

Luck

by Jake Barnes

Between classes you drive down the hill and drop off the papers with the paralegal. No hassles, no disputes over who gets what, so why not? Screw the lawyers.

You run your errand, drive back up the hill, park, go teach your class, go back to the Fine Arts building for your office hour. You sit at your desk and grade papers. A kid comes in and sits down. She apologizes for missing class. She had an operation on her leg, she says. She asks if you want to see her scar. She rolls up the leg of her jeans, but they are tight, and she can't roll them high enough. She gets up, clasps her books to her bosom, and with a cheery "See ya," she leaves.

You sit back, shake your head. Then you put your papers in your briefcase, look at your watch, get up and leave. It is time to pick up your soon-to-be-ex wife at the train station. She works in The City. Weekdays you pick her up later in the day.

You've got a few minutes to wait, so you go into a beer bar down by the tracks. The place is a dive, but a Budweiser is a Budweiser. You climb on a stool, drink off the first glass without coming up for air. Man, that tastes good!

You don't think about your wife and her lover. That's blood under the bridge. And you are not one to cry over spilt milk. Nosiree.

You crook a finger at the bartender, push your empty bottle forward, tell the fellow to bring you a refill. You nod at the calendar behind the counter, and the barkeep takes it down and hands it to you. It's the jumper's pool. You write your name in a space, pay a buck, and if somebody jumps off the bridge that day, you win the pot.

You toss two singles on the bar, write your name on a couple of spaces near the end of the month. You smile. Maybe one of them will be your lucky day.

