

Marco's World

Good English? Naaah!

Marco Morales

Carlos was from Mexico. He went to the USA for a month to visit his relatives in New York. By the second week, he had already made some friends, who in general, thought he was sort of wierd. Not because of his looks, but because of the way he talked and behaved.

In his own defense, you could say that Carlos really did not understand what most Americans said....using strange terms and expressions that his English teachers had never told him about. His grammar was good, but in spite of that, he had already had a couple of funny experiences trying to understand people or trying to make himself understood. However, he thought himself ready to face any problem he might have.

One night, he went to the bar where many of his friends used to hang out. There was a good rock band and he expected to meet some of his pals there. An hour later, he was still alone. He was sitting at the bar, having a beer and he was getting bored. When he was about to leave, a young woman sat next to him at the bar. She took a cigarette out of her purse, looked around and saw him. She smiled and Carlos smiled back.

"Hi! Do you have a light?" she asked.

"Sure."

Carlos took a little flashlight out of his pocket and offered it to her. The young woman just stared at him and started to laugh.

"You're a funny guy, all right, but I need something to light my cigarette."

"Oh, you want a match."

Carlos took a box of matches out of a pocket and lit the cigarette. He was thinking: "Here we go again."

"Thanks," she said. "By the way, my name's Jane."

"Hi, I'm Carlos." and he approached her to kiss her on the cheek.

"Hey, hold your horses, mister!" Jane said, pushing him away. "I'm not that kind of girl."

"Oh, I'm sorry...it's just that..., that...."

"...that you tried to kiss me!"

"Yeah, but since I do it all the time..."

"What do you mean you do it all the time? Do you kiss everybody hello?"

"Well, just girls."

"I bet!"

"Well, we do it all the time in my country, you know. I thought it'd be the same here," Carlos explained.

"Kissing someone when you meet her for the first time?"

"That's right."

"I want to hear it from the horse's mouth."

"So, does he really talk?"

"...What?" Jane asked.

"Mr. Ed. Does he really talk? I thought it was a TV trick. What do horses have to do with this, anyway?"

Jane just took a deep breath to control herself and said, "Just forget what I said, ok?"

"Ok. You are strange. Did you know that?"

"I'M strange? YOU say I'M strange? Give me a break, will you?"

Sure, here..." Carlos took out a piece of paper from another pocket that had the word *brake* written on it and gave it to her.

"**WHAT IS THIS?**" Jane asked almost collapsing.

"I knew you were going to like it! You are the eighth person who has asked me for that today. You are lucky. It's the last one I have."

"I can't believe what I'm hearing," Jane said.

"Why is everybody amazed at me?" It must be my charming personality, don't you think?"

Jane nodded, "You're doing this on purpose to impress me, huh?"

"Doing what?"

"Oh, come on! Did you really give cards like these to seven other people today?"

"Of course!" Carlos said.

"I don't buy it."

"It's not for sale.."

"What's not for sale?"

"The card. Isn't that what you mean?"

"What I meant to say," Jane said patiently, "is that I don't believe your story. What a guy! Where are you from, anyway?"

"Mexico."

"Hey! I'm learning Spanish. Let's talk in Spanish."

"Ok. ¿Cómo te llamas?" Carlos asked.

"Me llama Jane, mucha gusto."

"Me **llamo**, no me llama. Y **mucho** gusto, no mucha gusto."

"Hey, I didn't know that. Could y...¿Me podrías enseñar español algún vez?"

"Bueno, no sé," Carlos said smiling. "Lo consultaré con la almohada."

"¿Lo consultará con quién?"

"Con la almohada."

Jane looked at him with an incredulous expression on her face. "Do you have a talking pillow?" she asked.

"What? Of course not...well, on second thought, it wouldn't be unusual if I had a talking pillow. You know about a talking horse.

"Oh, never mind, Carlos. Let's talk about something else, ok?"

"All right."

"What are you drinking?"

"This is the sixth beer I've had."

"Could I have a beer?" Jane asked the bartender. "You drink like a fish, Carlos."

"Do, I? I never heard they liked alcohol."

"Oh, no. Not again. Mejor seguimos en español, ¿sí?"

"Está bien."

"¿A qué te dedicas?" Jane asked.

"Estudio medicina en México, pero vine a Nueva York de vacaciones. Me voy en tres días. Voy a presentar un examen en una semana."

"¿Un examen difícil?"

"Sí," Carlos answered.

"Rómpete una pierna."

Carlos looked at her incredulously. "¡Vaya! No son muy buenos deseos."

"¿No?"

"¡No!"

"Está bien...rómpete las dos piernas."

"¡Gracias!" Carlos said really upset.

Jane looked at him and said, "Why are you so upset? Did I pronounce something wrong?"

"How am I supposed to react? You want me to get a broken leg to avoid a test I have to take just because it's a difficult one, right?"

"Wrong. In English that means 'good luck'."

"Is that so?"

"Yeah."

"You know, I think we have a communication problem, here."

"I'm glad you finally noticed," Jane replied.

"I wish my English teachers had warned me about these things in my English classes."

"Oh, don't worry. I have the same problem, but I'm sure we'll get over it."

"Well, let's just forget about the whole thing, ok?"

"Deal!" Jane said shaking Carlos's hand.

They kept on talking about school, friends and their families. They also agreed to exchange addresses and send postcards once in a while. One hour later, they realized that the bar was just about to close.

"Hey, Carlos, it's getting late. We'd better go," Jane said.

"Do you want me to take you home?"

"You don't have to do that."

"Oh, I want to, come on," Carlos said..

"Ok, thanks."

They left the bar, but it was raining so hard they got completely wet in the couple of minutes before they could get a cab.

"Oh, no!" Jane said. "It's raining cats and dogs."

Carlos looked up expecting to see cats and dogs chasing each other..

"You know," he said, "Animals are very important in your culture."

"And pillows in yours," Jane said.

Carlos took Jane home and when he was just about to leave he said, "Well, thanks for the company."

"Oh, don't mention it."

"May I kiss you goodbye?" Carlos asked timidly.

"You don't give up, do you?"

"I always do," he said taking a little arrow out of his pocket. He gave it to her and said, "If you point to the ceiling, it'll be an up...if you point to the floor, it'll be a down..."