

BR. 18ES.2.7.032
The crowded lounge of the Golden Bell was ~~too~~ smoky and dark. The juke-box played some ~~new~~ new, brassy, but ~~it~~ tune. I walked over to the bar. No seat to be had. At the end of the counter, there was a group of ~~guys~~ guys, drinking ~~beer~~ beer from the bottle. I joined the gang. ~~them~~ men

I don't much care for beer, but drinking alone, standing up, at the end of a murky room, that was the best I could get. Besides, beer blended well with the vociferous crowd, the smelly air, paroxyde blondes and levy clad, greasy haired men.

yellow "This here is my prize possession," the black haired, *dark eyed, middle aged, thin* ~~skin~~ and tall man next to me said. "I've worked on it for two solid weeks", he continued, showing me a ~~the~~ *miniature* sized wooden figure.

I nodded affirmatively, not knowing what to say. It was too small a figure for me to make any judgement in the little light I had.

"You're too godd for it, heh? What do you know about art, anyway?", the man insisted.

"I didn't say it was bad", I apologized. *Just* "Merely can't see too well in here."

"Lawrence is my name," the guy continued, "and I've got a damnn good gas lighter," he went on, ~~to say~~ as he turned *up* the *light* ~~thing~~ and let it flame like a bonfire. "Now you can see, what do you say?"

I examined the little figure for a minute. It was no bigger than my thumb, ~~and I could see it was a~~ *its* human figure. The face looked like a prune, with warped up mouth, deformed nose, and *one* perfect eye. The other socket was void of anything. Just the hollow, deep *hole*, where ~~xxx~~ eyes, nerves and *blood* ~~blood~~ veins were supposed to be. Below the head there was a neck, or a break, like a circumcision. Then, drooping down, were the shoulders. One of them produced an arm, *which hangs down*, ~~below it~~. The other ~~was~~ a knot. *Looks very good to me*

"Quite interesting, ~~indeed~~, I said, *VB* "but I'm really no critic."

"I ain't asking for no criticism! I know I am an artist! Just tell me how you like it man!"

"I like it fine."

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With a sudden movement Lawrence pulled ~~open~~
Lawrence already had his knife ready. He picked up the figure
and with a jerk cut off the old man's ^{hanging} arm. "Is that better now?", he asked.

"Don't know why you did that. It was fine, I said."

"But is it better now?"

"I've told you I'm no critic, but I guess it is."

"Yeah", Lawrence said with a smirk, "it balances now."

He put the figure back ~~on~~ⁱⁿ his pocket. He ~~put~~^{shoveled} the knife in his ~~hip~~^{belt hanging down his hip?} pocket, looked at our ~~glasses~~~~xxx~~~~order~~~~xxx~~ bottles, and ordered two beers.

When the waiter brought them over, I tried to pay, but he wouldn't hear of it: "You balance, you don't pay", he said. "Maybe the next round. "

I stepped back, as if to see what was going on at the other end of the bar and looked him over from head to toe. No deformity I could see. He stepped back too, following my movement, and his move was perfect. Suddenly he faced me. His faded brown corduroy shirt open, his white tee-shirt against my dark-blue tie.

"No one notices it", he said, "only I know."

He turned sideways, and placed his hand on his left hip, where the knife was. He stood still for a moment than said: "Watch this!" I watched very closely, while getting into my judo position. A very slow, cadent movement was all I observed. His ^{arm around} hand behind my neck now, he asked: "Did you see that?"

I had to confess I saw nothing but a minute vibration of the hips.

"What do you take me for, a fool? Or are you a fool? Watch again!"

This time I forgot my self defense. I noticed a small crackling sound when he maneuvered his hips in a sideways fashion. Watching him - I don't know why - I thought of a belly dancer. But, then, I did hear a sound. Like a snapping.

"Very interesting," I said. "You know, I can do that with my toe..."

Lawrence ~~suddenly~~ became quite irate. His eyes, which looked

everywhere and inside at the same time, for ^{that} a moment spilt all their intensity ~~as he spoke slowly~~ ^{on me} "Is it platinum you have in your toe?"

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With a sudden movement Lawrence ^{reached for his hip,} pulled ^a ~~open~~ ^{his} ~~his~~ ^{knife} ~~ready~~ ^{hanging} ~~he~~ picked up the figure and with a jerk cut off the old man's arm. "Is that better now?", he asked.

"Don't know why you did that. It was fine, I said."

"But is it better now?"

"I've told you I'm no critic, ^{"I examined the figure and said: 'Well,'} but I guess it is."

