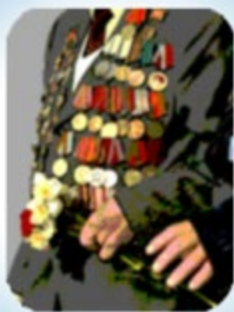


rapid city



a short story by
e. g. fabricant

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Rapid City is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Author's Note:

In late 2010, our writing group decided to do and review stories based on the Round Four rules for National Public Radio's "Three Minute Fiction"--600 words or fewer; containing each of these words: "plant," "button," "trick," and "fly;" and not "inappropriate." Two out of three ain't bad. It's about two veterans and a...new friend. Hope you enjoy it. Adult situations.

RAPID CITY



E. G. Fabricant

Willie stood in the doorway to Joe's bedroom, looking past his shoulder into the mirror. He tipped his felt fedora to a jauntier angle and smoothed the Brilliantined, white tufts beneath the brim over his ears.

"Ready to go, partner?"

"Pert' near—soon's I get the noose knotted." Joe struggled to cinch his tie into his starched white shirt collar. "Durn arthrititis."

Outside, a decaying but neat Voyager honked.

Joe split the blinds. "Let's go, Romeo. Amahl's here."

They crawled into the second seat, using the stool Amahl furnished. He bounced into the driver's seat and wheeled away. He found them in the rear view, eyes round and merry.

"Fourth Friday of the month—the usual, gents?"

Willie sighed. "Do you have to ask?"

They glided to the curb in front of a nondescript, two-story frame house. Gathering dusk compelled some of its lights and those in surrounding houses to come on. Smiling, Amahl turned and crooked his elbow across the top of the seat.

“Want me to wait this time?”

Willie sighed again. “Course—and put that flag down or we’ll have to walk home. And, no tip.”

Amahl laughed, threw it in “Park” and got comfortable.

Joe took the door handle. “Ready to plant the flag?”

Willie grinned. “I ain’t as good as I once was, but I’m as good once as I ever was. How d’you ‘spose Uncle would feel if he knew how we was using his benefits?”

Joe grinned back. “We’re veterans. We’re entitled.”

Upstairs, LaVerne released the sheers and turned.

“Okay; they’re here. Sure you’re up to this, honey? I’m sorry—I’m not usually short-handed on Friday night.”

Aurora finished picking out her natural and smoothed her lingerie. “Anything for my old mentor; besides, I need the money. Mama’s ill; no telling how soon I’ll work again.”

“I’m grateful. Bear in mind, though,” LaVerne whispered, “these gentlemen aren’t ordinary tricks. They’re...institutions.”

In the parlor, Joe selected Taffy, his regular, leaving Willie the choice of Aurora or the sofa and magazines. She took his hand and led him to the small room at the end of the hall. Pivoting, she posed. He shuffled his feet.

“Is something the matter?”

Willie couldn’t look up. “Ain’t never—you know—a colored...”

Aurora stanchd the reflexive bile with a smile. “The darker the berry, the sweeter the juice.”

Willie cleared his throat. “Reckon?”

“Do you want me to remove your clothes?”

“No, Ma’am. Man my age don’t have much but his dignity. I’d be obliged if you did yours, though.”

Naked, she prepared him gently. They engaged, and finished. She slid on her bra and panties and stood, hands on hips.

“Well?”

Willie buttoned the fly on his overalls and scratched his neck, his eyes dancing.

“Reckon right.”



Joe and Willie were taking the morning sun on the porch, over coffee and the *Journal*, when Amahl rolled up. Aurora popped out in a full-body leather jumpsuit and heels. Willie took it in. *Tighter than a cow’s own hide and more hard buckles than a pilgrim—assuming the pilgrim was set to beat you half to death with a cat o’ nine tails.*

She strode right up to Willie and fished into her handbag.

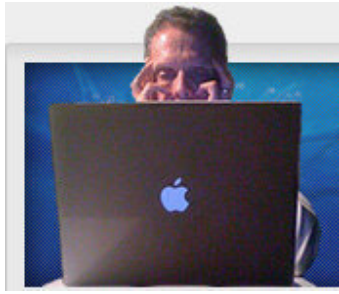
“I’m off to Chicago. You forgot your wallet.”

Just as easily, she was gone.

Up and down the block, Joe noticed that curtains had parted in windows now filled with blue hair and noses. He leaned into Willie.

“This month was really, *really* worth it.”





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