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The Hired Hand

By Alan Sharp

Hey, harry!!
Come on, else Im going to fry up
some bread!!
Hey, harry!!
Goddamn, how long have we been
boiling these grounds?
Tastes awful sour to me.
Well, you can throw them
away after this.
We'll be in del Norte by noon.
We'll buy some fresh.
Hey, arch,
these fish aren't bad.
Needs some salt though.
Well, we arent got none.
That's something else
we're going to have to get.
You set on the coast, Dan?
What the hell?
We got nothing but time.
I'll tell you something.
That is where it's really good,
out there in California.
You got your --
You got your weather.
Your woman are half-Mex,
half-American.
You got your gold...
and oranges...
and the ocean.
They say that ocean looks
like a great blue prairie.
I am not never seen
that much water.
Me neither.
This here's the most water
I ever saw.
Hey, harry.
Did you leave the line set?
Well... never can tell.
You might have something.
He's all right, harry.
He's just young, full of piss
and vinegar, like you was.

Was I like that?
Sure enough.
He's always wanting to go
someplace he hasn't been.
You really want to
go to the coast, arch?
Good as anywhere.
Better than most.
What's your fancy, harry?
Arch! Harry!
Come here, quick!
Harry!
Let me go!
What the hell are you at, anyway?!
Hey, what does he think
he's doing,
Letting her float away
like that?
Been dead awhile, whatever it was.
What do you mean,
"whatever it was"?
It was a little white girl.
It's a little blonde white girl.
You'd be dumping pieces
in your hands
The moment you started
to pull her in.
Hi.
Hi.
You fellows know where I can
find a man to shoe my horse?
Threw a front plate
a mile or so back.
Uh, tell me something, boy.
You always ride around
in your combinations?
Well, I-I got wet
crossing the river,
Thought Id dry out.
Any of you fellows
a blacksmith?
Isnt no blacksmith
that lives here now.
You want any horseshoeing done,

You're going to have to
get it done yourself.
Well... much obliged.
I'm out.
Well, think Ill have a cold beer.
They arent got no beer,
And even if they did have,
it wouldn't be cold.
They got, uh, three kinds of
tequila and one of whiskey,
And they're all grain and bad.
Well, what kind of town is this anyway?
Isnt no blacksmith.
arent no cold beer.
Don't see no girls.
arent changed much,
that's for sure.
You mean
you been here before?
Yeah. Three years ago
we was here.
Arch had a bad foot.
Damned horse stepped on it
and broke all my toes.
You fellows made up your mind?
Yeah, give us a bottle of that
double eagle and three glasses.
One eagle, three glasses.

Arch:

Here's to the coast.
Here's to California.
I am not going.
How's that, hARRY?
I am not going to the coast.
Where are you going to go then?
Home.
Now, look, hARRY,
If it's because of me
being so touchy this morning...
am not to do with that, Dan.
Oh.
Maybe there isnt
no such color.

We get to the coast,
it won't be like this.
Where I come from,
There's a guy who knew a fellow
who was on the coast.
Said it was different
from anything you ever saw.
Home is just a place
you start from, arch.
There will be something there.
Think maybe your wife and your
little girl are still there?
Didn't know you was married,
harry, had kids.
Why don't you go to the coast,
make something, send for them?
You go to the coast, Dan.
And when, in three or four years,
You find yourself sitting here
drinking this ride lotion,
You remember how you thought
it was going to be.
The hell with him.
The hell, I say.
We don't need him.
We can go to the coast
without him, can't we, arch?
You know how long me and him
rid together?
I forget. Long time.
Seven years -- Year round.
Seven years --
It's a long time.
You mean you arent going to go
to the coast?
You're going to go with harry?
No, Dan, I am not going to go
with harry.
Didn't recognize this place
until I saw that peak.
Then I remembered.
Guess I decided then.
It's just a waste
living like this, arch.

It's been building up
a long while.
Well, Ill go on
with the boy.
Always wanted
to see that ocean.
Come on.
It's a real good one, Sam.
It's a real good one.
Let's have a look at that bottle.
Hey, boy...
there isnt hardly
a mouthful left in here.
Have to get another one.
Going to ride out
in the morning?
Not the way Im drinking
this whiskey, I won't.
How long is it going to take you
to ride back?
A week, there about.
How you know there's
anything for you there?
I mean, what if she's married?
Haven't thought on it.
Yeah.
Well...
you come on out to the coast,
Maybe we'll meet up again.
Maybe, arch.
Maybe so.
Well, looks like
Dans already been here
And got himself something else.
Well, what'll you have?
Same as your partner?
Well, what did he have?
Well, he had a bit of prime.
Three dollars worth
to be exact.
Well, I guess Dans
in tonight.
You might as well
give us a couple shots

Of that double eagle there.
Oh, mother!
Mother!
Is he dead?
You shoot him?
This is my wife.
I found him in our house.
He was attacking her.
I called him, and I thought
he went for his gun,
But I guess he was just
pulling on his pants.
I'll take care
of the burying'.
That's all right.
We'll see to it.
How'd he find your wife?
Well, I guess he just saw her
outside and followed her home.
When I got there,
he was all over her.
You mind if I ask
her about that?
Well, she don't speak
any American.
Won't do you any good.
Don't seem to me
there's much to ask.
The woman's all messed up.
Your friend's got his pants half off.
Seems pretty plain to me.
Where can we bury him?

