”

“No. It’s just not my routine.”

“You have a routine for when you go to the bathroom?”

“Sure. Don’t you?”

“No! I mean, how could you? Doesn’t it depend on what you eat and when you eat?”

“Not for me.”

“So it doesn’t matter whether you miss lunch?”

“No. I’d still go.”

“What if you didn’t eat anything all day?”

“I don’t know about that. I’ve never tried it.”

“But you have a routine, whether you eat or not. No matter what you eat?”

“Yep.”

“So, like, what is this routine?”

“It’s just that I go about the same time every day.”

“Once a day? Like at 9:45 every morning?”

“It’s not that exact.”

“But you always know when you’re going to go, roughly?”

“Within half an hour or so.”

“And when is ‘zero hour’?”

“About 8:00 in the morning.”

“8:00 in the morning? Not 7:55 or 8:05?”

“Between 7:30 and 8:30, but usually pretty close to 8:00.”

“That’s really weird. So what happens if you sleep in till 9:00? Do you go in your sleep?”

“Don’t be ridiculous. I just wouldn’t go.”

“All day? You wouldn’t go for the rest of the day?”

“Not until the next morning. It has happened.”

“But where does it go if it’s ready to come out at 8:00 and you missed the drop?”

“I don’t know. I never thought about it. I guess it just goes back to where it was, in storage or something.”

"You sleep in on the weekends, right?"

"Yeah."

"So what happens on weekends when you miss your chance to go?"

"I don't go."

"All weekend? Doesn't this 'storage' place get pretty full?"

"If it does, it's not a problem. I just go Monday morning."

"But for the *whole* weekend!"

"Yeah."

"It must be a big load."

"Bigger than usual. But that's my routine so it doesn't feel strange to me. It's not like I'm constipated. I feel fine."

"What if you sleep in Monday morning and don't go till Tuesday? That's storing it up for four days!"

"I've never slept in Monday morning. Maybe I always wake up 'cause I know I need to go."

"Yeah, I would think Friday's lunch would be more than ready to come out by then. Man, I don't know how you can do it. I mean, what about if you went on holiday for a week and you slept in every morning. At 8:00, your body's ready to get rid of everything and every morning you sleep past it and put it all into storage. Can you store it up for a whole week!?"

"That's different. If you change your routine like when you go on holiday, then your body's gonna change with it."

"So you'd start going around 10:00 instead?"

"Something like that."

"I still think it's weird. I've never heard of anyone else having that kind of routine."

"But how many people have you asked?"

"Well, you got a point, but from what I see most people don't have an exact time like you. I see people in public stalls at all hours of the day or night."

"Maybe they all have a routine but they all go at a different set time every day. I bet it's more common than you think. My mother goes at 9:00 every morning and my brother always goes early in the evening."

"Maybe you just have a strange family."

"Maybe you're the one who's different."

"I don't think so. I think it's natural to go whenever your body finishes processing what you eat; and that's not going to be the same time every day."

"Well, at least my way I know I won't have to stop during the day when I'm in the middle of something, to take care of that business."

"Yes, but what if you're up before 8:00 and for some reason, there's no toilet close by. Or maybe someone else is using it. What do you do then? Go back to bed so you can sleep through your scheduled time and hold it in till tomorrow?"

"I guess I would have to hold it. Don't you ever have times when you need to go but can't?"

"Sure. But I don't have to wait a whole day. I can go an hour or two later. I have more control than you since I can go anytime."

"I think you have *less* control since the urge takes you any time of day. You go when you have to go."

"My point is that you can't postpone it like I can. I can wait and go a little later but you can't do that."

"I would just hold it in till the next morning. No problem. At least I never get caught out somewhere with no toilet around. Since I know when I need to go, I can always be prepared."

"It still doesn't sound right. If it's ready to come out, you shouldn't force it to stay in till the next morning."

"I never force myself to hold it; my body does it by itself, just like yours. If it wasn't supposed to stay in and wait, you'd get the urge to go again, wouldn't you?"

"I do."

"Well, I don't, so that's why I don't think it's abnormal. I go whenever I get the urge, just like you. The only difference is that I get the urge about the same time every day and you don't."

"I know one way to figure out if it's normal or not."

"How?"

"The way it comes out. I mean, if I force it out when it's not ready, it takes forever and just a little comes out anyway. But normally when I go, it comes out clean and smooth in one or two logs. That's how I know it's normal and healthy. That's the way mine is, most of the time."

"Mine too."

"Really? Not sticky and messy?"

"No."

"And you don't need to use up a lot of toilet paper?"

"Not usually. The odd time it's messy, especially when I eat spicy food or drink too much."