"Yeah", Lawrence said with a smirk, "it balances now."

He put the figure back ⁱⁿ his pocket. He ^{stuck} ~~put~~ the knife in his ^{belt hanging down his hip?} hip pocket, looked at our ~~glasses~~ ~~order~~ bottles, and ordered two beers.

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I had to confess I saw nothing but a ^{minute} ~~minute~~ giration of the hips.

"What do you take me for, a fool? Or are you a fool? Watch again!"

This time I forgot ^{to stand in self-defense.} ~~my self defense~~. I noticed a ^{heard low} small crackling sound when he maneuvered his hips in a sideways fashion. ^{watching him - I don't know why - I thought of a belly dancer.} But, then, I did hear a sound. Like a snapping ^{in my toe}.

"Very interesting," I said. "You know, I can do that with my toe..."

Lawrence ^{that's funny} suddenly became ~~quite~~ irate. His eyes, which looked everywhere and inside at the same time, for ^{that} a moment spilled all their intensity ^{as he spoke slowly, sarcastically} on me. "Is it platinum you have in your toe?"

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"No", I answered, "the noise, I mean. I can make that little noise with my big toe..."

"To be able to make that little noise..." He stopped, he didn't remember my name, he said. I had never told him my name.

"Patrick."

"As I was saying, Pat, ^{for me to come up with that squeak} to be able to make that noise it took me three months in the infirmary and six at the hospital! " Then he laughed ^(describe) and continued, "I'm glad you can sound like me without going through what I did". ^{bitter sarcastically}

Trying to change the subject I asked him to see the figure he had carved again. He ^{pulled} took it out ^{of his} from his corduroy pocket and handed it to me. I ^{examined} examined it carefully, ^{examining each detail,} and asked him: "Maple?"

"Jacaranda... a ~~very rare~~ wood from Brazil. Rosewood, ~~is what~~ we call it. We ain't got none of it over here though. It all comes from over there. "He paused. "I like to work on foreign woods. Sort of takes me back to places I've ^{the man I've been} seen. Things I've done." All I do is carve now. I'm an artist. All the money I get is for the wounds I have, but I'm an artist. All my time I spend on these sculptures...

"Korea?" I ventured, judging ^{from youthful looks} his still young appearance.

"Yeah."

"What branch?"

"Marines. 'S far as I'm concerned there aint no other, ~~and~~"

~~Only Marines. Them are the guys!"~~ [enlarge - H pg]

It was Friday night. ~~There were still~~ last calls for alcohol at two a.m. of ~~Saturday~~. I ^{started to} ordered a couple more. Lawrence said he had enough, ^{Said good-bye} ~~Bid farewell~~, and left.

I drank my last beer, thinking about all that had happened and sharing a few words with the guys who were standing around. Some of them

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overheard the conversation. A few of them even participated in it, from time to time. All of them were eager to talk, especially now, when they knew all talking had to be done and over with in minutes. "Can you really make your big toe crack?" *was in the Marine Corps* "Were you in Korea?", *Does he think* "Isn't it too bad what we do to our boys?", *the GB is a gallery?* "Do you think he has any talent?", "Isn't that a crummy piece of wood?" - All kinds of questions and no answers. They wanted ~~no~~ answers. They only wanted to ~~ask~~ *talk*. They ~~asked~~ *talked* and laughed and looked the other way. ~~Honest that's what they did!~~

I laughed too. I nodded. In a way I answered, from time to time. But ~~God knows I~~ *really* said nothing. I ~~had~~ *was + heard* no chance.

When I finished ~~my beer and~~ *my beer* walked over to the car I noticed that Lawrence was standing next to the highway. ~~He had not really gone. He was waiting for a ride.~~

I drove by slowly, and saw him signal. *He pretended he had not been* ~~He'd been thumbing before.~~ *thumbing a ride.* I let him in, asked him which direction. It was not really my way, but not too far ~~either~~ *out*.

All through the ride I learned about Marine Corps training. How they did this, how they did that. How they were trained to kill, kill, kill! 265 ~~Branch~~ *Flagg* Road. Lawrence opened the door, stepped out, kept the door open, holding on to it: "Come and have a beer at my place."

No excuses ~~were~~ *seemed good* enough. "Tomorrow is Saturday" was the repeated answer ~~- or else -~~ *then, finally,* "O.K. Boy Scout, go home. You've done your good deed for the day. Tomorrow you'll remember you've taken a disabled Marine home. Be sure to report that to your troop counselor!" *He slammed*

the door, and started up the porch.

