ed.

She ran out. "Ozzie! We've been struck by lightning!" He came running in.

"You sure?" She nodded, then pointed to the living room. He started in, then saw how dark it was and decided to go to the basement to check the circuit breakers instead.

He was gone only a moment. "OK, lets check this out", he said, on his way to the living room again. Harriet followed.

"I had just turned this light on when it happened", she began. He nodded. The room was dark, so he reached for the switch. He flipped it and nothing happened. Just as he was about to remark that something must be wrong, there was a brilliant white flash. He hid his eyes and reached out to grip Harriet, as if to protect her and steady himself by holding on to her. Neither of them could see the other. As the brilliant light subsided, the fierce wind and deafening roar came again. Ozzie smelled smoke, but could see no fire. Instinctively, he flipped the light switch off. The catastrophe immediately vanished.

"What the ...?"

"Get rid of this bulb!", she said.

"Yeah. I'll get another." He left the room and returned a moment later with a new bulb. He reached toward the one in the lamp.

"Careful", she said. Ozzie nodded and touched the glass. It was very hot. He withdrew his hand and reached for a dust-cloth. Then he gently unscrewed the bulb.

When he had removed it from the lamp he looked carefully at it. "Look at this!" There was a faint glow inside the bulb and Ozzie could see a tiny mushroom cloud. "What is this thing?"

"Don't worry about it. The store will take it back. Put another one in."

He did. They both went to stand by the wall switch. Ozzie took a deep breath, then flipped the switch. The same thing happened. This time he flipped it off before the smoke could fill the room.

"Those are some really strange bulbs you brought home. What kind are they?"

"GE, I think. That's what the box said."

"Must be some sort of new model."

"Yeah, maybe they're special ones for the military, or something."

He unscrewed the bulb, curious to see if the little mushroom cloud was inside. It was.

"Why don't you take them all back?", Harriet urged.

"That's just what I'm going to do."

He went to the kitchen closet, got the rest of the new bulbs, then retrieved the store bag from the trash-can. "You're right. They are GE bulbs." Harriet said, noticing the logo on the box.

Ozzie headed out the door toward the garage.

When he entered the store he noticed that the bulb display was gone. They couldn't have sold them all this fast, he thought. He forgot about it and walked toward the manager's office.

Just as he reached the door, it opened and someone came rushing out, almost knocking Ozzie down. The person muttered a perfunctory 'excuse me' and kept going. Ozzie recog-

nized the manager and called to him. "Excuse me", he said. The manager paused, but did not turn to face Ozzie, as if hoping Ozzie might be addressing someone else. "I'd like to return these." The manager looked at the bag, sighed, then looked at Ozzie. "These bulbs. Something's wrong with them."

"Uh. Yeah."

"You see, we tried two and the strangest thing happened."

"Uh. Electrical stuff is not returnable...usually."

"Oh, but these are clearly defective. After you throw the switch, they put out this really blinding flash of light, then get dimmer, then start to smoke. Then, if you turn them off and back on again, they do the same thing all over."

"Yeah. Well, there's nothing I can do."

"You mean you can't take them back?"

"Yeah. It's not my problem...it's the manufacturer."

"But they're GE bulbs!"

"Right. You'll have to take it up with GE."

"All I want are replacements. I don't want my money back."

"Sorry. No exchanges, either."

"You mean I'm stuck with them?" The manager did not answer. "Well?"

"Yeah. You bought them."

"But they have little bombs inside!"

"You'll have to live with them. They're all like that now, the whole shipment is the same. Not just bulbs, but dishwashers and refrigerators too. All the GE stuff. I've had people in here all day. I can't take it anymore!" He hurried away.

"But I can't live with them", Ozzie shouted.

"Sure you can. You've been doin' it for years. You just didn't know."

"I've been doin what for years?"

The manager stopped and turned. "Buyin' bombs when you bought bulbs."

Ozzie stared at the manager with a puzzled look on his face. "But I don't want to buy a bomb when I buy a bulb!" He said.

"Yeah...well...what are you gonna do about it, then?"

Rich Conti

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