

Betsy

by Kenneth Sibbett

Lester sauntered through the flea market, with nowhere to go and no hurry to get there. Since he retired recently and his beloved wife Ellen had died, he mostly worked around his house or in his workshop. When he was a young buck there was always somewhere to go. He remembered getting his first drivers license and buying an old clunker of a car. He put used Mag rims on the wheels and after shining up the tires and dash and putting a good wax job on it. wasn't look half-bad looking. It wasn't new like the new cars the rich kids had, but it ran great. Back then he always had places to go and people to see. Not like now.

Lester walked by a vendor who tried to sell him an old guitar he had in the back of his truck. He picked it up and saw it only had two strings. He plunked one and both he and the vendor shook their heads. Just to be nosy, he asked the vendor how much he wanted for it. \$30? He walked away thinking the guy would never sell it at that price. It took Lester longer than usual to find his parked his car and when he did; he was opening the trunk and putting the old guitar in the back. How? He didn't remember buying it. Surely, the guy must have given it to him. He knew he wouldn't buy it, he had never played a guitar in his life. He couldn't even whistle a tune.

A week later, Lester was looking for a pair of pliers to loosen the nozzle on the water hose when he opened the car trunk and spotted the guitar. What the hell? Who in the world put that in his trunk? It could only be his son. He had taken his car the week before to get the oil changed and he must have left it in the truck. How many times had he told him to always keep the trunk clean? He grabbed the guitar and started walking towards the back door of his house to call his son and give him a piece of his mind, but stopped. Looking at the old guitar again, he turned and went into his workshop. The more he stared at it, the more he saw it wasn't in that bad of shape,

really. Why, with a little work and some furniture polish, maybe some shellac and some new strings, she just might play. He decided to fix her up. Her?

Lester walked back into the house. He was hungry but didn't know what he wanted to eat. Really, he couldn't remember how to fix anything he wanted anymore. He walked over to turn on the television, but couldn't find the on/off button. Surely the damn thing had an on/off button. The phone rang and Lester went looking for it, but the next thing he knew he was back in the workshop with the phone in his hand. He sat down and picked up Betsy, his guitar, and started playing Hank Williams "Your Cheating Heart" and was in the middle of Willie Nelson's "Blue Eye's Crying in the Rain" when he fell asleep. It was dark when he awoke with that damn guitar in his lap. He put it down, angry at his son for bringing it there.

Still angry, he carried the guitar into the house and sat it down. He was hungry and his wife wasn't home and he didn't know where she could be. He looked around for a note from Ellen and started to turn on the overhead lights but instead, tripped over the guitar. He fell and hit his head on the end table. Blood was running down his face and onto the carpet and his favorite chair. He took out his handkerchief to stop the bleeding. He stood up, angry, and seeing the guitar started stomping it and stomping it until it was nothing but small pieces of wood and wire. The wire wrapped around his foot and as he took his other foot to try and get the wire off, he fell again.

He awoke to a very dark house. He was on the floor with blood everywhere and his head hurt. He put his hand to his head and felt the cut. Someone must have broken in and knocked him out. He was able to get to his knees and reach the floor lamp. That was when he saw Betsy, the treasured guitar his father had given to him thirty years ago, smashed into pieces. He loved it more than life and lay back down and started crying. Who could do this? What kind of person would beat up an old man and destroy the only thing he had left to love in this cruel world? As he cried, he pleaded for his wife to come home to help him up and feed him and love him again and he

could only lay in a fetal position on the floor and cry and whisper
why?...why?...why?

