

HEROES AND ROMANTICS OF OUR TIMES: A Comedy in One A

FRANK J. MORLOCK C 1986

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Etext by Dagny

CHARACTERS:

Dobbs, a police Corporal
Dillon, a police officer
Larry Chambers, a police Sergeant, about thirty years old
Jack Dalton, the Sheriff, about thirty–five years old
Mitch Powell, an unemployed waiter
Vonda, about twenty–five years old

The scene takes place in the office of the Sheriff in Atkinsville, a mid–sized American town somewhere in the heartland of middle America.

The stage is empty when the curtain rises. We are in the office of Sheriff Jack Dalton. On the walls are posters for missing persons and criminals and duty rosters. The office contains a desk, several chairs and a rather fancy couch. After a moment Corporal Dobbs and Dillon pass through. It is late at night.

Dobbs

Sheriff Dalton must still be at the theatre.

Dillon

He surely likes to see the plays. Never cared for that much myself. Too high–brow. I like the movies.

Dobbs

I think the Sheriff likes one of the actresses.

Dillon

Now, don't you be spreadin' scandal.

Dobbs

I ain't spreadin' no scandal. You put up with too much shit from him.

Dillon

What're you talkin' about?

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Dobbs

You like to kiss his ass.

Dillon

You're just runnin' your mouth again.

Dobbs

You know what I'm talkin' about. You should stand up to him more.

Dillon

Leave me alone, Dobbs.

(Enter Sergeant Chambers.)

Dobbs

Evening, Sergeant.

Chambers

Hadn't you boys better get back on patrol?

Dobbs (fawningly)

We was just on our way, Sarge. Things been quiet though.

Dillon (to Dobbs, on their way out)

Why don't you stand up to him more?

(Exit Dobbs and Dillon. They greet Sheriff Jack Dalton who comes in jauntily and tosses his hat on his desk.)

Dalton

Evening, Larry.

Chambers

Evening, sir. Did you like the play?

Dalton

Oh, it was almost too hot to enjoy it. Rotten weather. Anything new?

Chambers

Nothing, sir.

Dalton

You sure?

Chambers

Oh, the reporters came for information.

Dalton

Over the Tucker business? (Chambers nods) I hope you were nice to them.

Chambers

Disgustingly nice, Sheriff.

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Dalton

And that's all?

Chambers

Some drunks, as usual, on a Friday night. A couple of brawls, a couple of thefts, and that's that. Nobody hurt.

Dalton

That's good.

Chambers

Nothing happening in Atkinsville. Never is, for that matter.

Dalton

Wonderful. Maybe I'll be reelected.

Chambers

At the moment, Atkinsville is reposing in perfect tranquility.

Dalton

Superficial tranquility, Sergeant. There are volcanoes grumbling in their depts. Nobody came to ask for me?

Chambers

Nobody. Was it a success?

Dalton

What?

Chambers

The new play.

Dalton

Huh! Big house very big house. Some pretty women lots of them. Same as always.

Chambers

Ah, the theatre.

Dalton

Bah, very deceiving, the theatre.. Most plays drag, tiring, repetitious situations, banalities never raise any social problems. Shit.

Chambers

Hell, we deal with social problems here, Sheriff, on a daily basis.

Dalton

We're married to them, you could say. All you see on the stage is love affairs. Take me, I'm yours. Adultery, whatever you wish. Reform, ideas never

Chambers

The theatre doesn't think.

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Dalton

No, it's a fact. It's because the theatre caters to women. God, that's the reason no need for further explanation.

Chambers

Right.

Dalton

Almost midnight. You know, I don't need you on a quiet night like this. Go on home. Take off. I've some work.

Chambers

That's very kind of you, sir. (hesitating) Sir, by the way, have you heard anything about my article?

Dalton

Your article? Right, I forgot. I saw the publisher of the Sentinel the other day

Chambers

Well, uh?

Dalton

Well, it seems it won't do. Too heavy, your article. Too heavy. What they want is something light witty.

Chambers

But it's a serious study of crime based on actual cases in our files.

