Introduction

Thank you for purchasing this book. I apologize in advance for the fact that it contains almost no robots or explosions—or exploding robots. My favorite bit of the book is where Richard and Emmeline are shipwrecked on a tropical island and, with neither the guidance nor restrictions of society, emotional feelings and physical changes arise as they reach puberty and fall in love. Later, on page seventy-two, where Richard moves with his mother to a neighborhood in the San Fernando Valley region of Los Angeles, their new apartment’s handyman, an eccentric but kindly Okinawan immigrant, teaches Richard not only martial arts but also important life lessons, such as balancing on a boat. If I were being honest, I would admit that the flight commander article is my favorite because I wish I were an astronaut, but as that would make me sound like a geek, I won’t.

I used to spend many hours writing stupid stories, mainly to annoy people, on social networking sites. As I was continually banned from these places, the 27b/6 website was created as a forum that could not be touched by moderators. The site in those days got around five hundred hits per week. After posting an article concerning paying for an outstanding chiropractic bill with a bad drawing of a spider, the website effectively went viral and has enjoyed a relatively large audience since.

The name 27b/6 is a vague homage to George Orwell, who wrote the novel 1984 while living in apartment 27b on level 6. Terry Gilliam also used this as a maintenance form name, though with a stroke not a slash, in his dystopian movie Brazil.
Also, to answer the question I am most often asked, the e-mail articles in this collection are verbatim. Having said that, I do, on occasion, change names, unless the person has annoyed me. I also sometimes fix spelling errors, as is my prerogative, and bad grammar prior to posting. The characters in the non-e-mail articles are people who have annoyed me, work colleagues, and friends.

Thanks go to my offspring Seb for his part in the fun; Holly, for being my favorite person on the whole planet despite her being American; and Simon, Craig, Leith, Mark, Bill, and Ross for putting up with my juvenile behavior. A big thank you also goes to the people who link to, tweet, re-post, and frequent the 27b/6 website. Without them, the hit counters would be only in the double digits.

Regards, David
Overdue account
chiropractors are not real doctors

I read recently of a “qualified” chiropractor who has been using distance healing for quite some time, claiming he can heal you from his living room. There’s no need to visit his office—just call or write and he will do the rest. Apparently, he discovered his special chiropractic skill while he was in his car. His foot hurt, and he told it to realign itself. I did not make this up.

From: Jane Gilles
Date: Wednesday 8 Oct 2008 12:19 p.m.
To: David Thorne
Subject: Overdue account

Dear David,

Our records indicate that your account is overdue by the amount of $233.95. If you have already made this payment please contact us within the next 7 days to confirm payment has been applied to your account and is no longer outstanding.

Yours sincerely, Jane Gilles
From: David Thorne  
Date: Wednesday 8 Oct 2008 12:37 p.m.  
To: Jane Gilles  
Subject: Re: Overdue account

Dear Jane,

I do not have any money, so am sending you this drawing I did of a spider instead. I value the drawing at $233.95, so I trust that this settles the matter.

Regards, David

From: Jane Gilles  
Date: Thursday 9 Oct 2008 10:07 a.m.  
To: David Thorne  
Subject: Re: Re: Overdue account

Dear David,

Thank you for contacting us. Unfortunately we are unable to accept drawings as payment and your account remains in arrears of $233.95. Please contact us within the next 7 days to confirm payment has been applied to your account and is no longer outstanding.

Yours sincerely, Jane Gilles
From: David Thorne  
Date: Thursday 9 Oct 2008 10:32 a.m.  
To: Jane Gilles  
Subject: Re: Re: Re: Overdue account  

Dear Jane,

Can I have my drawing of a spider back then, please?

Regards, David

From: Jane Gilles  
Date: Thursday 9 Oct 2008 11:42 a.m.  
To: David Thorne  
Subject: Re: Re: Re: Re: Overdue account  

Dear David,

You e-mailed the drawing to me. Do you want me to e-mail it back to you?

Yours sincerely, Jane Gilles

From: David Thorne  
Date: Thursday 9 Oct 2008 11:56 a.m.  
To: Jane Gilles  
Subject: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Overdue account  

Dear Jane,

Yes, please.

Regards, David
From: Jane Gilles  
Date: Thursday 9 Oct 2008 12:14 p.m.  
To: David Thorne  
Subject: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Overdue account

Attached <spider.gif>

From: David Thorne  
Date: Friday 10 Oct 2008 09:22 a.m.  
To: Jane Gilles  
Subject: Whose spider is that?

Dear Jane,

Are you sure this drawing of a spider is the one I sent you? This spider has only seven legs, and I do not feel I would have made such an elementary mistake when I drew it.

Regards, David
From: Jane Gilles  
Date: Friday 10 Oct 2008 11:03 a.m.  
To: David Thorne  
Subject: Re: Whose spider is that?  

