

UPPER LEFT EDGE

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Something's happening here, what it is, ain't exactly clear.

The Poker Game or 4 Hours With 7 Jokers

By Evangeline Alburas

I was raised here in Clatsop County, so finding an unfamiliar setting was difficult. I considered going to Annie's, the strip bar. That would be shockingly unfamiliar, I have never been to a strip bar. I even planned on the night and had invited some guys from work thinking that would make the experience more bearable. Thankfully, one of the invitees talked some sense into me; it was a bad idea to go to a strip bar. However, every week a group of men get together and play poker, so Darrin, one of my coworkers, suggested this as a possibility for a strange and unfamiliar setting. Women rarely hang out to watch a game, much less sit in on a game. And I love playing games, but poker was a bit of a mystery. Does a four of a kind beat a full house, or the other way around?

They are a rather organized bunch of guys; Darrin, "the Curmudgeon," and "Uncle George" had started the weekly games and had been playing poker every Tuesday night (give or take) for five years. After much trial and error they had found the magic seven who could stand each other enough to play every week. They call themselves the Thanatopsis Literary and Inside Straight Club, "the Western Chapter." One of the Marx brothers played poker with a group by this name, which is where the TLISC came from. Darrin told me that at one time they even had business cards printed up bearing the club's name. The location of the game rotates among the players' houses. That week it was unceremoniously, yet appropriately, in a garage.

I entered through a side door in the garage, which was unconnected from the main house. The compound was nestled back in the woods east of Cannon Beach and north of the RV Park. Some boys were playing darts when I waltzed in. The garage was large and airy with a concrete floor and a big, oil heater mounted on the ceiling which blew out hot air. The walls were lined with shelves and the building housed three big trucks. A table stood surrounded by three benches, which had come from the old Bill's Tavern, and a couple of chairs; a centralized music system fed us The Bad Livers, Steve Earle, Billy Bragg, and other acoustic tunes. A modest guesthouse with a large loft adjoined the garage. The host's house was not your usual bachelor's pad, and because all the players smoked, and occasionally spilled a beer, they were relegated to the garage. I was worried that I'd be the only woman, but was rescued by the appearance of Vicki. I noticed a few things about the group as a whole: four of the men wore glasses, those in glasses were all over fifty, the other three being under forty; four men wore plaid, flannel shirts, and all seven smoked.

"Sasquatch" sat to my left; he had his white hair pulled back into a ponytail, he wore red rimmed reading glasses, overalls with a plaid shirt, and spent much of his time rolling cigarettes. He drank Hamm's Golden Draft, a new and exciting edition to the Hamm's line.

"Uncle George" wore a vest, small round glasses, had a closely shaven head and a five o'clock shadow. He was amiable and smiled a lot; he was also the only man who had a female sidekick. Vicki, my female comrade, had come with "Uncle George". The two of them had traveled two and a half hours to join in the game; "Uncle George" commutes the farthest to attend the weekly soirees. "U.G." split his time between smoking, playing the game and being the whine sponge of his neighbor.

Sitting next to him was the "Curmudgeon"; he bitched, moaned and looked to "U.G." for sympathy and empathy. The "Curmudgeon" coughed, smoked, spat profanities and hit those he could reach, all between gulps of Budweiser. He wasn't a good winner, and he was losing. He had an answer for everything, whether it was true or not. His appearance was similar to the others: small round glasses and plaid shirt but with jeans and Converse.

The "Professor" was the oldest participant; he had heavy square glasses, a red nose and a Redskins sweatshirt that had been washed many times. "Professor" was known for his jokes about quantum physics that no one but "Uncle George" understood. Next to the "Professor" was "Joey"; "Joey" was the youngest, full of gas and youthful vigor. He wore a fleece vest, sweatpants with rubber boots, had short hair and a jarring boyish laugh.

Then there was our "Host", he was dressed in a dinner jacket and comfortable loafers; he was affluent and clean cut. Our "Host" had just bought a new truck, a big, white beautiful International to add to his collection. Last in the rotation was Darrin, my coworker, dressed in his usual shorts with Texas and a plaid shirt.

Each player ponied up ten dollars, the chips were distributed evenly and the cash stuffed into the empty card box. The "Host" stashed the card box out of sight and started by dealing a game called seven card stud, high-low. The dealer antes a blue chip worth fifty cents, basically an ante for all the players; this is done every deal so the other players don't have to worry about anteing every game. It seemed like some of the players didn't like me being there at first, but with the aid of beer

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Rev.
Hults

Editorial Now & Then

Hey, Rube!!!

Ever been to a 'carny', not a carnival, but a 'carny'? It's a traveling show, much like the Gypsy caravans in the old days. They come into town and they have games of chance and fortune tellers and all sorts of strange stuff, and everybody knows that it is rigged, dishonest, and a rip-off, but they still go. There is a famous story about Wilson Mizner confronting his brother Addison at a saloon in Alaska where Addison is playing roulette, and Wilson asks why he is playing when he knows the wheel is rigged? "Yeah, but it's the only game in town," was Addison's answer. Carny's are the only game in town because they travel from small town to small town, one step ahead of the law.