That made me feel bad. Cheap childish, perhaps. I ~~slam~~ stepped out & said:

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"Just one," I said. "I'm not much of a beer drinker," *but I guess one more is ok.*

"You don't have to drink, *just* one. Come and see my sculptures.

There ain't too many people as appreciate them. What you said about the balance was right. Them arms didn't balance. I knew that for a fact..."

And I did have a beer. The can was thrown *to* me, while I sat in front of an enormous Wooden monk. *(enlarge)* *the can* It came flying in from the kitchen, and hadn't I caught it, *either I'd have passed out or else* it would have burst open on the floor. But it was no "pop-open" can. Lawrence soon made that clear by throwing the can opener directly onto the arm-chair, where it landed, like an airplane, right where the arm's fold embraces the *upholstered* back of the *upholstering*. Satisfied with his success he laughingly opened up a can for himself and propped down on the imitation Persian rug in the middle of the floor, his legs touching his head, high up, perfectly balanced on his stomach! *Then, sitting up, he asked, he said, pointing at two pictures on the wall.* "See those Indians, there? I painted them. I paint too. But sculpture, that's my baby!" As he said that he *stood* sat up, looked all around.

My eyes followed his as he examined every figure: One eyed ladies, hunchback priests, one legged soldiers, women with one breast, heads without ears, perfect bodies with no heads.

"I was taught to kill. I learned to kill. I killed. *Boy,*

now I killed...
Now..."

figure.

I watched Lawrence's *face turned sadder* sad face as he went from figure to

His smile grow wider, with every movement, slow movements, which wound up in a jump, when he faced me, smiling, & he
"Well... Now... it's this monotonous life again."

He jerked himself up, grabbed my thumb, and pulled it against my wrist, while, at the same time his right leg went between mine and his right hand, under my chin pulled me up from my arm-chair, his right hand practically choking me: "See how easy it is to kill a man?" he asked.

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He released me completely, as soon as he asked the question.

Not only was he sure of my answer - which he did not wait for - he was proud of knowing he had mentally slaughtered me. *He had caught me off-guard.*

He laughed around a little. Told me ^{more} of his training. *Went over* Repeated the many tricks he had learned about bones, nerves, circulation. And walked towards his working table. While he talked he picked up different sized knives, looked at them, smiled. Then, all of a sudden, he threw a small *it* ~~one~~ against the big figure of the priest, *beside* ~~right next to me~~, ~~he~~ hit him with a thud, right next to ~~his~~ heart.

Watching my amazement
~~I must have looked somewhat frightened,~~ for Lawrence laughed louder than ever that night. "Want another beer", he asked?

I've had enough. Thanks.
 "I said just one, Lawrence. I'd better be going now." *and* ~~I said~~
 as I stood up to leave.

you're not leaving!
~~"Don't go."~~ *poor to sudden* I want to talk to you. I want to tell you of the joy... ~~I mean~~ I want to share my war experiences. To tell you of the ones I killed, the pleasure I felt, to know... to know that it was me killing, me... "

sticking up and touching
 A knife hit the floor, ~~right up against~~ my left shoe. *- re-word*

"Do you still want your toe to make that crackling noise out of its own, or would you rather..." He said that and laughed. He laughed like a hyena and wiggled himself, keeping rhythm with the platinum of his hips.

"I'll see you again, Lawrence, ~~anytime~~ *must*. I ~~just have to~~ go now, ~~it's~~ *"*
~~too late.~~"

"All right. I believe you. Some people have no one to kill. Have no figures to build. They only punch clocks, smile at customers, count money, *keep time*. Before you go, tell me, which figure would you say you liked best?"

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I looked around, saw a Dutch woman ~~right~~ next to the exit door:

"Her, I guess"

"No", Lawrence said, "not what you think you like, but just what feel you want. Which one would you say,"---' Now here is something I want...
Here is something I don't care what price I pay. Here is what I want!"

I looked around again. There was nothing I could be so determined about. I looked at him and said: "I guess I really want the Dutch woman."

Lawrence said : "O.K., take her. She's yours."

I took the figure from her pedestal, opened the door, thanked him. I walked ^{down} the first flight of stairs, ~~down~~. ^{I did not hear the door shut so,} At the landing I looked up again to say good night, ^{and saw him squat in my direction,} He threw a knife at me. His force and precision were perfect. The Dutch woman flew up and hung suspended on the wall, a knife across her bosom. ^{I looked up twice. Then I ran}

^{down} I ran the next flight of stairs. Just as I opened the door to the porch I heard a thud.

↓
The Dutch lady
Lawrence