



three-b

they stood side by side in adjoining cubicles vomiting their guts up. one on the business end of the worst hangover his thirties had ever gifted him, the other spilling like an overfull glass thanks to his second week of radiotherapy. the stinging scent of sick vindictively went for their eyes, causing them both to partially blind themselves with tears. as Simon's stomach rolled over and admitted defeat he straightened up, wiped his chin and banged on the cubicle wall.

"you O.K in there?"

"i'm super, it's like my favourite meal and a birthday blowjob from Christina Hendricks in here."

taking to the sink, Simon throws some water in his face before sipping from the tap. his head buried in the cool porcelain as Richard finally flushes, then vacates the end stall. he runs his fragile, saran wrapped hands, under the cold water faucet. the cancer has chewed the best meat from his bones.

"so what is it that's killing you?" Richard asks.

"excuse me?"

"mouth cancer, three-b, you?"

"nothing. i'm visiting my old man, he's got Alzheimer's so bad he can barely remember how to wipe his own asshole."

"ah, that sucks. life is a bucket of shit with a barbed wire handle."

Simon nods "i like that."

"you can have it, it's Jim Thompson. well if it ain't the big casino then what's got you so sick?"

"i'm an alcoholic, i don't need any excuse to get sick. i just need a line of credit. do you really have mouth cancer?"

"yup," nods Richard "they reckon it came from the years of drinking cheap fucking vodka and smoking cigarettes. apparently there's something in the cheap stuff that isn't in the good stuff, something that weakens the mouth, or softens, or makes it more susceptible to it. i'll be fucked if i ever *really* understand it, all i know is that i thought i was saving myself money and now i'm looking at them removing all my teeth or the lower half of my jaw. that, or let it kill me."

Simon hands him a paper towel, and considers what Richard would look like without his lower face. it's a dried dog shit of a break, only a bitter and twisted cunt like life would deal a man the pain and suffering of fifty years of punching clocks and paying his way *then* throw cancer in on top of it for variety.

"you ever consider, you know..."

"if a day passed where i didn't at least swear it under my breath, kid, then i've suddenly forgotten it. you come in on the way out."

"barely given a fair fuck at it."

"ain't that the truth."

and it was.

exiting the bathroom, the two men make a move to go their separate ways, trading pleasantries, offering each other words of consolation, but as they walk they realise they're both walking towards the same door. exiting the hospital, Richard stops. Simon stops too, awkwardly.

"look, kid. say no if you want but i'm having some family over this evening. i've a daughter who is going to be left all alone soon, my HMO is refusing to cover all my costs so there's a solid chance that this round is my last hurrah. they're throwing me a little shindig, and as i said i've a daughter who is going to be left all alone soon."

"you want to set your little girl up with a self-confessed alcoholic you met ten minutes ago because you were chucking spuds side-by-side?"

"she's a good girl, beautiful too, but she goes in for world class fuck-holes. you're here taking care of your dad, you've been square to me. she could do worse than a decent guy like you."

"sure," smiles Simon "why not. i've only just moved to Show Low since my dad got sick so I don't know many people. shindig sounds good."

"good, there's a place called One Eyed Jack's. i'll be there from about eight-thirty."

with a splash of cologne, Simon looks his reflection over in the mirror and tells it *you're going to have*

fun tonight, you're going to drink a FEW beers and have fun. it was a hope more than a goal, he'd been on the business end of the booze crusade since he was tall enough to mash a horse and not once did a night ever end with a few beers... or him having fun for that matter. most of the times something got broken, when he was lucky it was something replaceable like a coffee table and not bones, and when he was *extra* lucky the police didn't end up filling out paperwork on the matter while he stewed it off in the drunk tank.

strolling down Deuce of Clubs Boulevard, Simon makes it to One Eyed Jack's right in time to see Richard return from the bar with a shot of bottle shelf vodka, and a cigarette firmly pressed between his lips. being a California boy, Simon still found it odd how he could smoke where he wanted in the state of Arizona. odder still that Richard, stage three-b, would be giving the big C the biggest F he could imagine.

