

Sometimes You Just Don't Want To Know

I swore that I'd never again attend a meeting of writers, but there I was. Someone invited me, I can't remember who, so I went. I had nothing else to do. They say that writers should get out of their caves, go out and make connections, but it's never helped me in the least. I only end up walking away from the gathering frustrated and irritated and angry. And there's never anyone in attendance who can help me sell my work, which is the point of it all, nor anyone I'd want to stay in touch with. Sometimes I try and counsel another wannabe who's struggling, who can't get anything produced or into print. It's a paradox. I'm completely selfish and egotistical, but if someone needs help and asks for it, I'm more than willing. Artists are only interested in themselves and those who are worse off. We're incredibly jealous and bitter people, more jealous and bitter than most, probably because there's so little to go around....

My wife wanted me out of the house, though, and that was another incentive to go. She claims that I'm insufferable to be around when I'm in one of my moods, and it's true that I'm always in a surly frame of mind for one reason or another. What she doesn't know is that it's even worse for me, having to live with myself. But she hangs in with me -- I'm not sure why. We'd probably be better off apart, but in life inertia mostly wins out....

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This group did nothing but read their own plays. I took a seat on the periphery and looked around, thinking what a sad bunch of humans we scribblers are, sitting there day after day masturbating over our computers, hoping against hope that something spectacular is going to come out, like a gigantic orgasm in a porn video. Know what else is terrible about writers as a breed? There are no attractive women. They're either homely or overweight, or hideously ugly or they've got terrible attitudes. Most writers don't look good at all, including the men. We're a pitiful group, all right....

To break the monotony I volunteered to read one of the parts of Will Nesce's new play. I didn't know what I was getting myself into. The piece was a deadly concoction having to do with some obscure combat incident during World War II. Why would someone in the 21st Century want to beat that old horse to death? It's all been done before, and better. And of course Will wasn't in the war himself, so how the hell could he know anything about it?

The play was a snore, slow, talky, and loaded with clunky exposition that only a military historian could appreciate. Generals and colonels sitting around at a hearing -- a court martial, I suppose you'd call it -- justifying their actions regarding the deployment of fighter planes during some ill-fated mission. In other words, the most interesting action of this drama was taking place off-stage. Why in the world Will would ever fancy himself a playwright -- or any other kind of writer, for that matter -- was beyond me. That's another awful thing about writers -- we're a deluded lot.

The ordeal dragged on for hours, two, three, and no one made a move to put a stop to it. No doubt the moderator was a

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friend of the playwright. It seemed that everyone there had all the time in the world.

When it finally came to an end after 11 p.m., nobody said anything for a while. Usually at these events there's a barrage of criticism from the other writers, who act like sharks ripping apart a chunk of raw meat. Tonight everyone was too exhausted to respond. Some ran for the exit. Then a couple of people piped up and talked about how much they enjoyed it and all that other horse shit. They were out of their minds.

I had to get out of there before my head exploded. I bolted through the door and found myself outside in the dark. It was early December and already as frigid as a witch's teat. For the millionth time I asked myself why I wasn't living in California or Florida or Mexico. All my life I've been plagued by indecisiveness. I tell myself that it's on account of lack of money that I don't pick up and leave, but maybe it's something else -- maybe my character is too passive. Likewise, I convince myself that I need to be as close to New York City as possible, to be near the center of the world's action, but maybe I'm just afraid of life. Most writers are that, too -- afraid of everything. They can be tough behind the keyboard, but in real life they're sissies.

I got into my car and started driving home. The streets were deserted. Everywhere I looked, in the house and store windows, there were Christmas decorations, which depressed me. On Bloomfield Avenue I passed a shadowy sign that read "Heartbreakers." I knew what it was referring to -- a strip joint, the rare kind that doesn't call excessive attention to itself because it's close by schools and churches.

As usual, I had naked women on the brain. I'm always

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thinking about them, and it's cruel punishment to live in a part of the world where sex isn't ubiquitous and on everyone's mind all the time, like it is in Rio, or Caracas. All we know here in the Northeast is work, paying the bills, getting somewhere in life. And more work. It's an awful, tedious way to live.

I swerved into the curb. What the fuck. After spending a night with a bunch of dullards, I needed some kind of outlet. I usually try to stay away from gentlemen's clubs because they only torment me, not to mention that they drain me of what little money I have, but I'm vulnerable to stupid actions -- what man isn't when it comes to beautiful women?

Heartbreakers had an unmarked door and blacked-out windows. In other words, they really didn't want you to know what was going on inside. I thought about it for a few seconds. Why would I want to go into a place like this, with its overpriced drinks and the kind of women who wanted you to keep feeding their machine until you had nothing left?

My fantasies won out. The place was small, and packed tight with men. Up on the bar, three nearly naked women were prancing and shimmying and making love to the silver poles that ran floor to ceiling. The music, a mindless technobeat, was much too loud, so loud I couldn't hear myself think. And when you can't think, you spend more money.

I made my way to the bar and ordered a ten-dollar beer.

