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Untitled

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i was sitting on a park bench when the most honorable Harold D. Stoll, du jour, high chancellor U.S.A., walked up and sat down. the amazing thing about these street people is that they don't stink too bad. Harry was no exception. the pigeons stayed away. he took out his cigarettes and gave me one, too. we sat smoking.

“... her name was Esther ... she was the first ... all my life ... a victim of bamboozles ... that son of a bitch ... hey, get out ...”

a bus came by. from our bench i watched a small crowd board. i named them anonymous, to myself, and said to Harry: “Jesus”.

“... agghhgibah ... they should've called me Jesus, i'da shown 'em ... that's right ... all my life ... i went to work when i was twelve years old ... the old man ... look at that ... the bastard ...”

i thought about trying to direct the conversation. i wanted to ask him his age. his story. but when i stopped and thought about it, i knew questions were pointless. i'd serve best as listener.

“ah shit ...” i said”.

Harry just sat there awhile. i think i caught him at a good time — 5:00, the sun was in its decline. a couple more hours of good light. hot sun puts a man like Harry to sleep. the fact that i had nowhere else to be felt o.k. i shifted a bit in my seat — shuffled my feet. all this against urban decay. time is allotted. laugh at ambition.

“i didn't go to the war. i just didn't”

“Harry, how 'bout some whiskey”

“o.k.”

the light went from “WALK” to “DON'T WALK” just as i entered the intersection. i stayed in the crosswalk. a Nova waited to turn. he looked at me like he was in a hurry. this didn't faze me. i could see the liquor store waiting. Harry probably still sat there. i stepped onto the curb. the light turned yellow. i entered the store.

“hey, how ya doin'? half pint please. Canadian mist”

“two twenty five”

“thanks”

i crossed the street with no problem. there sat Harold. i sat down. we drank, passing the bottle. enlightened prince. just god. strength of men. brink of

everything. suddenly the bench fit. across great fields, empty, we tread. i caught myself . . .

“Jesus Christ”

“ . . . absolutely . . . have you ever been to St. Bernard’s? . . . what time is it? . . . i’m gonna be late”

“for where” i said.

“what?”

“late for where”

“i uh . . .”

the sun kept moving. who cares. all the things we bleed about are so personal. Harry told me. you’ve got nothing. nothing but what you think you’ve got. the sun kept moving. Harry stared straight ahead. my words started, wavered and stopped. he sat regal as the plains

Andy Ostrowski



Bev Janoski