

features

"Seven Paper Men" A Short Story

by Ryan Kelly, Mike Shannon, Jesse Teets, and Matt Wright

It's not my fault that I was born a thin man, thin in an emotional respect that is, rather than physical.

Seemingly endless have been my endeavors to fit in a Sloppy Joe's Bar, where I have observed an attractive society like no other. It is there the crowd seems as though it is a family, yet I have always been excluded. Not only

this, but they incessantly hurled toward me daggers of words, insults that are indirectly placed, as they appear similar to all who enter. "Tank Gut!" "I like yer dress, boy! Dya steal that from my girlfriend?"

Such comments have pierced me deeply over the past few months; they cause me to reflect upon my childhood, as though

they really know me . . . How could they? Yes, how could they know that I weighed two hundred pounds at the age of four and wore my mother's clothes? I have changed so much since then. I have, really. I only wear my mother's clothes once a week these days, as I know that no self-respecting man goes for more than a few hours in his mother's Sunday best.

It is this type of ridicule, which plagues this house of common man, night in and night out. I know that this onslaught of insults is not a response to my physical features or the fact that I may be a tad too effeminate for the average Key West bachelor. This flood of abuse is in the direction of every man, woman, and child that walks through the mahogany double doors of this Key West gem.

I can expound upon all of this because it must have been about two weeks ago when I arrived, unusually tardy for my daily victimization. I witnessed the same avalanche of rudeness rushing towards another man of singular disposition. When he caught on that I too was a victim of the onslaught of hierarchy in the bar, we drew close together and formed a bond, one might say. We were a band of rejects. We spent our days in the bar together. Our numbers slowly grew as

we noticed others that were like us. In time, our numbers grew to seven. At this point, our sad cluster matched the tight assembly of disgruntled barflies.

Slowly, we learned to take comfort in each other's presence. So what if that group of old drunkards thought I wasn't worth the pink sandals I walked in! I know these guys sitting with me, these fellow victims, and they are much more than the harsh verbal assaults that they have sustained at the malice of our sworn enemies, who sit just across the bar. Slowly, the disdainful group of geezers dwindled down to a mere set of three grungy men.

One day, as we -The Seven- entered, we found, to our fortune, that only two of the seven old

men remained at the bar. One of these had the gall to hurl one final insult toward us: "Ah look! Here come the Seven Paper Men!" belted the most drunken of the two, as he laughed and fell off his stool, shook his head, took a final swig of his beer, and slammed his cup down upon the filthy bar. He then stepped over his former comrade, tipped his hat to us, and exited the building, never to be seen again. We then moved to the central station of the bar, and the old man upon the floor took off running into the restroom, out of confusion. As we laughed, we did not turn to see him; we did, though, heard the sound of his head smashing into the door labeled "Gentlemen."

Creative Writing Boxing Fear

-by Mandi Fields

My opponent's name was Fear.

He's famous for destroying all who come near.

How large he was in comparison to me!

He snarled and laughed at his rivalry.

The battle bell rang, and the crowd cheered his name.

I couldn't understand why they encouraged his fame.

"You're support makes him stronger," I said to the crowd.

The champion smiled smugly and took a bow.

He knocked me down with one glove in my face.

"Give up!" Fear said to me. "You are a disgrace!"

"I'd rather die," I said, "than surrender to you."

So I fought though I was painted black and blue.

I remembered the things that Fear took from me.

My courage, my faith, and my prosperity.

I allowed him to cause me too much pain.

The time had come to put an end to his reign.

I gritted my teeth and forgot about his size.

I glared into his scornful eyes.

I punched him with all of my energy within.

He fell like a tree and the referee counted ten.

The room was so quiet that I could hear a pin fall.

The crowd was amazed that I had won the brawl.

I realized that Fear received his power from me.

He was only as strong as I allowed him to be.

I had to face Fear before I could grow...

One enemy down and ten thousand to go.

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poetry, fiction short stories, non-fiction short stories, and critical essays can contact Nathan King at kingna@montreat.edu, or send submissions to box #820.

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