

If Wishes Were Horses Beggars Would Ride

by Larry Strattner

Two people are talking. They are both wearing hats. Both have had dinner and are lingering over a drink in the neighborhood bar. The bar is a gathering place for artists, writers and musicians. People actually working in these professions come here. You would have heard of none of them.

"I wish I was better at things."

"What things?"

"Anything. I always get started a bit too late. Behind the curve so to speak."

"The early bird gets the worm. Get up earlier. Carpe diem and all that shit."

"It's not that; it's more like my hole cards are always a deuce and eight. I'm never in. I start behind."

"Look. Excellence comes in such small blobs it's hard to see the statue taking shape."

"What?"

"Small blobs. You know, the guy puts on a little clay with his thumb. Steps back. Asks himself is that her cheek, or not?"

"What's *wrong* with you? Always with stuff like this. I never know what you're talking about."

"I'm always talking about you; wanting to be born fully formed. You find a thing and you want to be good right away. It's not about right away. It's about blob by blob. It's about being able to admit, nope that's not her cheek, scraping it off to try again. It's about craft. It doesn't matter what it is either. It could be ice fishing or pogo sticking. You always want to be in the top ten the week you start. It doesn't work that way."

"You don't get it. I don't have time. I can't blob this and blob that then stand around evaluating. When I find something I like and start

I'm way in the back of the pack. I started everything too late. Everybody else is smarter, faster, younger. I get sick of being an also ran."

"Did you ever consider your gift is in the finding?"

"Finding?"

"Yeah. Your ability to find new things you like and value. Things you want to learn and do. It's not about the painful excellence it's about the glow of being there. So many of us are lost in the pain of striving we forget about the joy of process. Who knows? Occasionally good things, even great things, get done out of the box. Could happen to you. Maybe you just haven't hit on your thing yet."

"My thing. Right. I haven't got forever I want to make an impact not dither around finding my thing."

"History forgets winners and losers both. Or worse it lies about them. Or even worse it digs them up and laughs at them; strips them of their context."

"Man. These kind of conversations make my head hurt."

"Right. Well, one last thing."

"Such as?"

"True impact. It's always on one or two others. Trying for big important things by yourself is like trying to win a war with one big bomb. It never works. You could blow up the world and there'd always be someone who didn't appreciate your idea hiding behind a bush on Venus. Concentrate on helping some other lost soul make progress. Don't impede, encourage. Treat yourself the same. You have a lot of experience. Push some things along. That's how a world gets made; person by person. That's where the art is; and even the beauty. It'll all come back to you."

"You sound more like my grandmother every day."

"I'd hope so. I started late. I was always behind the curve with her. I'll never catch her. I'm encouraging you instead."