Dalton

What can I say? I told them that. It's not my idea.

Chambers (very disappointed)

Thanks all the same, Jack. And people complain about the press! Decadence.

Dalton

Everything's decadent, Larry, the press, the theatre, the public, the police, too. Especially big city police not here in good ol' Atkinsville, population thirty thousand,. We live in an epoch of decadence. What do you want? We're not going to be born again, you know. Good night.

Chambers

It's all the same to me. But it's sad very sad. (dejected) Good night, sir.

(Sergeant Chambers goes out. The Sheriff works, whistles, looks at the clock impatiently, as if he is waiting for something to happen.)

Dalton

Should be here by now. (working some more) Any time now. (works some more) C'mon, dammit.

(Noise of a scuffle outside, a woman cursing. Dalton adjusts his tie, smiles delightedly, then resumes his work with a satisfied air. Enter the two deputies, dragging in Vonda. Vonda is a good-looking woman, heavily made-up, in a short skirt, flashy colors in short, a typical hooker.)

Vonda

Pigs, brutes bastards! Haven't you any shame? To treat a woman like this? Let me go! Sons of bitches!

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Dalton

What is it, what is it? What? You again?

Dobbs

Yes, Sheriff, this woman again. Parading her ass right up and down in front of Police Headquarters.

Dalton

In front of Police Headquarters, why

Vonda

It's not true! You're a bunch of savages.

Dalton

Shut up! What's got into you? At this time of night and in that skirt? This is about the twentieth time you've been brought in here, isn't it?

Dobbs (to Vonda)

You'd be wise to keep your mouth shut.

Dillon

More, Sheriff. The thirtieth, at least.

Vonda

That's true.

Sheriff

So, this is the way you take advantage of my good nature, my weakness?

Vonda

Let me go you're hurting me. At least you could give me a smoke.

Dobbs (a raucous laugh)

Ha, ha the sweet little thing.

Dillon (leering)

Come on, honey pie, you and me will go play in the cell.

Vonda

You are both pigs. Pigs!

Sheriff

Shut up! Don't complicate your case. It's serious enough as it is.

Vonda

But, Sheriff, it's not my fault. These are savages.

Dalton

Shut up! (to the deputies)

Leave me along with her.

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Dillon

Ah, Sheriff, she's just a slut.

Dobbs

And she's a real hellion, too. Might be dangerous.

Dalton

I'm not afraid. (to Vonda) I am going to deal with you once and for all. In front of Police Headquarters. You think I'm going to let you get away with that?

Vonda

I was just notching up my stocking.

Dillon

Every couple of minutes.

(Dillon imitates Vonda pulling up her skirt and notching up her stocking.)

Vonda (hotly)

It kept falling down.

Sheriff

Resisting arrest and indecent behavior and soliciting police officers.

Vonda

I was not soliciting these pigs.

Sheriff (to deputies)

She won't talk sensibly while you're around. You'd better go. (to Vonda) No resisting understand?

Vonda

But, Mr. Sheriff

(The deputies reluctantly go out.)

Sheriff

Enough. What's your name? What's your name? Answer!

(The voices of the departing deputies fade slowly away. Vonda and the Sheriff look at each other and then break out in guffaws of laughter. Vonda throws herself onto his lap. They kiss voraciously.)

Vonda

Ah, my sweetheart, my sweetheart, my darling.

Dalton

She's always funny. Always a great actress. A riot! Good evening, my happy hooker. (gives her his hat) Your hat.

Vonda (putting on his hat, then mimicking him)

Shut up! What's your name? (kissing him) You are terrifying, aren't you?

(Dalton gets down on his knees and rocks in front of her.)

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Vonda

No, no, don't do that.

Dalton

Come to mommy, come to mommy.

Vonda

No, no. They shook me up enough already.

Dalton

Poor little thing.

Vonda

And now, you know, I'm sure I've got black and blue marks all over my body.

Dalton (lewdly)

We'll see about that. (trying to undress her, but she evades him) Well, what's the matter?