Sam:

go till the morning'?
I'll close my cantina,
And you can let him
rest here for the night.
We'll bury him now.
Jesus said,
"let those who lead you say to you,
"See the kingdom is in heaven."
"Then the birds of the heaven
will precede you.

"If they say to you
it is in the sea,
"Then the fish
will precede you.
But the kingdom is within you,
and it is without you."
A disciple said to Jesus,
"tell us how our end will be."
Jesus said, "have you then
discovered the beginning
"That you inquire
about the end?
"For where the beginning is,
there shall be the end.
"Blessed is he who shall stand
at the beginning,
And he shall know the end
and not taste death."
"His disciple said to him,
"when will the kingdom come?
Jesus said,
"it will not come by expectation.
"It will not say,
'see here or see there.'
"But the kingdom of the father
is spread upon the earth,
And men do not see it."
Ah!
Let's go!
Ah! Goddamn!
Damn!
Goddamn!
Ah!
Ah!
Ah!
What do you mean, what's she like?
Is she tall, thin, fat, round,
brown hair, blue eyes?
What's she like?
Medium, red hair...
brown eyes, I guess.
I think I know her.
She had a nice voice.
How old is she?

How old?

Well, she was 30
when we was married.

And how old was you?

20-- Just turned.

Hell, boy,

you didn't stand a chance.

Ah, it weren't her fault.

I wasn't ready, that's all.

Too hot to ride

and too hot to walk.

Well, it isnt far now.

Wonder what your wife's

going to say to you

When she lays eyes on you,

harry.

What I mean is, what kind

of nature does she have?

I don't rightly recall.

Only lived with her

about a year and nine months.

Well, if I had a horse

for a year and nine months,

I'd sure know

how many teeth he had.

Well, she had three teeth,

I remember that.

Hannah:

What can I do for you?

Go on inside, Janey.

I don't want to, mama.

Go on.

Do like I told you.

How have you been, Hannah?

Why'd you come back?

Got tired of the life.

What are you hoping for,

coming around here?

Work.

You don't have any right

to come back this way.

You think I can't send you away.

Think you're still married to me,

but that isnt so.
Look, Hannah, just let me
work the place for a bit,
Like a hired hand.
No difference.
See how it runs.
I'm asking you, Hannah.
I don't want Janey upset.
As far as she knows,
her father is dead.
I don't want you saying
no different.
Sure.
Come on.
Get ready for bed.
Shout me when you're in.
Not 100, mama.
I counted.
Off you go.
I'll add them to tomorrow night.
There's some sacks in the shed
And some clean straw
in the rack.
Should be a lamp there, too.
Tomorrow we'll talk about
what you're going to do.
Need some thinking
what to put you to.
Mama, Im in!
Coming, Janey.
All right.
See you in the morning.
Don't mind me asking, ma'am.
How come you don't have a dog?
I notice when we rolled up
there wasn't one.
Had one, but it ran away.
Never bothered to get another.
Good night, ma'am.
Welcome home, harry.
Yeah.
The straw smells good.
Beats sleeping on the ground.
What do you think, harry?

You think you'll stay?
Harry's turned in.
He's so tired,
he can't see proper.
By your leave, ma'am,
Ill just finish my smoke.
Surely.
What are you getting
out of this, Mr. Harris?
Ma'am, if I wasn't doing this,
Id be doing something else.
Be more prospects
in something else.
Well, me and harry, we rid
around together a long time.
He's keen to try this for a while,
So Ill just string along.
Why'd he come back?
Just got tired
of drifting around.
He'll go.
It's just a matter of time.
Well, most things are, ma'am,
one way or the other.
Ask Mr. Marshall at the store
If that lead paint
has come yet.
We can paint the house
before winter comes.
And don't forget
the jars for preserving fruit
And don't forget my candy.
Candy?
You don't eat candy, do you?
Look there, it's write
n down -- "Candy for Janey."
Come on. Hey!
Bye, Janey.
I'll go on over
to the general store.
You go set up the beers.
Sounds like a reasonable
division of labor.
Give me two beers.

