

THE SHOWDOWN

The stranger stepped down from the stagecoach and stood for a moment in the dusty street; a few townspeople glanced at him quizzically then moseyed on about their business, deciding he was no threat. He didn't appear to be packing any iron. Then, in the fading twilight the stranger strode over to the Last Chance Saloon.

"Which way to Stockholm?" he said to the man polishing glasses behind the bar.

"Don't rightly recall no Stockholm in these parts, stranger. Maybe you mean San Antone?"

Just then a voice filled with cruel mirth bellowed from across the room: "HEY BOYS, THE DUDE'S LOST! HAW HAW HAW." It was Bad Bart, with six or eight of his gang. "WHERE'S THAT YOU'RE HEADING, DUDE? ALL FANCIED UP LIKE THAT. HAW HAW HAW."

The stranger looked over at Bart. "You talking to me?"

"HEY BOYS, THE DUDE WANTS TO KNOW IF I'M TALKING TO HIM. HAW HAW HAW MAYBE I'LL DO MY TALKING WITH THIS," and he slipped a glinting Bowie knife from his boot and hurled it across the room. It stuck in the floor between the stranger's feet.

The stranger ignored the Bowie and stepped further down the bar. "No, not San Antone. Stockholm. Reckon I'll get directions later from someone that knows."

"I know this territory pretty good, mister and most of the people in it. They call me Moxie."

"Glad to meet you," the stranger said, not offering his own moniker. "I'll have a bottle of sarsaparilla and a glass."

"Sarsaparilla? Don't get much call for that, but I recollect we do have some on hand."

"Much obliged."

"HEY BOYS, DID YOU HEAR THAT?
THE DUDE WANTS SASSPARILLY
LET'S SHOW HIM SOME REAL SASSPARILLY,"
and he filled a tumbler with straight whiskey
and walked up to the bar.
"NOW, I'M THE SOCIABLE TYPE, DUDE
AND I WANT YOU TO HAVE A DRINK WITH ME.
HERE, DRINK THIS."

"No thanks, friend. I've got my own."

"BOYS, I RECKON THE DUDE JUST DON'T COTTON TO REDEYE,
WELL, TRY SOME ANYWAY,"
and he splashed the full tumbler in the stranger's face.

"You shouldn't have done that."

"AW, DID I MESS UP YOUR CLOTHES?
THAT'S A SHAME. ALL THEM FANCY DUDS.
THEM SURE ARE RIGHT FANCY SHOES, TOO
AIN'T THEY, BOYS?
I WONDER IF THEY'S DANCING SHOES,
C'MON DUDE. LET'S SEE YOU DANCE,"
and he whipped out his twin Colts
and peppered the floor around the stranger's feet
with smoking lead.

The stranger didn't move.

"Okay, friend," he said finally. "You've had your fun,"
and with cobra quickness
his hand darted to his inside jacket pocket
and emerged holding two sheets of paper.

"WHAT'S THIS?"

"Read it and weep," the stranger said,
"it's my acceptance speech for the
Nobel Prize in Literature.
I'm on my way to Sweden now
to pick it up."

"THE NOBEL PRIZE IN LITERATURE?"

A murmur broke out in the bar
and the rest of Bart's gang backed out the door.
"Your boys are hightailing it, Bart.
It's time for you to do the same."

"Jeez! The Nobel!"

The stranger's eyes narrowed to slits.
"That's right. For a lifetime
of poems and philosophy."

"Pomes?"

"You heard me, friend. Now make
your move or make tracks."

Bart's face glistened with sweat
and his voice was a whisper
as he turned to Moxie the barkeep:
"A six-pack of sassparilly," he stammered,
"to go."

-- Tony Quagliano

Honolulu HI

WORMWOOD AWARDS: CONTINUED FROM PAGE 58.....

New awards are noted with an asterisk:

- 1969: Charles Bukowski: Notes of a Dirty Old Man, Essex
- *1970: Lorine Neidecker: My Life by Water, Fulcrum
- *1971: Jonathan Williams: Blues & Roots/Rue & Bluets,
Grossman
- 1972: Gerald Locklin: Poop, and Other Poems, MAG Press
- *1973: Ronald Koertge: The Father Poems, Sumac
- *1974: Steve Richmond: Earth Rose, Earth Press

Nominations are being accepted for the 1975 Award

NEW MAGS:.....

The Alchemist (edit. Marco Fraticelli) \$4/4 nos. fm. P.O.
Box 123, Lasalle, Quebec H8R 2Z4 CANADA. ♪ Purr (edit.
Linda King & Geraldine King) \$1/cpy. fm. Purring Press,
2440 Edgewater Terr., Los Angeles CA 90039. ♪ Bachy
(poetry edit. John Harris) \$3.50/2 nos. fm. Papa Bach
Paperbacks, 11317 Santa Monica Blvd., West Los Angeles
CA 90025. ♪ Bits (edit. Robt. Wallace) fm. The Guten-
berg Annex, Dept. English, Case Western Reserve Univ.,
Cleveland OH 44106. ♪ Hard Pressed (publ. Ellen Rosser
and highly recomm.) #1 a folio of broadsides fm. Ellen's
Old Alchemical Press, 2850 3rd Ave., Sacramento CA
95818. ♪ New Moon (edit. Michael Ward) seeking mss.
write c/o General Honors Program CSULB, 6101 East 7th
St., Long Beach CA 90840.