“Yeah, of course. But most of the time it’s like one or two logs, easy to clean?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, I am surprised. I would’ve thought storing it up like that would interfere with things, but maybe not.”

“No. But I don’t understand how you can *not* have a schedule. If you have an eating schedule, you should have a schedule for going to the bathroom, since they go together.”

“Well, I always eat three meals a day but other than that what I eat varies a lot. So going to the bathroom varies a lot. Sometimes I’ll go two or three times a day then not go for the next two days.”

“There you have it. That doesn’t sound very healthy to me, being so erratic.”

“It’s not erratic. It’s going according to your need. If I eat more, I’ll go more often but you’ll go at 8:00 even if you’ve eaten next to nothing. You’ll just go and drop a few pellets. That to me seems pointless.”

“For one thing, I never have ‘pellets’; it’s always a whole day’s food that I’m getting rid of. Besides, it’s a daily exercise of cleaning out your body. It really doesn’t matter how much you evacuate.”

“I think it does. My body gets cleaned out only when it needs to – when the tract is full. You must have days when it’s really a waste of time to go and other days when it’s backed up to your lungs. What about one of those Monday morning loads? Don’t they ever block up the toilet?”

“No. They’re not as big as you might think.”

“I bet since it’s been building up inside it’s almost too thick to come out. I bet it hurts.”

“No. Not usually. It’s not three times as much, like you’d expect.”

“It should be.”

“I guess my body regulates itself somehow so it doesn’t get rid of it all at once. It makes its own schedule.”

“Weird. I suppose you pee on schedule, too.”

“Sort of.”

“I knew it. How can you possibly pee on schedule – unless you drink exactly the same amount of liquid at the same time every day.”

“It’s only a loose schedule. I go when I get up, mid-morning, late afternoon, after supper and before I go to bed. If I have more liquids than usual, there might be one or two extra trips.”

“So, would you go mid-morning even if you didn’t drink anything at breakfast?”

“Yeah. But there wouldn’t be as much.”

“Then why bother going?”

“Because I’d *feel* like going.”

“I only feel like going if I’ve got a lot.”

“Well, that’s the main difference between us. I like my way better because it helps me plan my day. If I know I’ll need a bathroom around 4:00, then I can work things out so that I’m close to one. I bet you get caught sometimes needing to go with not even a urinal nearby.”

“Sometimes. But I can hold it in for quite a while. I don’t intend to centre my life around going to the washroom.”

“I don’t centre my life around washrooms. I organize things for my own convenience. For example, I don’t like using the washrooms at the subway so I avoid riding the subway around 10:00 in the morning and 4:00 in the afternoon, when I usually have to go. That way when I do have to go, I can easily get to a nice clean washroom.”

“If you’re just using a urinal, it doesn’t really matter what washroom you use. I think you’re being a little paranoid.”

“But you have to admit some urinals are better than others. The subway ones always smell and have cigarette butts and wrappers in them, which turns me right off. And there’s usually somebody making a drug deal or throwing up. If I’m downtown, I try to go in a restaurant. Restaurants aren’t bad, unless the place is a dive anyway.”

“Me, I don’t care where I go as long as it’s a floor model. I don’t like the higher ones. I don’t want it landing too close to my nose.”

“Yeah, the floor urinals are the best, especially if they’ve got those scented rings in them. They cut down the smell and it doesn’t splash as much.”

“It depends how you pee in them. I find the rings do more damage than good, in terms of splashing. The ones with just the grated metal plates are better if you pee directly into the holes and not onto the plate. But if you miss the holes you’re in trouble.”

“I think the holes are too small. If I have to use one of those, I usually avoid the metal plate entirely and pee on the side of the urinal. Sometimes it splashes, but at least I can control it a little better.”

“Do you ever go in the stall just to pee?”

“Sure. I do that a lot.”

“Even when the urinals are free? Why?”

“Privacy. I don’t mind using a public urinal if I’m the only one there but I don’t like other people peeing right beside me.”

“Why not? What are you scared of?”

“I’m not scared of anything. I just don’t feel right letting complete strangers look me over.”

“Are you ashamed of it?”

“No, I’m not ashamed of it! It’s just a question of privacy.”

“The only time I use the toilet is if all the urinals are being used. I always feel like I’m hiding if I go in a stall. After all, urinals are there so you don’t have to use the toilet.”

“Urinals are there so you have a choice, which is fine, but I’d like to see more toilets in public washrooms.”

“If more people did what you do, we would definitely need more. Some places only have one toilet. What if you’re using it just to pee and someone comes in who *really* needs it?”

“I don’t see what difference it makes *why* I’m using the toilet. If I was doing something else, he’d have to wait even longer.”