Vonda

No, no. I've been manhandled enough, thank you. (she straightens herself up, rubs her arms and legs) Your deputies really worked me over, those brutes! They'd like to rape me. You'll see someday, they'll break something. And you call this love, do you?

Dalton

Love? Why, yes, ducky romantic love love for our time. It brings to mind balconies and rope ladders pimps and ruffians all in the moonlight. In this century, where we have no adventures, where life is so tepid, so flat. I find this delightful, unexpected, Shakespearean.

Vonda

What do you call it?

Dalton

I say it's Shakespearean.

Vonda

Police terminology. Really

(Vonda becomes thoughtful, then sad.)

Dalton

Ravishing, ingenious little Vonda. What's the matter, baby?

Vonda

Nothing's wrong.

Dalton

Something ain't right. Come on.

Vonda

I this isn't my idea of love.

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Dalton

What's wrong with it?

Vonda

To dress up and act like a hooker, to get pushed around by those animals you call deputies. They make my flesh crawl.

Dalton

But, it's exciting, isn't it?

Vonda

Yes, it's exciting. I was amused at first. Now, well now, yes, it degrades me. (grimacing) It humiliates me. Pretty soon I'll have to spend a night in the slammer with some real hookers. So as to make it more romantic.

Dalton

It's a thought.

Vonda

Then, it will be with your deputies taking turns screwing me. Right? That would be Shakespearean. A gang bang.

Dalton (liking the idea)

You exaggerate.

Vonda

So, that's it. I've had enough.

Dalton

You don't have any imagination, baby, that's why no poetry. No love of the unusual. You're just not passionate.

Vonda

Me, not passionate? (outraged and hurt) Ah, honey, you remember.

Dalton

Yes, yes. I remember very well, sweetie. What I mean is you lack cerebral passion. You've got it together physically, God knows, a little fire pot. But you want regular love, clockwork romance. My God! Me, I want something unusual, the French Foreign Legion, struggle, danger, Romeo, Bogart

Vonda (laughing)

Oh, you

Dalton

Now, show me how you notched up your stocking.

Vonda (coyly)

Why, like this, honey. (she demonstrates in slow motion)

Dalton

I love it, I love it. I'll bet Dobbs wet his pants.

Vonda

They both looked like they were going to jump out of their skin. They kinda scare me, honey.

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Dalton

Did they really hurt you?

Vonda

Did they ever.

Dalton (wildly)

And did you fight back?

Vonda

I kicked one of 'em in the balls, and scratched the other one.

Dalton (passionately excited)

Come on, come here, come here. (pulling her to the couch) Daddy's best girl. Are you wearing any panties tonight? I go crazy when you don't wear any panties.

Vonda

Find out for yourself. (after a weak resistance, allowing herself to be pulled down on the couch) Ok, ok. But listen, sweetheart, we've got to find a better way to see each other. You ought to have a better, a safer way. You, the Sheriff.

Dalton

There isn't any better way. This is the only way which satisfies my taste for adventure and at the same time affords me maximum security. I need security, you know. Not for me, but for my function. The Sheriff must be respected. I've got to set an example to the community. What do you expect? Besides, my wife is getting more and more jealous. She's watching me, spying on me, following me all the time. I saw her face in a cab the other night when I was at the scene of a crime. Terrible. This is the only place I'm safe. In my office. She's capable of anything, anything, my wife.

Vonda

Your wife! Your wife! (looking at him closely) Wait a minute. Where've you been so late?

Dalton

The theatre.

Vonda

The theatre? Your wife? (crying) You don't love me.

Dalton (puzzled)

Why? Why don't I love you?

Vonda

No you don't.

Dalton

But I adore you. Give me your lips.

Vonda

Oh, sure! You always want that! (turning her back on him)

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Dalton (rapturously)

Your lips, your lips. I don't love you? But, if I didn't luv yuh, honey, why would I make you dress up like a hooker and expose you to the insults of my deputies, to worse, perhaps. Think a bit, unemotionally, coolly. These sacrifices ennoble the soul, purify the soul, they're sublime tests of love. A man doesn't impose tests like that on a woman he doesn't love passionately.

