

One day, as Tom was walking home quietly through town, a former class-mate stopped him.

“You’ve got a beautiful revolver! Can you shoot with it too?”

“Of course!”

The boy pointed out an old Whiskey-bottle lying on the street some distance away.

“I bet you twenty dollars you won’t hit that bottle there!”

Tom answered: “I don’t even have that much money.”

The boy said: “If you lose, you give me your horse.”

Tom didn’t answer. The bottle was larger than the centre of his usual target at home. It was impossible that Tom would miss it. And yet... the tiniest deviation of his fingers from their usual position on the gun could mean that he would lose his best friend, Bess.

On the other hand there were the twenty dollars. That was a lot of money that he could get in one blow.

His hand itched with wanting to shoot. Without saying whether he agreed to the bet, he pulled the gun and shot the bottle in two.

“Amazing!” said the boy. “Can you do that again any time?”

Tom wanted to shoot up the broken halves of the bottle, but the boy held him back. “Wait.”

Tom slipped his gun back into its holster.

The boy picked up a middle-sized shingle, said “This stone” and threw it up into the air.

Tom’s gun jumped out of its holster and fired five times. The boy saw how the shingle was hurled back up into the air on its way down and finally fell down in two pieces.

“Unbelievable!” he said in wonder.

Tom was pleased with himself too – at least one of his five bullets had hit the stone in the air!

“I’ll go and get the twenty dollars!” said the boy, helpful like a toady, and ran away. He really came back a moment later with a bundle of banknotes, exactly twenty dollars, true to his word.

“What will you do with the money?” he asked.

Tom thought of his dreams of naked flesh exposed to the wind...

The adult thing that adults do when nobody is watching - it has to be that. Tom had to do it too, see what it’s like.

He swallowed even though there was nothing to swallow, then he said: “I’d like to sleep with a girl.”

The boy looked at Tom quizzically. He obviously knew about these things. “Above the saloon there’s a girl who does these things for money.” He paused. “For a small fee, I can get you an appointment, then all you need to do is knock on her door, and she’ll let you in.”

So the boy got back some of his twenty dollars, and one fine Saturday afternoon Tom went off to the Saloon.

“Today you’ll do it!” he told himself, and he felt himself getting weak in the knees.

Then he felt somewhat ridiculous as well. After all he wasn’t going to do anything heroic, just try out his manliness. Every young man has to do that at some point.

Nobody ever dies from it. By and by Tom started looking at the whole thing as a kind of necessary chore rather than an adventure. He walked down the street like a child on his first school-day – a bit scared, a bit excited, but unfortunately not really excited in an erotic way...

After all, this path he was treading had already been trodden many times before, by every single boy turning into a man. There was nothing special or great about it. Tom came to the Saloon, pushed his way through the swinging doors, looked around in the room in a rather lost and undecided way, but then, luckily, he saw the staircase leading up to the rooms above, and he walked there purposefully like a businessman. He walked up the creaking stairs and, when he reached the landing, he stood there a moment. A strange moment. A moment can always be prolonged by another moment, and yet another, because a moment is just a moment, so you can always add another one to it. You have all the time in the world, you take in every detail of your surroundings, every crack in the wall, the dark wood under your feet, above your head...

But whatever you do, the moment is still just a moment, and it's over before you had a chance to really take it in. His heart was beating fast and hard. He saw the door number 4 and knocked.

Another one of these moments that are endless and yet never seem to last long enough, and the door opened a crack. A big round face with dark eyes and fat lips, grinning broadly, appeared in the crack.

“Ah, it's you! Come in! Come in!”

From the first moment he heard it, Tom hated that voice. It was a friendly voice, of course, much too friendly actually, but without real warmth. And in spite of this lack of warmth there was a soft undertone, kind of a confidential undertone, as if there were no barriers between them. There wasn't the slightest trace of reserved politeness that would have befitted two people who don't know anything about each other yet. And in spite of this total lack of reserved caution, there was no warmth in it. That's what put off Tom.

The door opened wide and Tom stepped in. As soon as he was inside, the girl closed the door. Her hand got between his legs as if by chance and gave his genitals a little squeeze. The soft undertone in her voice was quite tendentious by now.

“Put yourself at ease.”

Tom looked around in the room. It was dark, stuffy and small. Dirty curtains shut out the light. Apart from a little wooden stool, a wardrobe that seemed to lean dangerously forward and a big bed that covered most of the floor-space there was no other furniture. The girl was in underwear and already busily taking it off. Her breasts turned loose and floated freely through the space in front of Tom's nose.

Tom didn't feel well. A feeling of claustrophobia started closing in on him.

But he was brave, so he started taking off his clothes too and laying them down on the stool in an orderly pile. He bared his chest and the sight of his own muscular body calmed him down somewhat – he was a strong man, and he was the one who paid here. What could he possibly be afraid of?

The girl was already quite naked, but somehow she didn't look very appetizing. Just lots of bare flesh, like a chicken that has lost all its feathers.

As Tom let his pants slip down along his thighs, he felt his penis stretch out. For the moment he was alone with his thoughts, thoughts of bygone times, of walks along the lake. As he straightened up and put down his last piece of clothing, his penis had become limp again – he was back in the small unpleasant room.

