About 20 years ago – when I was young and stupid – I spent the night with my friend Squeaky on her farm. This farm was situated just off an area of the county we call “9 Mile”—a long dirt road in the boonies. Squeaky’s sister in law worked nights and was expected to be heading to her neighboring home around midnight. This, of course, gave us a very bad idea, and we decided to scare her. Once Squeaky’s husband (who would have stopped this foolishness) went to bed, we put our plan into action. I donned a set of the husband’s overalls, a work shirt, boots, and a hat. Squeaky then went and got a butcher knife and covered it with ketchup. She smeared a little mud on my face and then proceeded to pour ketchup all over my clothes and hands. We topped off my new look with a brown paper bag wrapped around a bottle and stepped out into the muggy July night.

If you’ve ever lived in Florida, you might be laughing at me already. You see, we get 100% humidity in these parts. Even at midnight, it was in the 90s. So hot doesn’t begin to describe it. Add to that the fact that I was now covered in both ketchup and sweat, and you can imagine the delight of the mosquitoes – which ate me alive.

The plan was for me to walk down this long dark dirt road in the woods and lie in wait for Patsy. When her truck got closer, I was supposed to jump out and stagger across the road like a maniacal killer. Squeaky’s job was to wait further back and alert me to Patsy. Only Patsy was running late. We waited and waited some more. By this time, the mosquitoes had feasted on me and I was slapping at bleeding bites and itching all over. Rather than wait in the scratchy bushes, I decided to walk a little farther down the road – not paying attention to what was around me. Finally, we decided that we’d had enough and would have to try it on another night when she wasn’t running late. So, I started the walk back. Seconds later, the road was illuminated by lights. Squeaky screamed, “It’s her!” I turned and began walking at her in my best maniacal killer impersonation and held up the butcher knife.

Two things then happened simultaneously. The headlights allowed me to see the predicament I was really in. One, this stretch of the road had fairly high barbed wire fencing running along both sides. Two, I heard the unmistakable sound of Patsy shifting gears, and stomping on the gas. And then Squeaky screamed the obvious. “Run for your LIFE!!!”

I ran for my life. Literally. Just up ahead, I could see where the barbed wire fencing ended, but it didn’t look like I was going to make it. The truck accelerated, and I could hear Patsy’s distant screaming getting closer. Just as I was about to be run over by the terrified woman and her truck, I saw the break in the fence line and made a dive over the lower, wooden fence next to it.

And landed face down in a hog pen.

In retrospect, I suppose it was better than being run over. But lying face down in hog slop tends to give a person perspective. At that particular moment, the perspective was eye to eye with some disconcerted hogs. Later --after we calmed down Patsy and her shotgun-toting husband --I decided to retire from practical joking on dark roads in the boonies.

Thank goodness I have being 19 years-old as an excuse.

*Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity; and I’m not sure about the universe.*

*-Albert Einstein*