Vonda (impressed, but not really following his thinking)

You say so!

Dalton

Yes, I say so! Me, Jack Dalton, the Sheriff of this little one-horse town known as Atkinsville. Have you read de Sade? Have you read Genet? I say so because it is true. Drunkenness in humiliation. Pleasure in suffering. Suffering in pleasure.

Vonda

Lies!

Dalton

Whaddaya mean lies? Psychological truth. Psychological and Christian, honey. What bothers me, what bothers me about you, honey, is that I have to explain all this to you. Other women, women who have read de Sade, they know this, they understand right away.

Vonda

Other women! (menacingly) What other women?

Dalton

I thought that would wake you up. Just getting a rise out of you, baby. Don't worry, I love you.

Vonda

You love me, perhaps, but you don't respect me. (Dalton makes protesting signs) No, you don't respect me. You want me to be a hooker. You don't respect me enough.

Dalton

Really, that's a little too much. You're crazy. See how unfeeling and unjust women are.

Vonda

No, no. (Dalton tries to kiss her) No, I came here to see my lover like I was a criminal being dragged off to jail.

Dalton

Right. That's what's so exciting.

Vonda

Oh, for sure.

Dalton

Exciting, Shakespearean! I've passed you off before my deputies for a streetwalker, you, my adorable mistress. And, I don't respect you? Talk sense.

Vonda

Jack!

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Dalton

No, you see, it's discouraging and it's unworthy. But, my God! And who has ever shown you more respect than me? Me, with my elegant manners! Have I ever offered to pay you for your love?

Vonda

Of course not.

Dalton

Have I ever given you a penny a single penny?

Vonda

That's true, but

Dalton

Well, have I? There (triumphantly) You see!

Vonda

Yes, but that's not the question.

Dalton

What whaddaya mean, that's not the question? Of course, that's precisely the question.

Vonda

Say what you want. As for me, it infuriates me to be treated like this. I have some modesty. I assure you it takes away my pleasure. Why can't you come to me at my place?

Dalton

Impossible.

Vonda (coaxingly)

It's real nice at my place. I keep it real clean. And it doesn't smell like tobacco like this place, and I don't know what! Everything's under control I'm a good housekeeper. Won't you just once?

Dalton

Impossible.

Vonda

My mom will make us a nice dinner.

Dalton

No, no.

Vonda

Really. There's nothing to eat here. Come home with me say you will.

Dalton

And my wife? Have you thought of that? If my wife found us together! Consider my wife's position. It would be a gross breach of trust in my marriage, and in my public life. What a situation.

Vonda (caressingly)

What? It would be funny, exciting then, you could love me with a sense of real danger. It would be

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Shak Shake how do you say it?

Dalton

No, no no more of this nonsense. This is madness. We're safer here. (grabbing her) Here, everything is under control ha, ha.

Vonda

Let me go, leave me alone, you don't deserve any

Jack What, me me, with my cerebral passions passionate, perverted? All right, perverted, I admit it. When you arrive with your clothes pulled loose, ruffled, torn, violated, struggling like a little bird in the big paws of my brave deputies what do you want? It puts me in a rare mood. It makes my blood pound. (embracing her again)

Vonda

You disgust me. You're an egoist a dirty old man. And don't give me any more shit. And, as for your wife I don't give a damn about your wife! Are you really married? How am I to believe you?

Dalton (coaxingly)

Vonda!

Vonda

If you're married, where's her picture? All married men have their wife's pictures in their office.

Dalton

My wife doesn't like the way she photographs, that's all.

Vonda

And your theatre? The Sheriff's always at the theatre. I'll bet. As if it were natural.

Dalton

My duty requires me to be there to make sure there's nothing unsuitable being performed.

Vonda

Ah, your duty. It's really nice, your duty. You probably screw all the whores in town right on this couch!

Dalton (injured innocence)

Vonda! You should know by now I would never touch a real whore.

Vonda

Let me be.

Dalton

Listen to me.

Vonda

I've had enough. Finished. You make me sick.

