

Veterans Day Parade

by

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DESCRIPTION

Four veterans, on the advice of their barkeep, choose to defy the town's cancellation of the Veterans Day parade because of budget cuts caused by the globalization of capital.

CHARACTERS

- DIGGER
- SAINT MARTIN
- SATCH
- COFFEE
- JIM, barkeep

MISCELLANEOUS

- Bar, stools, etc.

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A bar—not seedy, not elegant. A watering hole with four patrons and one barkeep, early in the day. A newspaper lies on the bar.

SOUND: Perhaps a television on somewhere—muffled. No music.

The patrons are like the bar—not seedy, not elegant. And none of them is young anymore.

JIM, the barkeep, listens to them with arms folded. He might also be drying glasses, cutting fruit, etc.—some of the thousand things that barkeeps do.

DIGGER puts his glass down a little too heavily, digs a thick finger into the newspaper.

DIGGER

You all read this?

COFFEE

Yeah.

DIGGER

I cannot believe this shit.

SAINT MARTIN

It's budget cuts—what're'ya gonna do?

DIGGER

But canceling the Veterans Parade?

COFFEE

You hate the military.

DIGGER

Completely separate.

SATCH

And you never march in the parade—

DIGGER

I was a fucking butcher back then, a mercenary—

SATCH

But on the government payroll.

DIGGER

You don't march, either.

SATCH

Uniform doesn't fit anymore—gotta think of my public image.

DIGGER

Your public image is like mine—overweight and arthritic. Fuck!

COFFEE

I don't understand this—you hate all that shit: July 4, Memorial Day, Flag Day—

SAINT MARTIN

Arbor Day, Boxing Day—

DIGGER

Shut up.

SAINT MARTIN

“Not the holiday type” would be on your mug shot at the Post Office—

SATCH

They still do that?

SAINT MARTIN

Yeah.

DIGGER

That’s not the point.

COFFEE

Then what is your point, because it’s not clear to the brain trust here.

But DIGGER falls into a silence. He sips, he stares at the paper. The others sip as well. JIM barkeeps.

SATCH turns to COFFEE.

SATCH

You served, right?

COFFEE

Yeah, but stateside. You know that “tooth to tail” thing for each soldier? I was the tail, right near the anus—quartermaster corps.

SAINT MARTIN

I got called down to Central America—the contras, that whole cesspool.

SATCH

Didn’t know that.

COFFEE

Didn’t know that, either.

SAINT MARTIN

Was not a glorious episode for anyone.

SATCH looks over to JIM.

SATCH

You ever serve?

JIM shakes his head no.

DIGGER taps his glass on the bar. JIM refreshes his drink.

SATCH

So, except for our barkeep here, we are all vets.

COFFEE

And none of us ever march in the parade.

SAINT MARTIN

We usually just sit here and let it pass us by outside.

COFFEE

Raise our glasses, maybe.

DIGGER

It's fucking globalization, is what it is.

The four look at him.

DIGGER

Do I have to spell it out to you? Again?

COFFEE

The town can't run the parade because of China.

DIGGER

It's all linked.

SAINT MARTIN

Can we not do the Marxist analysis this early in the day?

DIGGER

Because you don't mind sitting here while they all ream us out.

COFFEE speaks as if he's reciting a mantra or a litany. The others join in after "the banks."

COFFEE

The banks. The military-industrial complex. The financiers on Wall Street.

SATCH

If it's a conspiracy? Most open-faced coven of witches I've ever seen—no secret that the government sends our asses overseas to make the world safe for ExxonMobil and Warren Buffett.

SAINT MARTIN

And bails out the banks—they all shower together, anyways, so why wouldn't they give each a good rub?

COFFEE

Don't even want to think about that image.

DIGGER

Make fun—go ahead. But it trickles down—no, fucking rains down—and—

DIGGER digs at the newspaper again with his index finger.

DIGGER

This is what gets the shit tsunami—things we've done in this town forever—

COFFEE

Even if "we" don't do them—

DIGGER

Fucking comedian. Not the point.

COFFEE

Well, it is, in a way, since if we don't do them—

DIGGER

The tradition of it, is what I mean—what makes this place hang together—us hang together—

SATCH

We hang together because we get Social Security and a military pension and nobody's got any use for us anymore.

COFFEE

Here, here.

DIGGER speaks to JIM.

DIGGER

Cannot have a serious conversation with the clientele you get in here.