"what a fucking bad ass." Simon says to himself, as he crosses the bar, buys a beer and pulls up alongside Richard in a booth by the wall.

"you made it."

"you seem surprised."

"people don't always do what they say, or say what they mean for that matter."

"people are good like that." smirks Simon.

they toast *new friends* and the drinks go down the hatch. Richard calls to the waitress, a tattooed redhead with impressive sized melons, he orders up vodka.

"this guy too, vodka for him."

"i don't drink vodka."

"sure you do."

"and i don't drink the cheap shit, i'm not catching what you've got."

"i don't think it works like that, Simon."

"you know what i mean."

the vodka arrives, and though the protests were many, the drink vanishes down Simon's throat easier than the smoke-filled bar air. the waitress reloads. the door opens. two men in leather jackets and a blonde in a denim one, with a fur collar, enter, wave and head straight to the booth. the two men park up across from Simon, the woman pulls up next to him.

"Simon, these are Joey and Johnny, two good friends of mine."

Simon smiles and offers his hand, the three men shake.

"and this here is my little angel, Adeline."

he tries his best not to stare, but it's as weak-willed an effort as only having *a few* beers. Adeline got her looks from her mother, surely, and if so then her mother was one hell of a woman. piercing blue eyes, ocean blue, high cheekbones, rich, full lips and the most beautiful, smooth, lean neck he'd ever seen. her body was more of the same, and suddenly Simon was thankful for his dad's Alzheimer's, for having to move from West LA to the crusty arse crack of Nowhere, USA. for his stomach being weaker than his thirst and for the mouth cancer that was rotting its way through Richard.

"real nice to meet you, Simon." says Adeline batting her eyes and causing a stirring in her admirer's loins.

"pleasure is all mine."

"daddy says you've been looking out for him today."

"well," Simon looks to Richard, who nods encouragingly "i wouldn't go that far..."

"modest *and* kind hearted, not to mention good looking, right Addy?" Richard compliments bring a red tint to both their cheeks.

the vodka flows freer than STDs at a gangbang. it doesn't take long for the conversation to get slurred, the movements to get sloppy. Simon rests his hand accidentally on the inside of Adeline's thigh... and she doesn't object.

sliding out from the booth, Simon heads to the can. he gives himself the speech about *quality control*. *no woman is going to want to have to put your dick in a splint to get it inside her, so slow the fuck down*, he barks at the mirror.

returning to the table, there's a vodka waiting on Simon. he shakes his head.

"no, no more vodka, beer only."

"one more vodka." insists Richard.

"no."

"Addy's about to toast, it's bad luck, one more vodka."

Adeline raises her drink in her beautifully toned hand, Joey and Johnny follow suit, as does

Richard who stares to Simon with a *don't let me down* look plastered all over his puss. Simon raises.

"two things. one, to the best daddy that a girl could ask for. you've overcome everything and everyone throughout my entire life, you'll overcome this too."

cheers

"and the second?" Joey says, staring through Simon.

"to new friends."

"i will most *definitely* drink to that!" adds Johnny.

the drinks drain down.

"Simon, Simon, are you coming?"

"huh?" the bottom shelf voddie had taken a square out of him.

"Joey and Johnny are staying at this place across the street."

"the Three Pines Inn." Joey offers, lighting a cigarette, not nearly as badly pished as Simon.

"i don't feel too smart, Adeline. maybe i'll call it a night. could i get your..."

"ah, don't do that. c'mon, the night's only just begun." pleads Adeline "my place ain't far, and the old man's not going to hold out all night."

Simon wasn't too sure about that. the old boy seemed to be holding his mud better than any. agreeing, Simon wraps an arm around Adeline and leaves the bar with the rest of his new found friends. outside the mountain air has an almost ominous chill to it, catching in the throat and shrinking the souls of heroes. Simon felt it too, though it was slightly sobering.