“But he shouldn’t have to wait at all for someone who’s just peeing, not with urinals being empty.”

“I’m only going to be there for a minute. Even less than that. Sometimes it only takes twenty-five seconds.”

“You time it?”

“Oh, well ...sometimes.”

“Why?”

“Just curious I guess. You’ve never done that?”

“No! Not for a long time, anyway. I used to time it when I drank a lot and it seemed to go on forever. I remember once in a bar it took seventy-two seconds.”

“Seventy-two seconds! That’s incredible! My record is only fifty-eight!”

“Your record?! You keep records of that?!”

“Well, not really. I happen to remember. Obviously you remember too.”

“I’ve only timed it a couple of times, and that was years ago.”

“Well, it’s not like I time it every time I go. I’m mostly thinking about where it’s going.”

“In a toilet?! You don’t need to aim in a toilet. As long as you get it in the bowl, it isn’t going to splash or make a mess.”

“Sometimes it does. Especially if it lands directly in the water. I usually start in the middle, to be sure where it’s landing, then move out to the side of the water to cut down on the stuff that splashes up.”

“The only time I ever splash peeing in a toilet is when I get one of those shivers that go through you’re whole body.”

“Yeah, I hate those. They’re unpredictable and they throw off your aim completely. Luckily, they usually come near the end.”

“Have you ever had a hair stuck on the end of it that makes the stream split in two? I hate when that happens. There you are aiming right at the middle of the toilet bowl and suddenly it’s going off in two directions making a helluva mess. Once I hit the bathroom scales.”

“That’s the worst alright. And sometimes a little stream ends up going down your leg. If you’re at home, you can go change your pants. But if you’re not, man you’re stuck.”

“Yeah. You’ve got to clean it off somehow before you can leave and face anybody. I once spent twenty minutes in the can just waiting for my pants to dry.”

“I always keep an extra pair of pants at work in case something like that happens.”

“You’re neurotic. Anyway, how do you get from the bathroom with your wet pants to your nice clean pair of pants?”

“I never thought of that. Luckily, it’s never happened at work yet.”

“That’s what’s nice about peeing outside. It doesn’t matter if it goes off to the side and you miss the bush you were aiming at.”

“It sounds like you do that a lot.”

“Go outside in the bushes? Hell, if you’re alone or just with other guys it doesn’t matter, does it? Like when you’re hiking or on the golf course. If there’s no toilets around, you gotta go somewhere.”

“That reminds me of something I used to do when I was a kid.”

“What’s that?”

“Did you ever go while you were swimming? Like at a public beach?”

“I think everybody did. I remember wading out as far as I could go, looking around to make sure no one was watching, then doing it in the water while a friend stood guard for me.”

“Did you ever get caught?”

“No. Did you?”

“My sister saw me doing it once. She could tell. We were around eight and ten, I think. She got disgusted and told my mother, but Mom didn’t say anything to me.”

“Maybe that’s why you’re so embarrassed, and obsessed with privacy.”

“I’m not embarrassed about normal bodily functions. And I don’t think wanting a little privacy is obsessive.”

“Do *you* ever go outside?”

“No. At least, not for ages. But then I don’t do a lot of fishing and camping like you do so the need doesn’t come up that much.”

“I think it’s more than that. Do you wash your hands after?”

“Sure. Always.”

"I thought so. That's a sign of an obsessive personality."

"You're joking. Most people wash after they pee. It's just a matter of cleanliness."

"Not if you do it every time. I mean, if I can feel some drops splash on my hands, I'll wash them too. But if there's no urine splashback, what's the point?"

"Just in case."

"Just in case what?"

"In case there's some you didn't notice. Besides, you were just holding your thing. Wash your hands, man."

"I don't know about yours, but mine's clean."

"It doesn't hurt to be safe and hygienic. What's so hard about washing your hands?"

"What if you just had a shower?"

"I'd still wash my hands."

"So, you wash your hands five or six times a day?"

"Why not? Better to be sure you're clean."

"That's a bit much. I believe in washing your hands when they're dirty."

"Your idea of staying clean is changing your socks when they get hard."

"Hey, don't go getting angry with me now because I said you were obsessive."

"Why do we have conversations like this, anyway?"

"Beats me. I wonder how many other people talk about when and where they go, and how long it takes."

"I don't know. But I have a feeling most people keep it to themselves. It doesn't usually come up in conversation and I've certainly never said anything like this to anyone else. I mean, it's private and not something you want everyone to know about. It's really none of their business."

"I think you're right. A lot of people find it uncomfortable, or embarrassing."

"Yeah. It's a good thing nobody's listening to us."