After a few minutes, I was able to commandeer an empty seat directly in front of the action. I looked up and down the bar. At the far end was a guy with sunken cheeks who looked like he'd just been let out of an insane asylum. He sat there staring worshipfully at the dancers, his mouth slightly agape. Another

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fellow wore a hat with a bill in the shape of the open mouth of a fish. The rest of them, mostly steroided muscle-heads, were whooping and whistling like adolescents.

Another collection of losers. And of course there I was, smack in the middle of them all.

But what I liked about Heartbreakers was that you were allowed to put your hands on the girls. If you could get close to them, you'd sure get your money's worth. Sitting and watching isn't for me -- I like to fondle. By the time Candy planted herself in front of me, I was ready for anything.

She was a bleach blonde with all kinds of delicious curves, just the way I like my women. We joked about the mark on her ass.

"My ex-boyfriend shot me with a BB gun," she pouted. "When I was in the shower -- can you believe that?"

Of course you can't buy a thing these girls say, I've learned that. The villainous "ex" was probably sitting a few seats away, keeping an eye on his property, or Candy had done something so horrific to him that she was lucky she wasn't dead.

After a couple of beers I was devoid of my normal inhibitions. I reached out and stroked Candy's exquisite leg. My mouth began to salivate.

My wallet was lying open on the bar. On purpose, naturally. I plucked out a bill. Then I pushed it into Candy's tiny thong, and straight into her pussy. After I'd deposited it there, I let my fingers trail slowly over the hairless lips. She was moist.

"Ooh...thanks..."

Candy shivered. For a moment there, it was just the two of us in the whole world.

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I was just about to deposit another coin in the slot when she moved off, in the direction of a Neanderthal waving a fifty. The idea was for the girls to stay in motion and not get trapped in one spot. Despite appearances, there's really no spontaneity whatsoever in a titty club.

About then I started thinking that maybe this place wasn't a typical joint....I thought I smelled something different behind all the petting and stroking, which by law you're not allowed to do. Why here? They say the Syndicate is dead, but I could feel it all around me in Heartbreakers. The mob is the kind of organization that will always make the cops look the other way. And they always get the best girls....

It was Destiny's turn. She was even more my type: dark, ravishing, and built like a brick shithouse, as they used to say. There was a lascivious smile on her face, a smile that said "I'll fuck you blind...."

"Hi-ii," she purred like a cat.

I wasted no time. I passed a few bills to Destiny. We got into a nonsensical conversation. Then I slipped my hand into her fishnet top and massaged a taut nipple. Those breasts were incredible! Christ, what a place! They let you do anything short of bang the girls right on the bar, and maybe that was going to happen too if I hung around long enough....

Then I thought of my wife....My wife asleep in our apartment or doing who knows what. She was a good woman, my wife. I was stepping across the line right now, and I was about to do more. Thank God she never questioned what I was up to. It was one of the traits that made her so wonderful.

"Meet me," Destiny whispered into my ear. Maybe she

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sensed she was losing the connection, which meant I'd fold up my wallet.

“When?”

“Tonight. When I get out of here.”

It was an easy decision. Whenever you were presented with a golden opportunity in life, you had to jump on it; you never knew when you'd get another. You had to live before it came time to die.

“You got it, honey. I'll be waiting.”

She shimmied off in the direction of another patron.

What was I supposed to do now? I drained my beer, gave Destiny a little wave, and walked out into the night. I could have hung around the club, but I didn't want to appear desperate. A dancer will eat you alive if you're too hungry....

A feathery frost fluttered down over the earth, painting all things with an unreal silver sheen. It was beautiful in a melancholy way, but I was freezing my ass off.

I cursed the cold, got into my car and sat there. Where was everybody? Just after midnight and the world was already asleep....

I'd told Destiny exactly where to meet me when she got off. Now all I had to do was sit tight.

There was an all-night diner around the corner. I decided I'd go there and kill time while I waited for my stripper. I reached for my wallet. Empty. Every last one of the bills I'd had when I walked into Heartbreakers was gone...into the snatches of Candy and Destiny. How much had I flushed away? Seventy-five? A hundred? That money was supposed to last me a couple of weeks.

In the rearview mirror I watched more guys make their

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way into Heartbreakers. Destiny was in there pulling more dough, hundreds, maybe even thousands, from saps like me. Maybe she was stroking someone's cock right now. She might even be sucking one in a back room. *And what made me think I was the only one she wanted to meet when she was through for the night?* Still and all, I told myself, with a little patience I could probably have her. Maybe she really did dig me above the others. Or maybe it would take the right price....

I checked my watch. Still a half-hour to go before she got off. Meanwhile, the frost was hardening into ice on my windshield.

The booze had begun wearing off. I started to give some straight thought to what I was planning to do. An incredible orgasm or two, that's what awaited me -- if I was lucky. Well, *maybe*....And then I thought, maybe I was a fool for waiting for Destiny; it sure as hell wouldn't be the first time. She might show, then again she might not. When all was said and done, she'd be nothing more than one more trap, one more bottomless hole that sucked me dry....

I turned the ignition over. Tonight I was going to leave it all in the air. I'd let myself wonder whether she ever did show up, and whether she would have given it to me for free.

That's how it is some nights: you just don't want to know whether or not you were going to be had.