Dear David,

Yes it is the same drawing. I copied and pasted it from the e-mail you sent me on the 8th. David your account is still overdue by the amount of $233.95. Please make this payment as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely, Jane Gilles

From: David Thorne  
Date: Friday 10 Oct 2008 11:05 a.m.  
To: Jane Gilles  
Subject: Automated Out of Office Response  

Thank you for contacting me.  
I am currently away on leave, traveling through time, and will be returning last week.

Regards, David

From: David Thorne  
Date: Friday 10 Oct 2008 11:08 a.m.  
To: Jane Gilles  
Subject: Re: Re: Whose spider is that?  

Hello, I am back and have read through your e-mails and accept that, despite missing a leg, that drawing of a spider may, indeed, be the one I sent you.  
I realize with hindsight that it is possible you rejected the drawing of a
spider due to this obvious limb omission but did not point it out in an
effort to avoid hurting my feelings. As such, I am sending you a revised
drawing with the correct number of legs as full payment for any amount
outstanding.

I trust this will bring the matter to a conclusion.

Regards, David

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From: Jane Gilles  
Date: Monday 13 Oct 2008 2:51 p.m.  
To: David Thorne  
Subject: Re: Re: Re: Whose spider is that?  

Dear David,

As I have stated, we do not accept drawings in lieu of money for accounts outstanding. We accept checks, bank checks, money orders and cash.

Please make a payment this week to avoid incurring any additional fees.

Yours sincerely, Jane Gilles

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8 DAVID THORNE
From: David Thorne  
Date: Monday 13 Oct 2008 3:17 p.m.  
To: Jane Gilles  
Subject: Re: Re: Re: Re: Whose spider is that?

I understand and will definitely make a payment this week if I remember. As you have not accepted my second drawing as payment, please return the drawing to me as soon as possible. It was silly of me to assume I could provide you with something of completely no value whatsoever, waste your time, and then attach such a large amount to it.

Regards, David

From: Jane Gilles  
Date: Tuesday 14 Oct 2008 11:18 a.m.  
To: David Thorne  
Subject: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Whose spider is that?

Attached <spider2.gif>
I am not a big fan of cats. I do not hate them; I just have no interest in them whatsoever. If I visit your house, I do not want to pat your cat, sit on the couch where it has been, or have you make me a sandwich after patting it. I didn’t want that sandwich, anyway. The Maxwell House coffee was bad enough, and when you smelled the milk to see if it was still OK, despite being a week past its use-by date, I saw your nose touch the carton. I actually rescued a cat once. I was walking across a bridge, over a river that was flooding, when I heard mewing and saw a frantic cat being pulled along. I picked up a fairly hefty branch and threw it over the rail to where the cat was. I did not see it after that, but I am pretty sure it would have climbed on and ridden the branch to safety.

From: Shannon Walkley
Date: Monday 21 June 2010 9:15 a.m.
To: David Thorne
Subject: Poster

Hi. I opened the screen door yesterday and my cat got out and has been missing since then so I was wondering if you are not to busy you could make a poster for me. It has to be A4 and I will photocopy it and put it around my suburb this afternoon.

This is the only photo of her I have she answers to the name Missy and is black and white and about 8 months old. missing on Harper street and my phone number. Thanks Shan.
From: David Thorne
Date: Monday 21 June 2010 9:26 a.m.
To: Shannon Walkley
Subject: Re: Poster

Dear Shannon,

That is shocking news. Luckily I was sitting down when I read your e-mail and not half way up a ladder or tree. How are you holding up? I am surprised you managed to attend work at all, what with thinking about Missy out there, cold, frightened, and alone . . . possibly lying on the side of the road, her back legs squashed by a vehicle, calling out, “Shannon, where are you?”

Although I have two clients expecting completed work this afternoon, I will, of course, drop everything and do whatever it takes to facilitate the speedy return of Missy.

Regards, David
From: Shannon Walkley  
Date: Monday 21 June 2010 9:37 a.m.  
To: David Thorne  
Subject: Re: Re: Poster

yeah ok thanks. I know you dont like cats but I am really worried about mine. I have to leave at 1pm today.

From: David Thorne  
Date: Monday 21 June 2010 10:17 a.m.  
To: Shannon Walkley  
Subject: Re: Re: Re: Poster

Dear Shannon,

I never said I don’t like cats. Once, having been invited to a party, I went clothes shopping beforehand and bought a pair of expensive G-Star boots. They were two sizes too small, but I wanted them so badly I figured I could just wear them without socks and cut my toenails very short.

As the party was only a few blocks from my place, I decided to walk. After the first block, I lost all feeling in my feet. Arriving at the party, I stumbled into a guy named Steven, spilling Malibu & Coke onto his white Wham “Choose Life” T-shirt, and he punched me. An hour or so after the incident, Steven sat down in a chair already occupied by a cat. The surprised cat clawed and snarled, causing Steven to leap out of the chair, slip on a rug, and strike his forehead onto the corner of a speaker, resulting in a two-inch open gash. In its shock, the cat also defecated, leaving Steven with a wet brown stain down the back of his beige cargo pants. I liked that cat. Attached poster as requested.