SAINT MARTIN

Ever notice that after a certain amount of Jack Daniels, his righteous takes over.

COFFEE

Makes it easier to make fun of him, though.

SAINT MARTIN

Doesn't mean you aren't right.

SATCH

Doesn't mean the apocalypse isn't coming.

DIGGER

Doesn't mean the end times aren't already here—

ALL THREE

“Just in slow motion.”

DIGGER

Amen, roger wilco, over and out. The apocalypse in slow motion.

SAINT MARTIN

That's us—at least the slow motion part.

They all sip and think.

JIM leans forward on the bar.

JIM

Why don't you guys march?

They all give him a “look.”

JIM

You wanna do something, then march yourselves. Do something.

They look at each other.

JIM

Most days of the week you all sit here and analyze the state of the world. You all talk a lot. Helps my bottom line.

COFFEE

But you never chime in.

JIM

Not my place.

COFFEE

You must have some ideas.

JIM

I've got plenty of ideas. But as my dad said, take a lesson from your anatomy: you have two ears but only one mouth. Better to listen.

SAINT MARTIN

Your dad serve?

JIM

Nope. Hated the military. Never saw any use for having one.

DIGGER

Really?

JIM

Yep.

DIGGER

Care to elaborate?

JIM

Nope.

They all tap their glasses on the bar. JIM refreshes drinks.

JIM

No I don't.

SATCH

Why not?

JIM

I just don't. I get the sense that even though you all badmouth what you did when you did it, making a career in the military, you're glad you can call yourselves vets. What my father thinks has no bearing on that.

DIGGER

And you—you believe in what he believes?

JIM pauses.

SATCH

We're not gonna leave your bar.

JIM

Yes. Yes I do. I hate how the military way of thinking has taken over everything. Police departments with drones—please. And that's all I'm going to say.

SAINT MARTIN

I think it'd be interesting to meet your father.

JIM

Of all the fathers my mother might've hooked up with, I'm glad I got him.

SAINT MARTIN looks at DIGGER.

SAINT MARTIN

Well?

DIGGER

Why are you looking at me?

SAINT MARTIN

Because a challenge has been laid down to you.

COFFEE

A conundrum.

SATCH

To be the very thing we say we don't want to be a part of. Not to mention getting off our asses and getting some exercise.

SAINT MARTIN

Be the change you want to see. I remember someone saying—

DIGGER

Enough, all right. Thanks.

JIM

You're welcome. I've gotta go lug some cases up from the basement for tonight.

JIM exits. SAINT MARTIN sort of hums the words.

SAINT MARTIN

Be the change you want to see—see the change you want to be—

DIGGER speaks with more insistence than usual.

DIGGER

All right!

DIGGER drains his glass.

DIGGER

If I march, then it means I accept what I did back then, and I don't accept it, I never have—no fucking honor—and I don't want people standing along some fucking parade route waving—flags and—not knowing—

SATCH

I believe that took you right out of breath.

COFFEE

And it's a full-of-shit argument. If we do what our young barkeep suggests, we march together. For what we are now, who we are now. And it kicks China in the balls.

SAINT MARTIN

Town council in the balls.

COFFEE

Town can make what they want of what we do, if we do this thing. This is about not sitting around and complaining. This is about doing what we said we were protecting when we were in the shit.

SATCH

Quartermaster corps?

COFFEE

Ever have to defend a load of prime—whatever from a general who wants it for some special purpose? I had to wear my steel underwear a lot, believe me. In the shit.

SAINT MARTIN

He's right—we didn't do what we did so we could come back and not do what we said we were making sure everyone could do. Got that?

DIGGER looks at them all. They all look at DIGGER.

LIGHTS: Bump to black.

SOUND: A high school marching band playing John Phillips Sousa.

LIGHT: Individual lights come up on the four of them as each speaks.

As each speaks, he begins to march in place—an attempt to look dignified but with bodies that don't always allow that. However, the marching should be coördinated so that it has some grace to it.

DIGGER

Fuck China.

SAINT MARTIN

Fuck the banks.

SATCH

Fuck austerity.

COFFEE

Fuck doing nothing.

They march in place with the music around them—shabby and silly but determined.

LIGHT: Up on JIM to the side, as if watching.

JIM claps as they walk by. The four look at him, salute, then eyes forward.

LIGHTS: Fade out.

SOUND: Band plays as lights fade, then fades as well.