

## Two Cocks, One Lamb, and a Bell Tone

By. Isaac Summers

“Well hello again. I didn’ t know you were going to come back around to these parts. It’ s kind of symbolic, isn’ t it? The trail is going full circle, and Lou...nah. Let’ s not worry about Lou. So how are you?” “That’ s what I’ ve come to talk about, is Lou. He’ s shoehorned his way into the spotlight again. I don’ t know how to talk to him anymore.” “You don’ t know how to talk, or are you too scared to know what to say?” “I don’ t know, Carrie. It all seems the same to me.” “Hmmm... Come with me this way. Later on you’ ll find out how to pay.”

(While descending)... “Did Lou pull a stiff, on a person going off a diving board into the water, again?” “It’ s not fair for me to judge what goes on with him anymore. He-” “Then why are you *here*, Mortimer?” “Cus’ he darn traipsed into my life on his own accord again is why. *Mary had gone off like a little lamb* one day and found herself to be a feminine rooster to cock-a-doodle-doo in some other joint. Turns out it was Lou. I told him I wasn’ t going to get involved in his affairs, wouldn’ t tell his daughter, but here he gone did this to me. Whatever should I do?” “You spoke more than three sentences in a row; you know only I am allowed to do that. I’ m afraid I can’ t help you anymore, excepting for to place this into your quivering hand. Now go back up, go back up! There there. It’ s not the end of the world. Up and out, maybe someday you’ ll come out. Your cover’ s not yet blown. Now *git!*”

The snow falls, and we look upon Mortimer. Every year he appears to grow shorter, for every night he hunches his back in internal agony, and it has become more than a habit to him, that which has invaded the other hours of his life. They corrode, but when he can’ t hide he has no place that is an abode, him being humble with no home to match his composure with. *That agony, as a growing tumor*, is what drives him to misery. He pretends that none know his secret, but they all know. They don’ t care. He performs care, though, maybe to make it his own since noone will give it to him. Lou in the spotlight. Always in the spotlight. Didn’ t Mortimer know what he was saying? He already knew the jig was up. He couldn’ t love his wife, and so she chose another. He didn’ t wish to Mortimer anyone, but that is what he felt he had to do. He felt nothing towards women, but the fear from the past turned, in his mind, the world cold against him. Lou didn’ t care. He didn’ t care that he had taken away his friend’ s security blanket, and now he played underneath that very thing with another man’ s wife. Oh Lou. Whatever should Mort do?

“Come one, come all! The worst freaks of nature, all on display for you to roast with your eyes til the display goes up in flames! Hey you, madame! What say you?”

Want to have a quicky go? Oh, hoe, hoe, hoe! There we go! And you, sir, will you spy on the madame as she spies on the freaks caught that can't be on the lam?"

"I'm not a sham." "What's that? Oh jolly good, now! Santa sticks a hoe, hoe, hoe! What fun we're all going to have! And you over-" "I said I'm not a sham."

"What, eh? You'd like to start things sooner off with a BAM? Good sir, good sir, eager to be pleased, but then how can you please another if there is none to spy on you in turn, you so quick to mount?" "I said I'm not a sham!" "Eh? Then why are you here? Aren't all lambs soiled rams? Then join the hunt! I'd think you make a good cocker spaniel, well, wouldn't we all agree?!" "You stand on wood, and puff the same junk to make things sprout. Are you a woodcock, *tenaciously spontaneous*, good sir? Is that what you're about?" "Why, I...I never cared enough before to think about it! Just...just maybe I am a woodcock! What is it to you?" "Oh, nothing really, good sir. Resume, resume!" "And you, gracious lady, have you ever seen a sight for sore eyes? By the way this man talks, I'm sure he'll give you a nasty surprise! I usher you in, don't fret or I'll snap! In you go, in you goooo! In with you! Man! WHAT THE BLOODY HELL IS THAT?!" "I RAM YOU THROUGH! YOU ARE THE SHAM! RUN, WOODCOCK, RUN! I ONLY HUNT MAN!"

The carnival is closed. Mary clammers through the foggy entrance lair. She thought she had married a fine man. Old Lou and her had gone to the bank for him to reimburse a check to account for she and her husband's losses. It turned out that the bank was closed. Mary wanted to surprise Mortimer with Lou's gift and was afraid that if she saw him before receiving it she would give the secret away; she was not as good at keeping secrets as him. Lou offered her one thing more, a spare room in his apartment for the night, since he lived across from the bank, to make the journey and burden for her less of a chore. She called Mort at home to make an excuse, but the line just kept ringing. Only ringing ensued, *a surefire thing, but not necessarily to succeed* in the ringer's purpose, only to emit. Mortimer sat in the restaurant for their anniversary dinner, afraid for her and made bitter by the waiter who over time became shrewd. Mary had been so excited for the gift granted to him from Lou that she forgot the occasion to which the day belonged. Dejected and at a loss, the conflicted man left the scene. The caroling of others led his mind astray. The alleyways threatened to steal his life away, a figure with sleigh bells walking down such one with a cloak garbed over head. The caroling ceased, the truth renewed, the figure following now behind sounded some inner truth. Mortimer fled and ran from insecurity, wondering where his wife did dream. The phantom ringer crawled on the sides of buildings after him, the bells striking the corners of them as it jumped from one to another. The snow stuck on Mortimer's feet, impressing on him more than he could take. Without her he would be found out! He couldn't admit to who he was. Each bell let out a moan, *each sound pronouncing a silent fear*. In the blur of the wind, the world fell away. So did the sky heave mourning, and Mortimer fall on the white down of winter. The