Dalton (dryly)

You know me, my little Vonda, I don't like scenes. I have a horror of scenes. If I liked scenes, I'd stay home. I'd stay with my wife, who furnishes me with more scenes than I can count.

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Vonda

Stay there then.

Dalton

Vonda.

Vonda

Shut up!

Dalton

Come on.

Vonda

I can't be bothered.

Dalton

You're wrong. I swear to you, you're wrong.

Vonda

Shit! Shit!

Dalton

I don't know to what excess anger can lead a Sheriff. (laughing nervously) Oh, ha, ha, ha

(There is a noise of scuffling outside. They stop and listen.)

Dalton

Hmm what can that be?

Vonda

Perhaps they're bringing you another one of your girl friends.

Dalton

Shut up! (sitting at his desk) Go sit over there adjust your skirt and protest, rebel. Quickly, quickly. Don't be afraid to rebel. Call me names. I love names. Hurl 'em at me. Be nasty, abuse me. Hurry up look sharp.

Vonda

You really want me to?

Dalton

Hell yes! Come on.

(The door opens and the deputies enter, pulling in Mitch Powell.)

Dalton (to Vonda)

Shut up, shut up. You are insolent. Will you kindly be quiet!

Vonda

It's not true they lied. They are animals savages, murderers. And you are, too. You're a brute, a dirty old man. Pig! Pig! Pig!

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Dalton

Good! Fine. Shut up. When will you tell me your name? I forbid you to speak to me like that.

Vonda

Skunk.

(The deputies release their prisoner and are ready to hurl themselves on Vonda. She defies them with clenched fists.)

Dobbs

Put her in a cell!

Dillon

Let me work her over with my belt, chief. I'll teach her some respect.

Dobbs

A dildo's what she needs.

Vonda

You need one, too.

Dalton

Leave this women. I am not finished with her. She's got the devil in her. Now, what's this? What's he done? What's he in for? Nasty looking brute. (to Mitch Powell) What makes you prowl the streets at this time of night?

Mitch

It's not that late for a poor man.

Sheriff

Not late, not late? What are you talking about? Shut up, and don't joke with me. Why didn't you book him?

Dobbs

This man is perfectly free.

Dalton

Just because he came in freely, doesn't mean he can leave freely.

Dobbs

He asked to see you on a matter of urgency.

Dalton

On a matter of urgency? Really! And if all the criminals in town asked to see me urgently at two in the morning, while I'm engaged in important business, I suppose you'd bring them here to my office?

Dobbs

But chief (to Mitch after some nodding) Leave me alone, you. Settle down. (pushing Mitch)

Dalton

Come on, talk. What do you want here? Make it quick.

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Mitch

Pardon me, excuse me, Sheriff. I only wanted to tell you

Dalton

You want to tell me. You want to tell me. What do you want to tell me?

Mitch

Sir, I have something. I brought you something. I found it, very unusual. I found it not ten minutes ago, right in front of Police Headquarters.

(Mitch looks at Vonda and smiles.)

Dalton

In front of Police Headquarters? It's frightening, the things they find in the street in front of Police Headquarters.

Vonda

Talk all you like skunk.

Dobbs

That woman is going to get some old-fashioned police brutality.

Dalton

Let her alone, let her alone. I am taking notes. Now, what did you find (scornfully) on the street?

Mitch (pulling out a wallet)

Here, sir.

Dalton

Just a wallet. I thought it must be something special, like a diamond ring or something.

Mitch

A wallet, Mr. Sheriff, a red leather wallet with money in it.

Dalton (smirking)

But, only a few dollars, of course.

(The Sheriff and the deputies laugh.)

Mitch

See for yourself. I haven't touched a penny.

Dalton

You bother me at two in the morning over a billfold! (opening it) If there's nothing here Watch out! Let's see, let's see. This is crazy, this is impossible. (Mitch gives a series of approving nods and smiles to the deputies, who return them with furious looks and gestures) Wow! This is a fairy tale. Ten thousand dollars. (recounting) Word of honor ten thousand dollars.

Mitch

Ten thousand dollars. It's all there, yes indeed, yes indeed.