"here," says Johnny, handing Simon a bottle of moonshine "take a pop out of that and give yourself the night of your life."

the Three Pines Inn sat ahead of them, a neon cross hanging from the side of the adjoining building with the words "Jesus Saves" written across and down it like a beginners crossword.

ingratiating himself with his comrades, Simon hits on the moonshine but the eighty proof hooch kicks harder than an unruly mule and it's lights out.

he wakes to the feeling of another man's bell pepper rummaging around, seven inches deep, inside of him. his wrists are bound together with wire and then duct taped over, ankles spread shoulder length apart, with two rough mitts grabbing handfuls of ass as Joey pounds on him. Simon goes to scream but can't. his jaw aches, he can feel his eyes are both in the middle of swelling up to the size of cantaloupes but that's not why. the ball-gag muffled even the slightest possibility of a cry for help. Joey straightens and tenses, Simon can feel the inside of his gut get warm, and then wet.

his rapist struts across the motel room, a dick on him like a length of knotted rope. putting on his underpants, Joey smiles, lights a cigarette and leans in to kiss Adeline, who holds Simon's gaze. that is until Johnny mounts him. an inch shy of a foot burrowing up into his stinker.

"relax, boy." sighs Richard "this'll go better for you if you just relax."

Simon yells "you son-of-a-bitch! when i get free i'm going to cut your fucking prick off and make you fucking eat it!" but it comes out gmmm gm gmmm gmmmm gmmm gmmm gm gm!

Johnny works him over good, and suddenly Alzheimer's seems like an O.K deal. maybe in fifty years he'll be able to wipe the slate clean too. forget tonight, forget him, and those two, and her... that god-damn bitch, tease, cunt.

"i'm real sorry it had to go down this way, Simon, but you have to understand a man's got his needs. and these two fellas here, well they've got their needs too, and Adeline, well she's got needs also but i found out when she was little that more than anything, she liked to watch. ain't that right, pumpkin?"

"that's right, daddy." her smile as sickening as it was sincere.

Johnny straightens, squeezes and pops old salty, before climbing off Simon. taking up his spot behind him, Richard works his lad out but the old snake is a little unresponsive.

"give me a minute, Simon. the old dog doesn't hunt as well as he used to, but he can still tear up the turf when he gets going, if you know what i mean."

Richard strokes at himself. Joey kisses Adeline as Johnny works his way back into his jeans. suddenly, Simon pushes up on to his feet. he throws his head back making contact with Richard's nose. hearing the crunch, he shakes off the daze and *runs* for the door, flinging it open and kissing the cold, welcoming air. freedom never felt so good. the cocking of the revolver stills him. Simon turns slowly, meeting Adeline eye-to-eye again, the crosshairs of the piece firmly over his chest.

"daddy ain't done with you, so why don't you come back inside before the other guests get to complaining about the naked man on the balcony."

weeping, Simon drops to his knees. how the fuck does a situation get this shitty to someone whose only crime was moving state to take care of his kid-brained father? as he stands up he considers it all. trying to outrun the bullet. was it worse than going inside for round three? worse than suffering through another course of sodomy only to have them kill him anyway? he could identify all four of them, what were the chances of him seeing another sunset? did he even *want* to see another sunset with the knowledge of what they had done to him? what they had taken from him. turning on his heels, Simon leaps off the balcony. he hadn't thought to look before he jumped, but landing face down on concrete was certainly better than face down on that bed. staring at the beer, piss, and cum stains housekeeping couldn't get out.

you come in on the way out, and in between life gives you cancer, and rape, and aids, and death. if you're lucky it'll wipe the slate clean and you'll remember nothing, if you're lucky you'll land face down on the concrete.

but he didn't.

Author Biography

Belfast native David Loudon is the author of the roman á clef neo-beat novels *Lost Angeles* and *Bone Idol* [*bohn ahyd-l*] chronicling the life of his alter-ego Doug Morgan. His major influences in literature have been cited as Charles Bukowski, John Fante, William S. Burroughs and Brendan Behan. Reoccurring themes in his work include alcohol & drug abuse, death, sex and catholicism.

At present Loudon is developing a Noir project for television set in Belfast which he hopes will go into pre-production within the year.

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