

Yankee Lady

By Kenn Hartmann

Balancing knee deep in spring riffles below an old gristmill on the Winooski River in Vermont, I twirl a length of monofilament line like a lasso in sharp circles above my head, a little casting technique I had picked up a month earlier from local Indios fishing from the white rocks along the Escollera de las Chivas on Stone Island in Mazatlan. In Mexico, rusty nuts or washers were used as sinkers and strips of aluminum cut from a beer can fashioned around a hook made the flashy bait. The technique: twirl it, cast it and jig it until a triggerfish or some other exotic el pez made the fatal mistake of being seduced by an attractive illusion.

I had wintered on Isla de la Piedra in a hut called a Palapa, just four poles and thatched palm roof, no walls, no toilet, no four star amenities for sure. I shared a hammock with a young seniorita from the Philippines; she was eighteen or nineteen who had a local boyfriend in town. He was armed and I was armed which attracted a couple heavily armed Federales who were vacationing nearby. Despite warnings from a band of hippie expatriates about being chummy with descendants of Pancho Villa, I drank tequila with Mexican cops and cheered the cliff diver's precarious plunge into the sea and smoked a dandy strain of local Mota as we caroused the trails below El Faro, the lighthouse. From what I discerned the friendly Federales were not related to Pancho Villa or Zapata or anyone else of significance. The two cops may have been on a benevolence binge sharing their stash or perhaps harbored a hidden agenda, but I followed my instinct to slip away into a thin sliver of dark alley shadows illuminated only by the Mazatlan moon and a few strands of Christmas tree lights. I caught the night ferry to La Paz and headed north hitchhiking, hopping freight trains and a whole lot of walking until I happened upon Pomona College in California which opens another story which I won't delve into other than to say I picked up a little Metric 350 which I rode coast to coast and that's how I came to be balancing knee deep in spring riffles below an old gristmill on the Winooski River in Vermont twirling a length of monofilament line like a lasso in sharp circles above my head.

Now, returning stateside, I relinquish the flimsy strips of cutup beer can bait and unleash my lure of choice, a tiny spoon, a Daredevil and please note; I spell it the way Eppinger does. Dyslexia doesn't matter at a crawdad hole. My old pal Taj Mahal said, "Here's a little tip I'd like to relate/any fish bites if you got good bait." I'm just relating a story, true, that's what I do. The fact is a spoon's a versatile lure with a rod or not, just fling that thing swirling into an eddy downstream a rock or loggerhead, give a little jerk and pull out a small fry, "put 'em in a pot, put 'em in a pan, cook 'em 'til they nice'n brown."

I give a little tug and get a little tug and hook what appears to be a tiny trout.

"Nice minnow you pulled out there," says a strikingly demure but lovely voice from a crooked window on the gristmill's second floor, almost like a TV golf announcer's hushed whisper, "he pulls out his putter and studies the hole."

The silhouette of her soft blouse against a deep dark interior radiates like an iridescent Seraph against a Michelangelo sky, if such a thing as an iridescent Seraph exists, I humbly suggest that perhaps somewhere in all of existence you may catch a glimmer of a sentient being shimmering across an infinite abyss and I'm certain that would eloquently explain how visually cool her sunlit raven hair blends into a halo of shadows. I'm barefoot, my dungarees rolled wet above my knees.

"I say, what light through 'yon window breaks baby?"

She says, "What's up Romeo? You plan on romancing me with a minnow?"

"Uh, it's a small trout," I say, defending my skills, but really it's not a trout, maybe a skinny bass, not even, no idea. "One big minnow! Four or five inches!" I let it slip away just as I stub my toe against a sharp rock and whoop in pain. I dance onto the bank and dip my toe into the flow to rinse away blood.

"You need a band aid?" Yeah. She invites me up.

I amble up the bank to the Metric 350, fasten my boots and socks to the sissy bar and ride barefoot shifting gears over bridge to the gristmill, which looks more like a haunted hotel now that I look at it. She opens the door, kneels and lifts my foot into her tender palm. She frowns and drops my foot. "Just scratched."

"Quick healer."

"You're such a liar." She allows me up the creaking old steps into her atelier.

Her studio is a clutter of artwork and boxes; she warms a pot of water for tea. She says, "my goal is to be an artist, I graduate Goddard tomorrow and then off to New York. My family will be at the ceremony, I'm Jewish. What about you?" What about me what? "You're not like other boys here."

I stop caressing her shoulders and pull her close. "The tea is fine. Now what would you like?"

"To go for a ride on your motorcycle." Not my first thought but let's go. Adventure beckons.

-Kenn Hartmann

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Build it and they will bid... (Wisconsin Style)

I always try to spread the word about folks that support a benefit that better the biker image, and this guy does just that.

Local Artist Jim "JHS" Hadlock created this metal duck as a raffle item for the Cora Jones Scholarship Fund benefit that was held July 20th. The item brought in hundreds of dollars from folks that wanted a chance at a great hand-crafted work of art. With this year's money for a chance to win the duck still in the 100's, I am sure he will be asked to donate again next year.

Jim is a local Wautoma/Neshkoro metal fabricator that has been crafting for over 28 years. He works at Specialty Enterprises in Wautoma, WI as a welder and in his off time enjoys being close to his family, sculpting garden art and riding his old iron head sporty.



If you're interested in purchasing a piece from Jim give him a call at 920-293-8277. All I can say is the Free Riders Press salutes **ALL** people that support others through their talents.

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