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Dalton

Good Lord, it's an enormous sum, enormous A fortune. Holy moly.

Mitch

When I think there are actually people who go strolling around with that much money, while the rest of us

Dalton

And you actually found this?

Mitch

Indeed I did, sir.

Dalton

That's really astounding. I didn't think there was anybody in Atkinsville that had that much money.

Vonda

It's Shake Shake

Dillon

You shut up.

Dobbs

This doesn't concern hookers.

Dalton (to deputies)

Never mind, never mind. (to Mitch) Please tell us how you found it.

Mitch

It was easy, sir. Here's what happened. I was near the theatre

Dalton

Oh, you're a first-nighter like me, eh?

Mitch

I only wish. I just happened to be in the neighborhood. But there were so many people, and I was tired. My hernia was acting up. I've got a hernia that causes me a lot of trouble, Sheriff, and I'm not very agile. From military service. So, anyway, I saw this well-dressed dude who was a bit drunk four sheets to the wind, actually. That man wouldn't give a poor beggar like me the time of day. A man without pity. A millionaire, I guess.

Dalton

Unfortunate, no doubt. But, what can the rich do for the poor anyway? Don't slander millionaires, my dear sir. Millionaires are indispensable to society.

Vonda

There aren't nearly enough of them to go around, in my opinion.

Dobbs

Shut up!

Dalton

She's absolutely right. The government should concentrate its efforts at social reform on the object of producing

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more millionaires instead of giving money to the poor. If it weren't for millionaires, you wouldn't be finding any wallets like this one. So go on.

Mitch

Well, I wished him to hell, I assure you. Actually, I suppose it's all the fault of Osama Ben Laden

Dalton

Laden, everything's the fault of Osama Ben Laden.

Mitch

May God get him for all the trouble he's causing.

Dalton

Right, right. But let's get down to business.

Mitch

I'm getting to it, Sheriff.

Dalton

Hurry up, finish, come on.

Mitch

Well, I wanted to get a cup of coffee. I was more or less behind this rich dude, but limping along a ways back because of my hernia.

Dalton

Kindly get to the point.

Mitch

Well, he's a little bit ahead of me and he hails a cab. As he's getting in, I notice he drops something. I give a shout, but the cab pulls out. By the time I limp up, all I see is this billfold. Naturally, I had a look at it. And I saw what you see. And the street's empty. Absolutely empty. And there I am with ten thousand dollars in my hand. Never before in all my life did I realize what it is to be poor. And yet I've always been poor. And nothing else in the billfold. No identification, nothing. Not even a picture. So you see, I was scrounging for money for a cup of coffee and I fell over ten thousand dollars little good it does me. I walked on over here it was on my way.

Vonda

How interesting! What a fat head!

(Dobbs shakes his fist at Vonda.)

Mitch

And now, Mr. Sheriff, it's late and I'd like to be on my way. I have an engagement.

Dalton

Just a minute. You can't go like that. Nosiree, not like that. That's an amazing story you've told me. A fairy tale. It's Shakespearean! But, my God if all this is true

Mitch

Every word is true, sir.

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Dalton

I believe you, I believe you. It has to be true. No one would make something like this up. But holy cow you're an honest man. A hero. There's no getting out of it, you're a hero of our times.

Mitch

I'm no hero.

Dalton

No mistake. Don't argue with me. I'm convinced of it. I'll tell everybody. This man is a hero.

Mitch

But sir, suppose a policemen found the wallet?

Dobbs

Hmm wow!

Dillon

Would I like that.

Mitch

Or even this pretty lady?

Vonda

Hey, you're a nice gentleman, more than I can say for some people.

Mitch

Or even you, Sheriff?

Dalton

Me! The hell! Well, then I'd be a hero, too. A hero, like you, understand? Even if it was my duty. I don't take back a word. Ten grand! My Lord. And the street was deserted you could have easily

Mitch

But my leg isn't too good, you know.