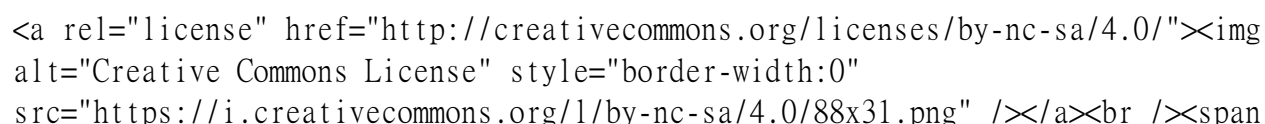
phantom disappeared into the night, a trail of vapor fading behind. It was even later when Mortimer called his worries 'tosh' and sat up upon the snow. He was outside friend Lou's, and he desired the use of a loo. When Lou came to the door, Mort smelled Mary's perfume. It was dated yet subtle; Mort called Lou a buffoon. Needless to say, the former could not powder his nose. This tale then began where the priorly spoken was placed; help was not granted to the hurt, a carnival in passing fanning the flame of hate. Mortimer is held by police, they not understanding the complications of being dead and dwelling among the living. What has he done? The carnival announcer wouldn't bat for the other side, and in the scuffle Mr. Feral bit the dust.

This is the conversation that followed at the police station. "Well, we know who you are, sir. You might as well say your name aloud." "Really? I didn't know that was a requirement if you already know who I am." "Yep, yep. It says so in our Employee Manual, or Code of Ethics, or something that can't be argued against unless we slip on a mental banana peel. Your name?" "I Mortimer everyone. You should know that right away. My wife was my friend, and even if she no longer is, you still can't have her." One officer to another: "Was that supposed to be some kind of confession?" Mortimer: "But I'm not Catholic! I'm really not. You know my name, you know of my criminal misconduct, and now I just ask what is next so that I can beg for forgiveness." "Mr. Mortimer Pastoral, I don't know how you otherwise changed it upon entering into your head, but you know you're not gay, don't you?" "Officer, what are you insinuating?!" "As I said, I'm not insinuating much of anything. Your wife tells us that when you get depressed you imagine that you're gay and go traipsing around, pretending that jealousy is fear of being found out. She's your loving wife, sir. You don't have to be afraid of her leaving you." "No, no no no no, that's not right. I- I don't mean to insinuate anything, either, sir, but...and I hate to put a blemish on her moral character, but I found out she was sleeping at a friend of mine's this previous night. I don't know what to do *but* insinuate." "It doesn't concern us any which way, Mr. Pastoral, but for what happened at the carnival. We are trying to understand your motive in case this later goes to court under the banner of you being mistreated due to your sexual orientation. We just want to know: What happened?" "*I, Mortimer Pastoral, am not a sham, am not like the embodiment of a twisted tale.* No. Drop it." "Sir, if you don't cooperate with us, this isn't going to end well for you. Are you really gay?" "Harassment! You're damn right this is harassment. You have no right to ask me that!" "Sir, would you please sit down? Sit down, sir!" "Give me that paper! What did he just write about me?!" "Sit DOWN!" Poof. \* sigh \* "Now, sir, that you are calmed down, would you like to finally tell us what is going on?" Silence. "We could bring your wife into here so that you can talk to her, if you feel that would help." Silence. "We're going to keep sitting here until we get an adequate response." Silence. "Suit yourself."

Five years pass. Mary visits her husband at the state penitentiary. "Heyyy, Mary." "Hi." "How's Georgie?" "Fine." "He's been fined? For what?" "Nothing. He's okay." "Well that's *sweet*!! How's Lou?" "Better than you." "Even better, then! And may I ask: How are you?" Silence. "Don't you want to tell me, Mary?" "Do you know why I haven't visited you for the past six months?" "I don't-" "Of course you don't. I shouldn't have asked. It's better this way, that you don't know. We're done talking about it." "Okay. Then what do you want to talk about?" "I came here to make a proposal. If you tell me what happened to the man at the carnival I'll tell you how I'm doing." "But you already know what happened with him. What more is there to talk about?" "I think there's plenty to talk about. What was going on inside your head?" "Then we'll flip the tarots. It's always nice to play games when you have nothing yourself left to lose. Let my tongue be a token of your depreciation; Lou can less easily love you now. The man at the carnival turned others into his pets, overstating their value while treating them like they were all the same. Everyone was alive to fulfill the purposes of his business, and to him everyone was a freak. He chose me, as to him I belonged to his caravan. I won't Mortimer no more. I am not a freak because you cheated on me; I am a freak because he loved me." "I didn't cheat-" "I know you did. Lou even admitted to me, at the door, what he wanted to do." "Mort-" "You wanted me to answer, and so I am. I am answering for my crimes. If you won't answer for your transgressions, that makes me the better person. I attacked that man because he thought he was better than me. He loved me, but not in the way I wanted. They say I tried to rape him, when it is he who tried to do so to me. If I am punished for the crimes of others, that is not my doing; all others must work for the Devil, and these walls are my sanctuary given to me by God so that you can't hurt me anymore." "That's it. I'm done here." To her walking away: "I **couldn't love you, honey! I'm not a bee.** I can't love you even if you were able to love me!" She turns around: "But I *did* love you!!!" With a smirk: "Yeah, you did. You loved to see me squirm."

Ten years ago Mary was a little lamb, and Mortimer was a sheep. They had no shepherd to watch over them, so the sheep lost sight of his feet. The lamb loved the sheep as if they were the same; the sheep knew better, and in his sorrow a lion he became. There is still no shepherd, for who to these animals would want to tend? Yet there *is* a shepherd that comes out when the lion roars, but it is only the lion he will defend.

End

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