

## The Things We Learn

“Orlando! They’re gonna know when I’m there, Baby! You know what I’m sayin’ Holmes?”

Must we always find a way to perpetuate a stereotype? This Puerto Rican fresh from the joint...the clink...the pit...the cage...the big house...the hoosegow...brimming with the confidence of a newly freed man...has about three weeks. That’s where I set the over-under on how long before he’s re-confined. Three weeks and he’ll have robbed some old lady, stolen a television, tried to ass rape a hooker and eaten someone’s dog. Of course, he’ll have been framed, or that’s the case the alcoholic public defender will attempt to make. It was some other retard...inbred...waste of life Puerto Rican fuck-up who looks just like this guy...and even has the same finger prints. Like Ron White says, “You can’t fix stupid.”

“I’m telling you Holmes...They’re gonna feel me, Baby!” says the newly freed man. His smile shows one newly capped tooth. God bless fake bling.

We’re somewhere north of Georgia. The smell of the Greyhound is some mixture of sweat and piss and weed. About two hours back Mr. Newly Freed Puerto Rican rolls a joint and lights up in the dark. “Hey Holmes...you wanna hit this fine *moocah* herb, man? It’s tasty shit. Straight from the garden of our Lord! It’s herbal paradise. It’ll make your ass pucker, Holmes!” I had quit smoking a few months before, so I only hit it twice. Hard to decline a good ass puckering moocah, eh?

We stop at a crossroads in the middle of Podunk nowhere. It's still dark out...either really early or really late depending on the last time you closed your eyes. Mr. Newly Freed Puerto Rican manages to quietly rock and sway in his seat to the beat of the song on my Ipod. *"Did you ever feel the pain...That he felt upon the cross...Did you ever feel the knife...Tearing flesh that's oh so soft..."* It's turned down low so only I can hear it, so the fact that he's keeping the beat should scare me senseless...but you don't get paranoid from two hits on ass puckering moocah. The bus doors open with a mechanical type of groaning complaint that my Ipod drowns out, but I can feel through my seat. On the steps I see the cast of *The Witness*. Do they really drive in a carriage? No shit. The things we learn. Only a few empty seats left on the bus. One of them happens to be next to me. Great. I'm making so many new friends. In high school I was voted most likely to make love to an Amish "person." *Hey, they all look the same to me!*

"Oh shit! Jebadiah! What's goin' on Holmes?! You just missed my killer shit man? It would straighten you out brotha! You'd love me forever, man! Tell him Holmes! It was da' sweet moocah brotha!" A new headline idea forms in my head: RECENTLY FREED PUERTO RICAN KILLED BY AMISH ZEALOT. I don't even know what a zealot is.

"Yessir! They're gonna know when I'm there, Jebadiah! You tell them what's coming Holmes! They're gonna be lining up for me, Baby!"

I'm not stoned. Just relaxed. I start to wonder...how does a guy who gets out of a Chicago area prison at 9:25 on a Tuesday morning, find an 1/8<sup>th</sup>, buy a bus ticket for Orlando, get a tooth poorly capped, jump on a Greyhound, smoke on said Greyhound with his newly crowned best friend...pal...amigo...and find

himself ruining diplomatic relations with the Amish contingency all within seventeen hours? This guy must have A.D.D. to keep his shit straight. Public schools can be proud of this one.

“Whew! Man, I need me some sweet Orlando lovin’ baby! Holmes, I’m gonna find me a girl and show her what she’s been missing man! I’m gonna do it hard and long baby!” I’m sure Jebadiah is taking notes. But for the next forty minutes he stares straight ahead. Never talking, never twitching, never blinking...not once. Perhaps he is sitting quietly, thinking longingly of a romance once lost...a boy and his sheep.

And what’s funny, is that before we even started to swerve, I knew we were all going to die.

The light at the end of the tunnel isn’t heaven. It’s a semi tearing through a Greyhound. In the last seconds before my heart stops beating in some folded origami of metal and flesh, I see Jebadiah’s lips moving...he’s singing ever so quietly... *“Do you ever hear the screams...As the limbs are all torn off...Did you ever kiss the child...Who just saw his father shot...Do you ever shed a tear...As the war drags on and on...”*

And as my spark fades, I feel a faint touch...it’s the tickle of the flames reaching out for me. I suppose it’s too late to pretend I’m sorry...