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Frontiersman

Facing the truth, however great the cost.

March 2007

The Dirty Trickster and the Blowhard

Fiction by Sam Aurelius Milam III

I don't spend all my time pullin' pranks. Sometimes, I like ta travel but sometimes pranks just happens.

I was drivin' through south Texas one Sunday evenin' a while back, goin' east on Highway 90. I like tha old highways and tha back roads 'cause it's more interestin' than tha damned freeways. Them freeways is a picture o' what's wrong with this country. Big, fast, efficient, an' no soul.

It was gittin' late an' I was lookin' fer someplace ta stop when I spotted a little motel just past a little place called Marathon. Cooper's Little Bend was tha name o' tha place. Didn't look too bad from tha outside so I went in. Right away I recognized tha woman runnin' tha place an' she recognized me. We went back a long way together but I lost track o' her late in 1971, in Northern California. I could see she didn't want ta talk about it so I let it drop. Anyways I got a room and found out that tha nearest food was a bar an' grill called tha Barn Grill, about 50 yards ta tha west, acrost tha parkin' lot. Found out later it really used ta be a barn.

Tha Barn Grill turned out ta be an interestin' place. Regulars just called it tha Barn. I sat in one end by some pinball machines and just watched. Some woman who was tha waitress, Molly by her name tag, brought me a beer and took my order fer a hamburger. They was a card game goin by tha juke box which I thought was a strange place fer a card game. Anyway, I'd been there about 15 minutes, long enough ta git tha feel o' tha place, when this big, loud guy came in and I saw all tha body language in tha place change. I could see most of tha regulars didn't like tha guy. Listenin' to 'im fer a few minutes I figured out why. He was tha kind o' guy

that always has ta tell folks how ta do somethin', how they shoulda done it, or how he'da done it better. Always talkin', never listenin'. Kinda guy that thinks everbody just sits around waitin' fer him ta git there. After about ten minutes I started ta think o' him as tha Blowhard.

So, tha Blowhard was lecturin' anybody who'd listen an' he got ta yakin' 'bout how hard it was ta find good help. Seems he owned a construction company. Said half tha people he had wouldn't work, tha other half did things half-assed. Then he got ta rantin' 'bout wages. Said they all wanted ta git rich offa him. I could see folks was tired of 'im. Then, I had a big idea. I jumped in without thinkin' an' said, kinda loud so's everbody'd hear me, "I'll work fer ya!"

It got real quiet. I hadn't been plannin' ta stay in town but what tha Hell. He looked around like a bull lookin' fer a bull fighter an' spotted me right quick. He left his bar stool and came strollin' over toward my table, real slow, with his thumbs hooked in his belt.

"Oh, yeah?" he asked, with his chest out. "So what can ya do?"

"Drive nails," I said. "Saw wood, fit pipe, run wires, lay shingles. You name it I kin do it."

"Oh, yeah?" he asked. He really seemed ta like them words. "I guess you'll be wantin' twice what yer worth, huh?"

"Here's tha deal," I offered. "I'll work tha first day fer a penny."

He looked like he was runnin' that back again in his head ta see what he'd heard.

"Oh, yeah? A what?"

"A penny. First day. Two pennies tha second day. Four pennies tha third day."

Tha Blowhard looked confused but I noticed that tha bartender had a knowing look in his eye and a hidden smile on his face.

"Oh, yeah? A penny a day?"

"No," I replied, "That ain't what I said. →

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Penny tha first day. Two pennies tha second day. Four pennies tha third day. See, how it is, ya double it ever day. Pay twice what ya paid tha day before.”

“Oh, yeah? Yer jokin’, right?”

“No,” I continued, “an’ I’ll do ya a big favor. I’ll quit after 30 days. That’s it. Six weeks, five days a week, double my pay each day, I start fer a penny tha first day, an’ I quit after 30 days. I’ll do any kinda work ya want an’ I’ll do it tha best ya ever saw.”

“Oh, yeah?” he responded.

“Look around,” I waved my hand. “We got all these witnesses. No way I can change my story.” Everbody in tha place was watchin’ an’ I notice that one o’ tha card players, found out later his name was Ed, was glancin’ at tha bartender an’ they both looked like they was onto my game. Nobody else had figgered it out.