Hello, there.
You riding on through?
No, sir,
we picked up a job.
You with somebody else?
Yes, sir.
We're working
for miss Collings.
Oh? Both of you?
Yes, sir, that's right.
Well, now, she's really down
to some serious business.
She's a fair woman
to work for, all right.
Fair?
Why, the widow Collings
is more than fair.
She's downright generous.
You can always tell a man
who's got something on his mind.
He keeps talking to people
he don't know.
Now what is it
you're trying to tell me?
What Im trying to tell you,
mister,
Is that most men who work
for the widow Collings
Get paid in more than cash and keep.
I'll surely remember that.
Save me getting
a lot of fancy notions.
And you can tell her
when you get back
That Ed Plummer
might take a ride out to see her.
One of these
moonshine nights.
What's he talking about,
arch?
There's your partner.
How do you work it, boys?
Night about,
or do you each do a week?

He was talking about Hannah,
wasn't he?
Was he?
You know he was.
That's why you hit him.
Stopped him from saying
something about her.
What was it, arch?
Said she slept
with the hired help.
If you're going to swing at me,
I'll take a great deal
of pleasure
In kicking the living shit
out of you.
Do you believe him?
He was a mouth off.
It's the kind of story
you find in any saloon.
You really believe that, arch?
Of course I do!
I am not saying your Hannah
Never looked the side
a man was on...
but I sure don't believe
What that fellow
was saying.
If I was you, hARRY,
I wouldn't be putting
no questions to her.
She isn't going to take
too kindly
To you setting up
judgment on her.
Giddy up!
Did I get the feeling
Your friend Harris
made himself scarce?
Could be.
Why could that be now?
I guess he knows
I want to talk to you.
What about?
I hope you aren't getting

ready to propose.
In town today,
someone said...
they made some remarks
about you.
What sort of remarks?
About you and the men
that worked here.
Go on.
What did they say?
You know what they said.
They said you slept
with all your hired hands.
You hired men to sleep with.
God, what do you know about it?
How many?
Does it matter?
Of course it matters!
You were long gone
before anybody got into my bed.
And don't think that's
'cause I was hankering after you.
I wasn't.
That was as long
as I could stand it.
I walked about this room
on nights like this,
Going crazy for a man,
any man, didn't matter.
And sometimes, when there
was a man out there,
He knew about it,
and he'd come in.
And sometimes Id have him
or he'd have me --
Whatever suits you.
But not all of them, and not
every time I wanted to.
And when the season's work
was over, Id pay them off,
No matter how well he'd worked
or how well he'd pleased me,
'Cause the man
that's in a woman's bed

Thinks he's her boss.
And sooner or later,
they'd have tried
To move their tackle
out of the shed and in here,
And I didn't want that,
'Cause Id already
had one man in here,
And I didn't want another.
Is that all you wanted to ask me?

Woman:

Mrs. Collings?
Oh, I was just passing,
thought Id drop by.
I never seem to catch you
in town somehow.
Hello, Mrs. Sorenson.
It's not often I get visits
from your good self.
I'm so glad
to hear the news.
I'm sure
you're very pleased.
Oh?
Well, I saw the paper
with my very own eyes.
Carl said he recognized him
in town today,
But I said
that wasn't possible
Because we hadn't even come
to Calmen in those days.
But Im sure
you're very pleased.
Janey, you go on outside
and play for a bit.
And I bet you're pleased, too,
aren't you, little Janey?
Go on, Janey.
Go on outside like I told you.
I assume you're talking about
the fact that Harrys come back.
Oh, yes, of course.

Maybe we'll see you in town
at the quiltings and all.
Folks are always saying what
a pity you never get into town.
Mrs. Sorenson, I didn't know
that he was coming back,
And I don't know
how long he'll stay.
I don't want Janey upset.
She thinks her father's dead.
If she finds out different,
and if he goes off again -
He's not going anywhere.
Didn't he show you what he wrote?
Nailed it up all over town.
"No further need of hired help,"
it said.
A man that does that isn't
thinking of going nowhere.
Your husband isn't around?
I'd so like to meet him.
Carl and I were still
in Philadelphia then.
No.
He's out on the farm.
Oh, I see.
Well, I just dropped by
to say hello.
We'll be looking for you
in town.
Folks will be looking out now
that your man's come home.
Goodbye, Mrs. Sorenson.
Goodbye, Mrs. Collings.
Oh, and give my very best
to Mr. Collings.
Thank you.
You know that he wants
to stay here.
I gathered that.
What do you think
about it?
That isn't for me to think.
You don't have to worry

