In 1999, an Australian gentleman told me about an interesting experience he and his family had at Universal Studios. They were on the backlot tour passing one of the theme park's main attractions, the Bates Motel used in the 1960 horror classic Psycho, about a murderous young man named Norman Bates who loved his mother a little too much. As the guide gave out information about how director Alfred Hitchcock shot the picture, a tall man, dressed in drag and carrying a large knife, emerged from behind the old set and charged toward the tram. The narrator seemed to know nothing about the Norman Bates look-alike and clammed up completely. The make-believe killer wore such a convincing maniacal expression that some of the paying customers were frightened and screamed when he raised his weapon. Then the "fiend" pulled off his wig and he turned out to be comic Jim Carrey; the thirty-seven-year-old star was clowning around during a work break. After his laughing "victims" calmed down, Jim was happy to pose for pictures and sign autographs.

Extra: Jim Carrey's second wife, actress Lauren Holley, once complained that her husband freaked her out because he couldn't pass a mirror in their mansion without stopping, staring into it, and making funny expressions for at least fifteen minutes. The same face-changing habit helped the Canadian-born comedian earn the praise of directors, adoration from his fans and millions of dollars.

Extra: Jim Carrey's big break came in 1982 when fifty-two-year-old Mitzi Shore, the owner of the famed Comedy Store on the Sunset Strip, took a mother-like interest in his career. Three years earlier, Shore's world was rocked when her unpaid performers went on strike. After all, if the waiters and the bartenders got wages, why not the talent? Why should Shore get rich while they made nothing? In Mitzi's eyes, she gave comics a showcase to hone their acts and move on to bigger venues. She even provided some of them with free food and housing. How could they do this to her? It had been especially galling that thirty-two-year-old David Letterman, one of her favorites, had joined the work stoppers. When a car struck a disgruntled picketer who ended up in the hospital, Mitzi decided to settle up before someone got seriously hurt. (It turned out the "victim," David Letterman's three-years-younger friend and future late-night TV rival Jay Leno, faked his injuries in a successful attempt to end the conflict.) The whole ugly incident left a bitter taste in Shore's mouth; she banned several of the labor dispute instigators from the club.

When Carrey arrived on the scene, Mitzi thought the newcomer was someone special. He had an elastic body that seemed to be made of Silly Putty, was respectful and (unlike many of the other comics who the proprietor saw) looked good and always

wore suits. Out of hundreds of comedians who auditioned at the Comedy Store each week, Shore gave Jim prime opportunities to perform nights at her club, publicly gushed over him and important people in Hollywood took notice.

Extra: A knife-wielding “Norman Bates” charging the tram later became a feature on some of the Universal Studios’ Tours.