

Stuffed Shirt

by Daniel Harris

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It was the losers' bar in my broken Brooklyn neighborhood. Beer was ten cents. A shot of bar pour was fifteen cents. A dollar could get you blitzed if you shot gunned four boilermakers. Depending on the bartender, I could get a free shot and beer on the house. The regulars were mostly old wounded WWII and Korean veterans, industrial accident victims, or the ex-wives and girlfriends of the aforementioned. I would go there when money was tight and I only had a dollar to get soused.

My art was not selling. I was having a hard time reconciling my artistic esthetic with life's financial imperatives. It was midnight, but I knew the bar would be open for another hour. I put on my coat and walked uphill to the bar. It was snowing lightly, enough so the cars spun their wheels at the uphill stoplight.

Only a few of the regulars were at the bar. It was before the neighborhood became gentrified. Cigarette Joe was tending bar. He had a burning cigarette dangling from his mouth and a lit one behind his left ear.

—Give me a pour and a draft.

—It's better you buy a stubby than a draft, said Joe. You know the draft is wicked bad.

—I've only got a dollar.

—Suffer, but don't blame me if you get the trots.

I put down three shots and three drafts. I could feel them working on me. I ordered the fourth and looked around the bar. I had only been there ten minutes. No one looked familiar. There was a small rough-looking woman sitting at a table. She looked plenty drunk and well used. Her most noticeable feature was her huge bosom. Not

just big, but enormous, outrageously so. I downed the fourth shot and took my beer to her table.

—Mind if I join you?

—Help yourself, sonny.

Now I'm not a breast man, but these were marvels of genetic mutation. She was perhaps five feet two and very slender, but she had these amazingly large breasts, virtual Virginia hams of meat.

—You lookin' at my tits, sonny.

I didn't know what to say.

—Well, they are a bit unusual.

—These puppies are real, sonny. Ain't no plastic or sil-I-cone.

—Oh, I believe you.

—Wanna see 'em?

—Not particularly.

—Touch 'em?

She put her hands between the straining buttons of her shirt and unhooked her brassiere. It was one of those bras that unhooked in front. Her melons dropped a half a foot under her shirt.

—Ya see. Real stuff. You can feel 'em for a beer.

—Sorry I'm all tapped out.

—You that artist guy who lives in the garage?

—You're lookin' at him.

—You got any food?

—Can of Campbell's tomato soup.

—How big is your bed?

—It's the floor.

—Got a toilet?

—And a shower.

—Take me home.

—I don't think so.

I left wondering what breasts that big felt like, but the drafts were working on my gut. No time for research.