They are a tight knit group of folks who are running a scam, or providing entertainment, depending on how much you lost. Like most small groups they form their own vocabularies. Key words, codes, like, "Hey Rube!" This is a shout that carnies use to call for help, because things are getting out of control. I learned this term while working as a day laborer tearing down a carnies in Baker, Oregon in 1968. A carnies troupe is usually no more than fifty people, with maybe ten trucks and trailers with the equipment and all. They hire locals in each town to help them set up and tear down, usually different people for each operation because they tend to try to not pay folks. Oh, they'll give you a check when you are done working, but if you get to the bank late the next day the odds are it won't be good.

"Hey Rube" also happens to be the name of Hunter S. Thompson's new column at ESPN.com every Monday. Yes the old doctor is back in print, or at least cyber space, on a regular basis and as rude as ever. His latest book is also on the shelves, titled *Fear and Loathing in America*; a collection of his often nasty letters to editors, writers, politicians and other unsavory folks.

"So, the point is?" I hear readers asking. The point is that I have watched my beloved country sold to the highest bidder. Again. I've watched a coup, or more like a dope deal going down, a scam. The fix was in, the muscle was in place, the right folks had been paid, the dogs had been drugged, and the deal was going down. Just like watching the mob take over Vegas in the old days. But, the problem with the mob was the guys who figured out the plan, eventually died. Meyer Lansky, the man who bought Cuba and owned J. Edgar Hoover lock stock and barrel, wrote, more or less, America's foreign policy toward Cuba from 1950, when Castro busted the deal, until Lansky's death. Bush and his

(Continued on page 2)

In 1555, Nostradamus wrote:
"Come the millennium, month 12
In the home of greatest power,
The village idiot will come forth
To be acclaimed the leader."



WASHINGTON AND OREGON COASTS
2001 Corrected for PACIFIC BEACHES
HIGH JANUARY LOW JANUARY

| DATE | MOON | TIME | FT. | TIME | FT. |
|---------|------|-------|------|-------|------|
| 1 Mon | • | 4:56 | 7.7 | 4:18 | 7.1 |
| 2 Tues | • | 5:38 | 7.9 | 5:31 | 6.6 |
| 3 Wed | • | 6:23 | 8.2 | 6:55 | 6.3 |
| 4 Thur | • | 7:11 | 8.5 | 8:16 | 6.4 |
| 5 Fri | • | 8:00 | 8.9 | 9:26 | 6.7 |
| 6 Sat | • | 8:49 | 9.3 | 10:28 | 7.1 |
| 7 SUN | • | 9:38 | 9.7 | 11:24 | 7.5 |
| 8 Mon | • | 10:28 | 10.1 | • | • |
| 9 Tues | • | 0:16 | 7.8 | 11:19 | 10.3 |
| 10 Wed | • | 1:05 | 8.1 | 12:10 | 10.3 |
| 11 Thur | • | 1:52 | 8.4 | 1:02 | 10.2 |
| 12 Fri | • | 2:38 | 8.6 | 1:55 | 9.8 |
| 13 Sat | • | 3:23 | 8.7 | 2:50 | 9.1 |
| 14 SUN | • | 4:09 | 8.8 | 3:49 | 8.4 |
| 15 Mon | • | 4:56 | 8.8 | 4:55 | 7.6 |
| 16 Tues | • | 5:45 | 8.9 | 6:09 | 6.9 |
| 17 Wed | • | 6:37 | 8.9 | 7:26 | 6.5 |
| 18 Thur | • | 7:29 | 8.9 | 8:40 | 6.5 |
| 19 Fri | • | 8:20 | 8.9 | 9:45 | 6.8 |
| 20 Sat | • | 9:08 | 9.0 | 10:41 | 7.1 |
| 21 SUN | • | 9:53 | 9.0 | 11:29 | 7.3 |
| 22 Mon | • | 10:36 | 9.0 | • | • |
| 23 Tues | • | 0:12 | 7.6 | 11:16 | 8.9 |
| 24 Wed | • | 0:51 | 7.7 | 11:54 | 8.9 |
| 25 Thur | • | 1:26 | 7.8 | 12:31 | 8.8 |
| 26 Fri | • | 1:59 | 7.8 | 1:08 | 8.7 |
| 27 Sat | • | 2:30 | 7.9 | 1:45 | 8.5 |
| 28 SUN | • | 2:59 | 8.0 | 2:23 | 8.2 |
| 29 Mon | • | 3:27 | 8.1 | 3:06 | 7.7 |
| 30 Tues | • | 3:58 | 8.2 | 3:57 | 7.1 |
| 31 Wed | • | 4:34 | 8.3 | 5:02 | 6.5 |

A.M. TIDES BOLD TYPE
P.M. TIDES BOLD TYPE
STANDARD TIME

BASEBALL

Oh, no, no, no, how could they do it? Amazing Grace is going to the Arizona rattlesnakes or some team that never leaves their Spring Training Field. That's like trading Lou Geirg to the Washington Spiders or something. Can Sosa be far behind? Oh, well, that's the Baseball Business. A hundred million here, a quarter billion there, its just money and it's just a game. Teams, a thing of the past, now it's corporations, fans, gone too, now there are consumers in the bleachers. What's next Extreme Baseball?? Oh, Cubbies.



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