

The U-Hoo Saloon

The raven-coloured stallion came to a deliberate halt outside of the U-Hoo Saloon, small spirals of dust swirling around its warm hooves as it stood still and proud. The tall, broad-shouldered stranger dismounted with a weary groan, and then patted the thick neck of his trusty companion. With heavy sigh, the stranger removed his well-worn gloves, which he used to slap away the settled dust from his chaps.

Stretching numbed, aching limbs after his long, lonely ride across the dusty, merciless plains, his silver spurs making that unmistakable clinking sound as he stepped up onto the wooden walkway, which shaded him from the heat of the glowing afternoon sun.

The black-hatted stranger pushed through the two green swing doors of the U-Hoo Saloon, scanning his slanted eyes around the now silenced bar room. The crowd stared at him questioningly and the stranger stared back with similar question in his eyes as he made towards the bar, each leather-booted foot slapping the dusty floor.

Somewhat nervously, the white-aproned bartender approached the stranger.

‘What’ll be mister?’ The bartender asked, twirling the thin cavalier-like moustache across his top lip, which is a good place to have a moustache.

The stranger stared for a moment then pointed to a bottle of whisky. ‘Make mine a large one.’

‘I can’t do that mister; all the bottles are the same size.’

‘Okay, pour me a whisky then.’

‘New in town stranger?’

‘Now there’s a coincidence, so am I.’

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‘Mmmh,’ the bartender grunted. ‘Have you got a name, stranger?’

‘Yip.’

‘Well Yip, will you be staying long in town?’

The stranger remained silent, his slanted eyes watching in the large mirror as a man made a cautious approach from behind. Slowly, the stranger’s gun-hand lowered, and he spun round with such elegant swiftness, his right hand then stretched right out as he aimed the pistol directly at the approaching man.

‘God, I must stop spinning round like that,’ he said into himself. ‘It makes me so dizzy.’

The crowd in the bar room fell silent, then all of them picked themselves up quietly and everyone stared as a three-legged dog entered, whined pitifully as it walked around the bar then just left again.

The two men stood silent as they stared into each other’s eyes, the tall stranger raising one eyebrow as he lowered his pistol to rest it back in its holster, well, it was a bit heavy.

‘Gosh Almighty, you’re as fast as ever darn it, Big Bart,’ smiled the man in high pitched voice as he clasped both hands to his face with excitement.

‘Well I’ll be__ Vaseline Vic__ blow me.’

‘Goodness, maybe later. How have you been, Barty?’

As the two friends embraced in warm affection, the entire crowd sighed a heavy relief, fearing that the pistol would go off and the loud bang would perhaps wake some of the neighbours. All giving a gentle smile as the two friends stood at the bar hand in hand.

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Big Bart and Vaseline Vic had been friends for a long time, well, not that long, not as long as time itself, but for quite a few years. They hadn't seen each other for several years, due to the fact that Vaseline Vic had ran away from home when it was discovered that his two sisters were actually his brothers in dresses. I mean, not that there's anything wrong with wanting to wear a dress. But what really upset Vaseline Vic was the fact his father, Gerard, wanted then to be known as Geraldine. So, at that particular time, there were rumours of a Californian Gold Rush. After finding out whereabouts the Gold Rush in California was taking place, Vaseline Vic immediately packed his toothbrush and favourite teddy bear to head off on his big adventure, but not before doing his chores and making sure that old mister Tompkins' haemorrhoids were firmly pushed back up? Although, the problem was, Vaseline Vic wasn't good at reading a map and got lost, so he settled down in Hardbutt Creek where he became a Shepard, enjoying all the little perks of the job, well, it was a lonely job up there in the hills, and it did get mighty cold at night.

Big Bart pushed the black Stetson to the back of his head and sighed a heavy sigh as he finished his whisky.

'Gosh Almighty, whatever's the matter, Barty?' Vaseline Vic asked.

'Well, it's just that, I really hate whisky, is there any lemonade in here?'

Now, meanwhile across the dusty street, Sheriff Jeremy. J. Jones was standing outside of the jailhouse, busily watering his prize Dahlias that he proudly displayed in window boxes on every window, a good place to have window boxes probably.

However, being somewhat of a crafty Sheriff, he kept one eye on the black Stallion that was tied up outside the U-Hoo Saloon, wondering who owned

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such a magnificent beast. Then, shielding his eyes as he stepped out into the radiant sun, he decided that it wasn't such a good idea to shield one's eyes when walking because he bumped into a wooden support at the steps. The Sheriff then pushed back his white Stetson; he wore white due to being a good cowboy. With his hat right back, the Sheriff wiped the beads of sweat from his wrinkled forehead with the neatly folded handkerchief that his wife had pressed earlier that morning, and then slowly returned to the jailhouse, carefully avoiding the wooden support this time.

Inside the jailhouse, the Sheriff stood with hands on slender hips until she told him to let her go. 'Sorry, Slender, I just like holding you,' the Sheriff apologised then gave a look of discontentment as he stared at the two prisoners who were sitting on the hard wooden bed, handkerchiefs in their hands as they both stared avidly at a magazine.

'Are you two boys thinking about doing some dusting in there?'

The two prisoners just stared back in silence with big grins on their faces.

'It's a mighty fine day out there. I think that I'll let you both sit outside for a little while, just so that I can give your floor a good clean. It's mighty strange how it gets so sticky in there__ real strange.'

Both prisoners rose to their feet with great enthusiasm, giving each other a look of cheerful surprise as the Sheriff hurriedly ushered them outside to the bench on the porch.

'Now boys, promise me that you won't be running away.'

'Aw shucks, Sheriff,' gasped Ivor Biggin, a man of colossal stature, and wore nice black boots. 'We won't do that, it's against the law.'

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‘Nope, we wouldn’t want to be getting you into trouble now, Sheriff,’ said the second man, Perry Sher, who also wore nice black boots.

Sheriff Jones stood with his hands on Slender Hips again, before she slapped his face. But the hard slap didn’t matter, because the Sheriff watched the two prisoners go outside into the bright sunlight, both shielding their eyes and banged straight into the wooden support at the steps. Then, as the prisoners rubbed at their foreheads, they watched the Sheriff eagerly gather up the cleaning tools before they both skipped hastily up the dusty street hand in hand and straight out of town.

Well, can you imagine the anger that the poor Sheriff felt? He was so angry that he actually crushed a bunch of grapes with his bare hands, no joking, and he jumped up and down repeatedly then sent the old cat flying with just one swift kick. Just then, Wan Hung Lo, the Chinese man who owned the local take-away appeared.

‘Gleetings, Sheliff__ I wok cat foo you?’ He smiled knowingly, cradling the worried looking cat in his arms. The guilt-ridden Sheriff agreed to let Wan Hung Lo take the cat, not really realising that he would never see it again, not unless he ordered a chicken curry.

Now, back at the U-Hoo saloon, Big Bart and Vaseline Vic were catching up on Old Times, who was the saloon owner’s dog and it just kept on running around the table.

‘Well, what brought you to Hardbutt Creek, Barty?’ Vaseline Vic panted, almost catching Old Times, but slipped on something brown and sticky. ‘What brought you here of all places?’

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