

Romeos

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When the Suppurating Pustules had a gig at the Bluebonnet in Adobe Walls, Ponykiller county's only honkytonk, I always broke out my National guitar. You've maybe heard of them even if you've never seen one. Remember Paul Simon flying down to Graceland and seeing the Mississippi River shining like one of them? Nationals are shiny. Nickel-plated steel all over, no wood showing though they're shaped like a regular guitar. Reason I used it when the Pustules were playing the Blue was because of the stage lighting there. That guitar was just perfect for casting reflections. I'd single out a good-looking stray at ringside and manipulate that old National to illuminate the lady in a sparkle of rainbow colors. Kind of get her attention, you might say.

That night we finished the last set with 'Good Night Ladies' like always and while putting the band's gear away, I caught the eye of the likely I had targeted and raised my eyebrows as an invitation to linger. She got the idea, and after I'd packed my trusty National away, I went over to where she was standing by the snooker table alongside the big old Wurlitzer jukebox. Before I could say howdy, she asked me, "You always do that to the ladies ringside?"

I said, "You mean overwhelm them with my musical chops coupled with my trustworthy demeanor that accompanies my boyish smile?"

"No," she said. "I mean blind them with that goddam National guitar flashing in their faces."

My boyish smile shifted to sheepish, but I did the manly thing and copped to it. I said, "You know being a Suppurating Pustule may look pretty glamorous, but you're the beauty of the bar tonight, and I just wanted to highlight you. If in that process I blinded you to my many stellar qualities, my apologies. I'm Willy."

She said, "I'm Lourine. That kind of bullshit ever work for you, Willy?"

I said, "Well it has got us engaged in a manner of speaking, and we only just met."

"This is going to be a short engagement," she said. "I hardly got time for more than a howdy. I got to find a place to spend the night. My pickup broke down just outside Adobe Walls."

So I did the manly thing and said, "Come on home with me."

She went into this hipshot stance, crossed her arms and commenced to tapping the corner of her mouth with her finger and said, "Just what you proposing we do, we get there?"

"Well, I'm a little dry from being on stage, so we could bring home a 6-pack of Lone Star long necks and get to know one another."

"And just what kind of sleeping arrangements you got in mind?"

I said, "Well, I got this brand new water bed, hardly broke in, that you're invited to experience."

She said, “That mean you got a La-Z-Boy you can bed down in....in another room?”, adding a little more stress than she needed to on those last words.

I said, “If it comes to that, I can handle it. I been rejected before.”

“It’s not rejection, Willy. I’m just not that kind of girl, but I will take you up on your offer.”

When we got to the trailer park, I pulled my F-150 in alongside my doublewide and said, “Here’s your new home Lourine.” I can’t say she was awestruck by her surroundings, but she didn’t have much to say. After a cursory inspection of the bedroom and head though, she deemed both acceptable and we retired to the living room. We popped a couple of Lone Stars and commenced to getting to know one another. Turns out she’s a barrel rider come to town for the annual Top o’ Texas Rodeo. Was about to ask her where’s her horse but thought better of it. Gal wants to be a little mysterious, I’m OK with that. Gives a man the latitude to be a little mysterious himself. Gives him some maneuvering room, if you get my drift.

I’d like to say we progressed to the snuggling stage, but no such luck. She did give me a good night hug though before going to bed. There’s two kinds of hugs. There’s your teepee hug where you lean into one another kind of like an A-frame. And then there’s the more intimate peepee hug. Lourine’s was an encouraging in between, but like I say wasn’t an invitation into the bedroom.

I was just bunking down on my La-Z-Boy wondering how she’d known I had one, when I remembered my romeos were in the bedroom alongside the waterbed. So I slipped my skivvies back on and tapped on the bedroom door.

She said, “Whaddaya want?”

“My romeos.”

“Your what?”

“My romeos. My bed slippers. They’re by the bed. I’ll just slip in and fetch them.”

“No need for that. I’ll hand them out to you.” When she did, all I could see was her arm holding out my romeos like a couple of dead rats. She said, “I got news for you, Willy. These aren’t romeos. You ask me, they’re brothel creepers, and they aren’t going to work with me.”

She was up early the next morning making coffee, and when she brought me a cup, I was still sacked out on my La-Z-Boy. She said, “I’m pleased to see you didn’t have a pile of dirty dishes in your sink. Speaks well of a man.”

I said, “Yeah, one of mans great fears is he’ll wind up with a slatternly woman who leaves the kitchen sink full of dirty dishes. Can be a real nuisance. She’s taking her sweet time in the john and you’re wanting to take a pee. So what’s a man to do? In fact, you ever wonder why you take a pee when you’re really leaving one?”

“Actually I haven’t. But I’ll leave you to ponder that. I got to run and get my pickup truck dealt with.” She picked up my keys from the coffee table where I’d shucked tem out of my Blue

Bell Wranglers before retiring and said, “How about I take your wheels. Be back before you need to go anywhere. That is, assuming your offer of a bed wasn’t just for a one night stand.”

I said, ” OK, but remember grand-theft-pickup-truck is a capital offence in Texas,” thinking at the time I was just joking. But, more than anything, hoping one thing would lead to another with this gal, name of Lourine.