Dalton

Don't say that. Don't slander yourself. This is a fine thing, splendid, heroic. I can't find the right word for it. You should get the medal of honor or something, really, or maybe a Nobel Prize. This is the biggest thing that's ever happened in Atkinsville, in as long as I can remember. What's your name?

Mitch

Mitch Powell.

Dalton

Mitch Powell. Mitch Powell. Marvelous, Mitch Powell. This belongs in a book. What do you do for a living, Mitch?

Mitch

Huh?

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Dalton

What do you do? What kind of work? Your profession?

Mitch

Well

Dalton

Finding wallets is not your regular job.

Mitch

I'm afraid it's the only one I have.

Dalton (astonished)

What you don't work?

Mitch

It's obvious to look at me, isn't it? I used to be a waiter, but I can't do that any more cause I can't move fast enough account of my hernia.

Dalton

You get a disability pension?

Mitch

They say I'm not sufficiently disabled. But nobody will hire me. I get public assistance.

Dalton (icily)

You mean welfare?

Mitch

I guess that's what you call it.

Dalton

You mean you're one of them welfare cheats? (disappointed) And I thought so highly of you.

Mitch

I ain't happy about it. I'd be happy to work if someone would hire me.

Dalton

Sure, sure. They all say that. Where do you live?

Mitch

Good Hope Park.

Dalton (surprised)

Oh, that's a nice neighborhood. You live with relatives, I suppose. What number?

Mitch

No number. At least I never saw one on the grate.

Dalton

You're kidding.

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Mitch

Unfortunately, no. A grate is the last word in modern living conveniences, Sheriff.

Dalton

Then, you have no place to live?

Mitch

Homeless!

Dalton

That's terrible! Really terrible! But you have to have a place to live.

Mitch

I've been saying that myself.

Dalton

Don't try to be funny. You're no comedian. Do you know what it is to be homeless?

Mitch

I'm perfectly well acquainted with it with every aspect of it. It's a misfortune.

Dalton

It's not a misfortune it's a crime. It is not allowed in this town. We don't permit homeless persons in our fair city.

Dalton

Well, I'm perfectly willing to change my present situation for a better one.

Dalton

Homelessness homeless people in a town. It's like a social cancer. You're a dangerous man, Mitch Powell.

Mitch

Me, dangerous? I'm an old man with a hernia that I can't afford to get fixed.

Dalton

A hernia. A hernia is nothing to do with it. Who cares whether you've got a hernia or not. You haven't got a home. People without homes are vagabonds. You are guilty of being a tramp. This is very annoying and complicated. There's no law in favor of heroes but the City Council has an ordinance against vagabonds. A whole heap of laws against vagabonds.

Mitch

I believe it. There's always something.

Dalton

You didn't think of that when you found the billfold, did you? You were only thinking of being a hero, of glory

Mitch

Really, sir

Dalton

Shut up! What a naïve idea!

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Mitch

If I'd known the law, I'd have let someone else do it.

Dalton

That would have been the best thing to do, by far. The rich take their wealth where they find it why did you have to be different?

Mitch

I'm a poor man.

Dalton

Right. Your reasoning is sound. But, what a misfortune.

Mitch

I thought maybe honesty would be important.

Dalton

It's not a question of being honest. No one asks you to be honest, Mitch. The only thing the law says is don't break the law. You can be as dishonest as you like, provided you don't break the law

Vonda

Or get caught!

Dalton

It's solely a question of respecting the law or getting around it, which is the same thing.

Mitch

Right, right. But you have to have money to do that.

Dalton

What do you want? Look at it this way. Here's this billfold. In your place, in your situation it was a fine thing to return it, I agree. I don't mean to say you were an imbecile to do it. No, on the contrary, morally speaking, your action is quite meritorious awe inspiring and even worthy of a reward. A hundred dollars at least. If the owner is ever found, I am sure he would agree. Yes, but legally, legally, you are in a very bad fix.

Mitch

I understand, I understand.

Dalton

There simply isn't any law obliging you to go around finding billfolds. See here's the City Code. Look at it, if you like.

Mitch

I believe you.

Dalton

However, there are numerous and explicit provisions penalties for being a vagabond. You would have been much better off to find a home than this wallet.