Tha Blowhard looked like he wisht he was somewheres else but I’d called his bluff. He purty much had ta hire me. “OK,” he said, “Tomorrow’s Monday. Be at tha site at seven.”

“Where’s that?”

He told me and left like he’d just remembered someplace important he had ta be. Everybody started wantin’ ta ask me questions but I wrapped tha rest o’ my hamburger in a napkin, handed tha bartender a bill, an’ left. Molly ran an’ caught me in tha parkin’ lot with my change an’ a box fer my hamburger. Hell of a good waitress.

Monday mornin’ I was there at 6:45. Tha blowhard showed up and looked like he was surprised ta see me. He started me ta carrin’ packs o’ shingles up a ladder an’ he kept me busy all day. I worked hard. At quitin’ time, I walked past him an’ said, “Meet ya at tha Barn.”

“Oh, yeah? I kin pay ya now.”

“No,” I replied without slowin’ down, “Give it ta me there in front o’ all them witnesses.” I left without waitin’ fer an answer.

Later, I sat at my table at tha Barn an’ ordered a hamburger an’ fries. I waited fer quite a while before he came in. He pitched a penny on tha table an’ left. I finished my hamburger an’ went fer a drive.

Tuesday was more o’ tha same. That evenin’

in tha Barn, folks was obviously waitin’ ta see what wuz gonna happen. What happened was he walked in an’ put two pennies in front of me on tha table an’ turned around an’ left.

Wednesday, I got four pennies.

On Thursday evening, they was more folks than usual in tha place. I’d been tryin’ ta keep quiet so tha regulars’d purty much stopped tryin’ ta ask me questions but tha crowd on Thursday evening was a lot o’ new folks an’ some of ’em wanted ta sit at my table. I tried not ta make ’em mad but I didn’t have much ta say. Tha Blowhard showed up an’ gave me a dime. Said he didn’t have tha right change. I had some pennies so I gave him two of ’em.

On Friday, they was a reporter from tha Marathon paper. He wanted ta do an interview but I didn’t have much ta say. Tha Blowhard showed up with my 16¢ but he didn’t want ta talk ta no reporter neither. Tha crowd was back ta normal, tha extra folks had seen me an’ lost interest. Most folks thought I was crazy. I’d worked hard all week fer a bully an’ all I had fer my effort was 31¢. Nobody was botherin’ me much any more but they seemed grateful that I was keepin’ tha Blowhard away. I noticed that tha bartender, Sam was his name, started servin’ me drinks an’ food fer free. He didn’t say why an’ I didn’t ask. He was onta my game. I could see that hidden smile on his face ever time he looked at me.

That weekend, I went down ta Big Bend an’ relaxed. On Monday, I was back at tha job site. Tha Blowhard avoided me. That evenin’, he sent one o’ his other people over ta tha Barn with my 32¢. I worked all week an’ my total pay fer tha two weeks o’ hard labor was \$10.23. Nobody but Sam an’ Ed an’ Molly was payin’ no attention ta me no more. Sam an’ Ed knew what was goin’ on an’ Molly knew they was onta somethin’ so she kept her eye on me too. Everybody else had decided I was a nut.

By Monday o’ tha third week none of us had seen tha Blowhard fer a while. He’d been sendin’ tha other guy ta pay me. On Wednesday o’ that week, tha guy had a gleam in his eye when he handed me my \$40.96 fer tha day. On Thursday mornin’, tha Blowhard was waitin’ →

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fer me at tha site. When I got outa tha Hummer, he asked me right out ta quit.

"Nope," I replied with a smile, "I got 17 more days ta go."

"But this is stupid!" he yelled. "I cain't pay you like this!"

"I got a bar full o' witnesses that say ya can." I thought he was gonna punch me but some o' his other people was watchin' with big grins on their faces. On Thursday night, tha Barn was packed wall ta wall when his man came in with my \$81.92.

On Friday mornin', they was a news crew from tha San Antonio News, a newspaper from out o' town, waitin' at tha job site. Tha Blowhard called tha cops an' tried ta have 'em kicked off tha place but they still talked ta some o' his people before tha cops got things under control. Tha local deputy, a guy named Brady who had a big smile on his face, had ta call in tha state troopers 'cause a crowd started ta gather. Later that day tha Texas DPS had ta close down Highway 90 toward San Antonio 'cause o' tha traffic. That evenin', I got a police escort from Debby's motel ta tha Barn. People was gittin' around tha roadblock an' they was a crowd.