“What about my little present?”

“Little present?”

The girl's voice lost its soft undertone for a split second: “The ten dollars!” she said coarsely.

“Ah, yes...” said Tom and bent down over his pile of clothes to look through his pockets. He pulled out the ten dollars and gave them to the girl. The girl put away the money and tumbled onto the bed.

“Come, come...” she said.

Tom couldn't have stood around naked much longer – he felt he was getting weak. He joined the girl on the bed, and she immediately had her warm hands all over him.

Tom relaxed, and his genitals became as soft as butter. The touch of her hands was so warm that Tom stopped feeling it. His genitals might as well have been safely tucked up inside his clothes once again. Tom forgot all about being naked.

“It isn't getting stiff“ observed the girl after kneading his balls for a while.

“You have to come closer to me” said Tom without real conviction. He hadn't imagined it would be like this. Precisely, when he imagined things, his penis would stretch uncontrollably and let go its juice in no time at all! Well, he was glad this hadn't happened here, before he even had time to do anything.

But actually, to be honest, he really didn't feel like doing anything at all right now – not with this woman! And yet he knew that he should, because that's what becoming a man is all about. Except that his penis had shriveled up to nothing in her much too warm hands. These hands excited him about as much as the hands of a dentist in his mouth! The girl pressed herself against him. Her body was as warm as her hands and smelled strongly of some cheap perfume. The girl lied down on top of him and moved back and forth. Her bad breath blew into his face, and he could also smell his own acid sweat when he lifted his arms. His muscular chest became ice-cold. Sweat-drops fell from his arm-pits, but his genitals didn't react.

The girl whispered in his left ear: “You're my dream-man... Come, come into me!” She spoke softly, then harshly, but it was to no avail.

She stood up, got her own underwear and pulled it over Tom's legs, over his genitals, but this perverse little gesture didn't change anything either. Tom had reached a point where nothing in the world could have excited him anymore.

The girl got up once again and said: “You are thirsty.”

She got him a glass of whiskey mixed with some fruit-juice, a glass that had probably never been washed, and she drank a mouthful before handing it over to Tom. This wasn't a time to be prudish, so Tom took the glass and drank all the mixture in big gulps till the glass was empty.

As he gave it back, he scrutinized the tummy of the girl, as she was bent over him. In this position it was rather egg-shaped, and he could see the pores in the skin like thousands of little craters. The big, deep belly-button was right in front of his nose, like a dark cave in which you could get lost.

When the girl wanted to start working on him again, he pushed her back, stood up, dressed up quickly and left the small, stuffy room without another word.

Back down in the saloon he felt like running off. He didn't. He walked to the exit gravely and solemnly, pushed his way through the double-doors and was back outside in the sun-shine. He felt immeasurably relieved. He walked to the middle of the street and just stood there a moment, glad to feel his body held up by his own two legs.

So, what had all this been about, then?

An inner voice was telling him that he was a bloody idiot. Maybe it was the same inner voice that had once told him to go into the stable with Bess, long before he had managed to tame her. Now that he thought about it, he vaguely seemed to remember being influenced by this same inner voice when he had asked his former class-mate about sleeping with a girl...

Maybe he shouldn't listen to this inner voice so much?

Now the inner voice was groaning! Maybe it would leave him now, give up on him... "No, no," it said, and now Tom could hear it literally as though someone was speaking inside his skull: "I'm not giving up on you just yet."

Tom couldn't tell whether he was relieved or scared. This inner voice was obviously just part of himself. Or was it? It said such strange things sometimes, such alien things!

Tom wondered whether he was really a bloody idiot or not. Of course he knew that he had been supposed to go in there to that woman with an enormous erection and to explode inside her in a glorious climax!

But why would that have been so great if everybody ended up doing it at some point in their life anyway?

Bloody fool, said the voice, everybody gets born too, at some crucial point in their life, but that doesn't make it any less glorious or miraculous!

Tom still couldn't imagine that what he had missed out on right now would really have been so glorious. So he should have gone in there, loaded with energy bursting at the tip of his dick, and then come out pleasantly drunk with post-orgasmic drowsiness? In the meantime the girl, not being involved emotionally, would have lost nothing of her strength. A professional whore makes even the stiffest dick soft again. It's a special power over men that she has. In the end she's the one who wins over her clients and not the other way around.

Well, it hadn't worked with Tom. His dick hadn't even become stiff to start with. Whatever potency was hidden in him, she hadn't been able to take it from him, because it hadn't expressed itself in the first place.

"Yeah, yeah," said the inner voice with obvious resignation, "you can look at it like that as well..."

Tom realized, and perhaps his inner voice realized it together with him, that it isn't always enough to get in touch with the body of just any girl in order to be rid of the tremendous inner tension. Sex is a means of escape from everyday life. But the sweetness of such an escape lies in the hope that it will lead into a new life, a new world. If it leads back into the old one, then it was useless.

What Tom expected from sex, deep down, was the promise of love. Without this promise it was an escape into emptiness, perhaps ultimately even death...

"Sure, sure," said the inner voice, exasperated.