Regards, David
From: Shannon Walkley  
Date: Monday 21 June 2010 10:24 a.m.  
To: David Thorne  
Subject: Re: Re: Re: Re: Poster

yeah thats not what I was looking for at all. it looks like a movie and how come the photo of Missy is so small?
From: David Thorne  
Date: Monday 21 June 2010 10:28 a.m.  
To: Shannon Walkley  
Subject: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Poster

Dear Shannon,

It’s a design thing. The cat is lost in the negative space.

Regards, David

From: Shannon Walkley  
Date: Monday 21 June 2010 10:33 a.m.  
To: David Thorne  
Subject: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Poster

Thats just stupid. Can you do it properly please? I am extremely emotional over this and was up all night in tears. you seem to think it is funny. Can you make the photo bigger and fix the text please.

From: David Thorne  
Date: Monday 21 June 2010 10:46 a.m.  
To: Shannon Walkley  
Subject: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Poster

Dear Shannon,

Having worked with designers for a few years now, I would have assumed you understood, despite our vague suggestions otherwise, we do not welcome constructive criticism. I don’t come downstairs and tell you how to send text messages, log onto Facebook, and look out of the window. I am willing to overlook this faux pas as you are no doubt preoccupied with thoughts of Missy attempting to make her way home
across busy intersections or being trapped in a drain as it slowly fills with water. I spent three days down a well once, but that was just for fun.

I have amended and attached the poster as per your instructions.

Regards, David

From: Shannon Walkley
Date: Monday 21 June 2010 10:59 a.m.
To: David Thorne
Subject: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Poster

This is worse than the other one. can you make it so it shows the whole photo of Missy and delete the stupid text that says missing missy off it? I just want it to say lost.
From: David Thorne
Date: Monday 21 June 2010 11:14 a.m.
To: Shannon Walkley
Subject: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Poster

From: Shannon Walkley
Date: Monday 21 June 2010 11:21 a.m.
To: David Thorne
Subject: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Poster

yeah can you do the poster or not? I just want a photo and the word lost and the telephone number and when and where she was lost and her name. Not like a movie poster or anything stupid. I have to leave early today. If it was your cat I would help you. Thanks.
From: David Thorne  
Date: Monday 21 June 2010 11:32 a.m.  
To: Shannon Walkley  
Subject: Awww

Dear Shannon,

I don’t have a cat. I once agreed to look after a friend’s cat for a week, but after he dropped it off at my apartment and explained the concept of kitty litter, I kept the cat in a closed cardboard box in the shed and forgot about it. If I wanted to feed something and clean feces, I wouldn’t have put my mother in that home after her stroke. A week later, when my friend came to collect his cat, I pretended that I was not home and mailed the box to him. Apparently, I failed to put enough stamps on the package, and he had to collect it from the post office and pay eighteen dollars. He still goes on about that sometimes, but people need to learn to let go. I have attached the amended version of your poster as per your detailed instructions.

Regards, David
From: Shannon Walkley
Date: Monday 21 June 2010 11:47 a.m.
To: David Thorne
Subject: Re: Awww

Thats not my cat. where did you get that picture from? That cat is orange. I gave you a photo of my cat.
From: David Thorne
Date: Monday 21 June 2010 11:58 a.m.
To: Shannon Walkley
Subject: Re: Re: Awww

I know, but that one is cute. As Missy has quite possibly met any one of several violent ends, it is possible you might get a better cat out of this. If anybody calls and says, “I haven’t seen your orange cat, but I did find a black-and-white one with its hind legs run over by a car. Do you want it?” you can politely decline and save yourself a costly veterinarian bill.

I knew someone who had a Basset hound that had its hind legs removed after an accident, and it had to walk around with one of those little buggies with wheels. If it had been my dog I would have asked for all its legs to be removed and replaced with wheels and had a remote control installed. I could charge neighborhood kids for rides and enter it in races. If I did the same with a horse, I could drive it to work. I would call it Steven.

Regards, David

From: Shannon Walkley
Date: Monday 21 June 2010 12:07 p.m.
To: David Thorne
Subject: Re: Re: Re: Awww

Please just use the photo I gave you.
From: David Thorne  
Date: Monday 21 June 2010 12:22 p.m.  
To: Shannon Walkley  
Subject: Re: Re: Re: Re: Awww

I didn't say there was a reward. I don't have $2000 dollars. What did you even put that there for? Apart from that it is perfect can you please remove the reward bit. Thanks Shan.
From: David Thorne  
Date: Monday 21 June 2010 12:42 p.m.  
To: Shannon Walkley  
Subject: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Awww

From: Shannon Walkley  
Date: Monday 21 June 2010 12:51 p.m.  
To: David Thorne  
Subject: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Awww

Can you just please take the reward bit off altogether? I have to leave in ten minutes and I still have to make photocopies of it.
From: David Thorne  
Date: Monday 21 June 2010 12:56 p.m.  
To: Shannon Walkley  
Subject: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Awww

From: Shannon Walkley  
Date: Monday 21 June 2010 1:03 p.m.  
To: David Thorne  
Subject: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Awww

Fine. That will have to do.