about me hanging around.
You probably think
Im pretty hard.
Now, ma'am,
that's not for me to decide.
Well, I am.
Don't want to be, but I am.
I don't know how many nights
I sat on the porch,
Rocking myself back and forth,
watching the shed,
Hoping whoever was in there
would come out...
hoping and terrified
in case he did.
It was all right
at the time --
Out in the fields
or in the hay.
Sometimes,
just down on the dirt.
That's right.
You can tell, can't you?
Wouldn't really matter whether
it was you or him tonight.
Do you think
he'll be happy here?
There will be times
when he'll be happy.
If you really want him, ma'am...
you're going to have to tell him.
And you're going to have
to tell yourself, too.
What are you talking, arch?
What's this
about heading west?
Well, you're settled
in here now, harry.
I thought Id go back
to our old plan --
Going out to California.
But you like it here.
I know you do.
He suits it here,

doesn't he?
Reckon if arch
wants to go on,
We shouldn't argue with him.
It's better this way, harry.
Best thing.
You really want to go
to California, arch?
See that ocean?
Sure do.
I wouldn't say so if I didn't.
Okay, arch,
if that's the way you want it.
I think this is
how it has to be, harry.
Did you ask him to go?
No, I never did.
But you want him to,
don't you?
I want you to stay.
That's what I want.
But I will stay.
I told you so.
With me, because of me --
Me and Janey.
Well, that's why
I came back, isnt it?
Partly.
Partly because you were tired,
Sick and weary of having no
place but the ground to sleep.
Harry, Im all aching and sore
from these last six years.
I feel Im going to split open.
I'm scared to think it might
all come right again
After all this time.
I don't believe it,
but I want it to be.
Can you understand that?
I guess so, Hannah.
That man out there,
he's a decent man, Im sure.
But he's had more of you

than Ive ever known.
He's what you left me for, harry.
I know you didn't know him
when you left,
But he's what you went looking for.
A man don't ask the things of
another man like a woman does.
He's easier to please,
And he don't get bitter
about the same things.
Each time you and me
didn't get along,
Each time you got weary,
he'd be there,
And Id wonder if you were
planning to go off with him
Or if he'd be telling you
not to be a fool.
Don't you see, harry?
It'd be just like
you came home
With some woman
you'd been living with
And said, "I want her to stay
in the spare room."
Out there where he's going, Hannah,
It's cold on your own.
Don't you think it's about time
You started practicing being
a husband again, harry?
I'll pick it up okay.
Good night, harry.
Sure is a good morning for it.
You make it back this way...
sure.
Arch...
...if it gets, well, you know,
the way it can out there,
You just turn around.
I'll bring you back
a bottle of that ocean water.
Goodbye, Mr. Harris.
Bye, Janey.
I hope Ill be all right

for you, harry.
Just checking Janey.
She's all right.
Wind didn't waken her.
I love you, harry.
I love you, too, Hannah.
Harry!
Harry, there's a funny man,
And he brought
Mr. Harris' horse back.
Where'd you get this horse?
Sam sent me with it.
Where's Harris?
He wants you to come see him.
Where is he?
Waiting for you.
What is it, harry?
It's arch.
Something's wrong.
Is he sick?
Not exactly.
He sent you... this.
Sam says each week
you don't show up,
He's going to take off another.
And if you
don't show up ever,
He's going to cut off his toes and all.
Harry, what are you doing?
They cut off
one of arch's fingers.
One each week, they say,
till I get there.
How do you know
it's his finger?
It sure as hell is
somebody's finger,
And seeing as they got arch,
I reckon it's his, okay?
Harry, you can't.
You came back, you said.
You said you'd come back.
You can't go away, you can't.
The longer I wait, the worse

it'll be for him, Hannah.
I don't care about him!
I care about me and Janey and you!
You never meant to stay.
You never!
You planned it, the two of you.
You planned it!
It's your way
of getting away again.
You planned it!
That's not true, Hannah.
I have to go.
Arch is in this trouble
because of me.
I have to get him out of it.
And when that's done,
I'll be back,
And things will be right.
You won't come back,
I know it.
Your discard, you know that.
Same las patas.
Magdalena!
Dame solo,
pinche jodido!
Iandale al pozo,
Magdalena!

Arch:

Por favor.
Come on.
Come on!
Come on, come on.
Come here.
Give me a little water.
Yeah, that's -
- That's all right.
Ah.
Para qu? Vinistes?
Ese hombre pendejo
te quiere matar.
Mat? A mi hombre.
Y mat? A tu amigo.
Y ahora te quiere

matar a t?.
Give me a gun.
A pistol!
No. A m?, m?Tame, no.
I'll kill him.
I'll kill him!
A m?, m?Tame.
Sacque de aqu?!
Pistol.
You can count
your fingers now.
Your friend's
come to get you.
Mighty good to see you.
I've been looking
pretty hard for you...
and that's difficult,
Seeing it's very hard for me
to get about.
Where's Harris?
He's here.
You rid hard.
You saved him a finger.
They're bad ones, harry.
I knew it.
First time we was here...
I had a feeling.
Then, when we rode out,
Thought it was all left behind.
Oh.
Hold me, arch.