

Short Blonde, Long Red

by G.E. Simons

Danuta waved at me with just the top joints of the fingers on her vertical right hand as she disappeared to serve the ruddy group of men who were dressed in ties, lies and by the way they were hungrily eyeing her... sighs.

I laughed silently and knowingly through my nose, which was still very sore from the cartilage contusion of a punch I had taken on it in the Glassy Inn a few hours earlier - disagreements over a meat raffle and Guinness spilled.

Then I felt a hand on my shoulder and a plume of toasted cigarette breath fan my neck.

"Do you want a dance?" Asked Natalie.

She fluidly slid around me, turning the rotating bar stool and maneuvered her little body so that she stood between my legs to face me directly.

It felt like a final head-to-head at a welterweight title fight weigh-in without the ticker tape.

I drank half of my Heineken, and then offered the bottle to Natalie by its neck.

She wrinkled her nose and shook her head.

"I'll have a vodka and cranberry though." She said.

The timing was good. Danuta had returned and immediately produced a bottle of Belvedere, before hitting a tumbler with a waterfall of the spirit and passing it to Natalie along with a Tetrapak of Ocean Spray cranberry juice.

Natalie blushed the vodka with an almost pointless twist of the fruit juice as I fought in my inside jacket pocket for my wallet, fished another £10 from it and paid Danuta for the drink.

Natalie drank half of the vodka and set the glass down against my nearly empty bottle of lager.

The frazzling muzak that had washed over me like a low hum for the last couple of hours suddenly caught my attention.

The driving riff of The Doors' 'Peace Frog' had been sampled and was providing the driving rhythm of a pounding Balearic anthem.

"I never thought I'd hear this in here." I said through a smile.

"What?"

"I said, I never thought I'd hear this in here." Pointing into the air as I spoke.

Natalie looked at me blankly, draining the last of the pinkish vodka from the tumbler.

"The music." I said as she shrugged and scratched what must have been an itch on the right hand side of her neck.

She started to tap a rhythm on the bar counter, avoiding the various puddles of spilled alcohol that spread across it like oceans on a map. Her sharp, sculpted fingertips following the beat with a mesmerisingly accurate tempo.

A degenerate percussion section conducting an orchestra of the damned, as she tuned up for a night-time of solos.

"You're funny." She said through a laugh.