Mitch

I couldn't agree more.

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Dalton

I am going to find you a home.

Mitch (surprised)

Really?

Dalton

Word of honor.

Mitch

It's really kind of you

Dalton

Right here

Mitch

In your house?

Dalton

You'll be my guest for the night.

Mitch

Thank you, Sheriff.

Dalton

And tomorrow morning, I'm going to put you on the first train.

Mitch

The first train?

Dalton

Right.

Vonda

Hey, you can't do that nobody does that anymore, it's illegal.

Mitch

My God!

Dalton

Arrest this man. But go easy with him. He's a hero.

Vonda

It's unconstitutional

Dobbs and Dillon (brutally)

Come on. We've got a nice little cell for you. (dragging him off) Out you go!

Mitch

But, you can't do this. The lady is right, the Supreme Court has said

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Dalton

Are you some kind of liberal or commie? Don't mention that un-American institution to me.

Dillon

Out you go, bum. You can talk later.

Dobbs

Some kind of hero.

Mitch

Please

(Dobbs and Dillon drag Mitch out.)

Vonda

It's despicable. Is that your idea of a joke?

Dalton

What? Not in the least.

Vonda

You're not going to run him out of town?

Dalton

I sure am.

Vonda

How can you?

Dalton

Got to. We can't have homeless people in this town. Give the place a bad name.

Vonda

Oh, no! You are DETESTABLE! DETESTABLE!

Dalton

No need to talk like that, now. Nobody's around, baby.

Vonda

This time it's for your benefit. And I mean it. I don't want you any more. I am ashamed of you. God, you're ugly.

Dalton

You know, you're getting on my nerves.

Vonda

Oh, am I? Well, I've just begun.

Dalton

Have you? Do me a favor, and get out of here.

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Vonda

No, I'm not going. I'm going to give you a piece of my mind.

Dalton

You don't want to leave?

Vonda

No, no!

Dalton

As you please.

(Dalton pushes a button.)

Vonda

What are you doing?

Dalton

You'll see.

(Dobbs and Dillon come in.)

Dalton

Lay hands on this woman.

Vonda (spluttering in rage)

You, you you

Dalton (calmly)

And put her in a cell.

Vonda

What ?

Dalton

With the other hookers. I'll see about her in the morning.

Dillon

That's not bad.

Dobbs

It's a nice cell.

(Dobbs and Dillon pin Vonda's arms.)

Vonda

No, no. I don't want it.

Dobbs

Maybe I'll come see you there, honey.

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Dillon

Don't want you to be lonely.

Dobbs

We're very hospitable around here.

Vonda

Let me go. I don't want it. I don't want it.

Dillon

You're going to get it, honey. Tonight.

Vonda

Brutes, animals, no, no!

Dobbs

Shut up, you little bitch. You've got a lesson to learn.

Dalton

Be easy on her, boys. She's a woman after all.

Dobbs

There won't be any bruises.

Vonda

I'll expose you. I'll tell everybody about you. I'll tell your wife.

(Dobbs and Dillon pull Vonda off, screaming.)

Dalton (alone)

My wife's been dead for years. (walks up and down, takes the billfold, looks at it, then locks it in a safe) Imbecile! (lighting a cigarette) These crazy women you can't have eight days peace in a row with them no, not ever. Why should she care what happens to this vagabond? What a disgusting way to spend the evening. Well, it was time to get rid of her. Still, maybe I should stop Dobbs he's a real sadist, and might

(Enter Sergeant Chambers.)

Chambers

Excuse me, Sheriff, but

Dalton

You but what what are you doing here?

Chambers (bewildered, hearing Vonda screaming off stage)

Sir

Dalton

Are you going to get out of here?

Chambers

But Sheriff Dalton, I forgot it was stupid of me, but I forgot my house keys and

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Dalton

Get out and leave me in peace or I am going to put you in a cell, too.

(Dobbs and Dillon return, grinning.)

Dalton

And you get out, too.

(The Sheriff beats them all as the curtain falls.)

CURTAIN