



What the Plumber Wants,

What the Plumber Needs

Jim Ruland

Mr. Fix It's tool kit: Suction stick (5" rubber cup, 28" handle) a.k.a. plumber's helper, a.k.a. plunger, standard issue, which, when kicked sure-footedly by Mr. Fix It, describes an abbreviated parabola before sticking to the door, quivering like an arrow stuck in a red rubber heart; tacky glue; extension wands; SukRite Suction System drain cleaner; Sure Shot steam sanitizer; a plethora of hoses of varying lengths and diameter; several pressure gauges, some with splash guards, some without; Hot Button aluminum torch (self-igniting); propane bottles; snap cutters; zodiac bristle brushes; Mr. Yanky faucet puller; slip-resistant strap tool; studded dog collar; 64 oz. bottle of Rodeo Joe's clog deconstitutor; wrenches, lots and lots of wrenches, including pipe, lug, element removal, cleanout, plug, and three-hole (both left- and right-handed); one dozen EZ-Glide ram bits; nipples of varying sizes and descriptions: brass, stainless steel, chrome, PVC, and gumdrop (also, nipple extractors); a pair of bacterial drain and trap cleaners; aqua ram; three closet augers; a miniature hand snake; the Speedy family of drill units: Lil' Speedy drop head, Xtra Speedy open book, Sir Speedy slot lip (with keyless chock) and Whole Lotta Speedy oyster pyramid with tubular welded contour mount; the apocryphal fix-u-later: the missing part without which the job cannot be completed and mysteriously disappears on warm spring afternoons when the Pedro Beach Sea Ponies softball team has a day game at Polliwog Park and the offshore breezes are blowing just so; P-250 Red Goat submersible pump (Navy issue); Humphries drain de-clogging assemblage with self-retracting coil; multi-pronged pipe shark; 3/4" bowel bomb; telescoping copper cat; miles and miles of duct tape; thousands of washers; dozens of crumpled maintenance tags, work orders, business cards, complimentary calendars and part-requisition forms; and a post card from Hearst Castle stamped with a ten-year-old postmark sent to 333 Shell Street, Pedro Beach, addressed "Dearest Stan" and bearing the message "I'm sorry," and left unsigned.



Jim Ruland is a veteran of the Navy, a part-time instructor of English, and a creative supervisor at an LA advertising agency. He is the recipient of a literature fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, a contributor to The Believer and Razorcake Fanzine, and a freelance radio correspondent for National Public Radio's "Day to Day." He is also the impresario for Vermin on the Mount, an irreverent reading series in the heart of Chinatown, and the author of the short story collection Big Lonesome.