See, this is what happened. By then, somebody'd figgered out that I was due \$163.84 fer tha day's work and that my total fer three weeks was \$327.67. Whoever tha genius was had also figgered out that my total take at tha end o' tha fourth week would be \$10,485.75. I don't think he could count no higher than that but tha folks at tha News had done their own figgerin' an' published my weekly take fer six weeks. It came ta \$10,737,418.23. They figgered tha Blowhard's whole business wasn't worth a tenth o' that. Word got around. Tha Blowhard was nowhere ta be seen but I had lots o' witnesses.

On Monday o' tha fourth week, couldn't nobody git nowhere near Marathon. Tha week-end'd been a nightmare an' tha governor had called out tha national guard. They'd detoured traffic on Highways 90 an' 385 from all four directions. Some reporter sneaked in somehow an' waylaid me at tha door ta my room. Wanted ta sign me fer an interview but I wasn't interested.

After that, Debbie did a better job o' keepin strangers away from my room. Tha authorities just wanted ta settle tha mess an' I agreed ta quit tha job ifn I got tha total sale price o' tha Blowhard's business, at auction. He screamed but tha local court in Alpine threatened ta git involved, seemed like he wasn't well liked in them parts an' what with all tha witnesses, we made a deal. I cain't tell tha final amount but it was a lot. Not ten million dollars but still a lot. It should pay for my next prank, long as it ain't too big. If tha Blowhard defaults, I git tha total sale price o' his business, at auction, supervised by tha court in Alpine.

Tha final benefits ta me was that Sam promised me free anything that tha Barn could offer, fer life, an' Debbie made a similar deal over at her motel. They both got all tha business they could handle an' it looked like their popularity might last fer a while. Me an' Debbie got re-aquatinted real nice. After visitin' her fer about three days, I climbed into tha Hummer a richer and happier man. Yaaaaahooooo! Tha Dirty Trickster riiiiids again!

The Dirty Trickster's Pay Schedule

Calculated Using Microsoft Works 3.0

<u>First Week</u>	<u>Fourth Week</u>
\$0.01	\$327.68
\$0.02	\$655.36
\$0.04	\$1,310.72
\$0.08	\$2,621.44
\$0.16	\$5,242.88
<u>Second Week</u>	<u>Fifth Week</u>
\$0.32	\$10,485.76
\$0.64	\$20,971.52
\$1.28	\$41,943.04
\$2.56	\$83,886.08
\$5.12	\$167,772.16
<u>Third Week</u>	<u>Sixth Week</u>
\$10.24	\$335,544.32
\$20.48	\$671,088.64
\$40.96	\$1,342,177.28
\$81.92	\$2,684,354.56
\$163.84	\$5,368,709.12

Author's Note: The Barn Grill is the setting for a short collection of fantasy stories that I wrote some time ago. The collection is for sale, as is most of my fiction.

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Nation in Distress

If an obligation isn't
voluntary, then it
doesn't exist.



Acknowledgments

My thanks to the following: Sir James the Bold; SantaClara Bob; Lady Jan the Voluptuous; Lord Jeffrey the Studious; and my mother. —editor

Blame

Original Source Unknown. Forwarded by Don G.

- If your neighbor crashes into a tree while driving home drunk, then he blames the bartender.
- If a crazed person breaks into the cockpit and tries to kill the pilot at 35,000 feet, and the passengers kill him instead, then the mother of the deceased blames the airline. ∞

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Definitions

Attributed to the Washington Post's Mensa Invitational. Forwarded by Lady Nancy the Enchanting.

- **Foreplay:** Any misrepresentation about yourself for the purpose of getting laid.
- **Cashtration (*n.*):** The act of buying (or building) a house, which renders the subject financially impotent for an indefinite period of time.
- **Inoculate:** To take coffee intravenously when you are running late.
- **Osteopornosis:** A degenerate disease.
- **Karmageddon:** It's when everybody is sending off all these really bad vibes and then the Earth explodes and it's a serious bummer.
- **Glibido:** All talk and no action. ∞

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