

And excerpt from. . .

Doves Migration

by
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Across town, Tad joined in a game of five card-stud. Sitting next to his friend Daniel Hobbs, at a round table in the back of the dingy poorly lit room of Jake's pub, he dealt the last card to himself. Determined to win some of the money he lost last night to that damned Irishmen, Gilbert, Tad casually slipped himself the Ace that was buried on the bottom of the deck.

Casually picking up his hand, he showed no emotions at the Ace high straight he dealt himself. Only the glimmer in Tad's eyes betrayed his excitement, knowing he was certain to win this hand. Glancing at Gilbert over the top of his cards, Tad's desire to shame his enemy intensified. Not for the money that he had consistently lost to the Irishmen. But more importantly, after seeing Miranda's interest in Gilbert earlier in the garden, Tad was hell bent on proving he was far more worthy of her attention than this man he deemed as a worthless son-of-a-bitch. Clearing his throat, he turned to Daniel.

“Hobbs, it’s up to you?”

“Not so fast, Honeycut!” Gilbert grabbed Tad’s arm from across the table. “Let’s be showing us all the Ace of spades that was buried low hole. I’d be wagering it has found its way miraculously into yer hand!”

Glaring back at him, Tad said, “Are you accusing me of cheating?”

"I'm doing more than calling you a cheater, ya lousy bastard! I'm here to prove it." Gilbert shouted, reaching across the table before Tad had a chance to react and grabbed him by the coat lapel, while knocking his cards across the table.

Daniel, noticing the Ace at the same time as Gilbert, reacted by knocking into the table, resulting in the cards, money, and ale crashing to the floor at Tads feet.

"Why you dirty low down scum! Can't win the honest way can ya? Gotta deal off the bottom of the deck?" Gilbert shouted.

"You damned liar!" Tad shouted back, knowing it was now his word against Gilbert's since all the cards were scattered on the pub's floor in a pile. "You're drunk and don't know what the hell you're talking about!"

"That may be so, yer lordship. But why is it then that you got yourself the ace of spade that was buried on the bottom of the deck? I saw it with me own damned eyes when you were shuffling!"

Tad outraged reached down on the dirty floor to retrieve the money and cards that had fallen, spotting the Ace of spades on top, he placed his boot over the card and then threw the money at his accuser. "You don't know what you're talking about! Here ,take your damn money! Who needs it! You're only pissed off that the lady prefers me to the likes of you."

"What the hell you talking about? What lady?" Gilbert shouted back at him.

"You know perfectly well what lady, you slimy bastard. Can I help it that Miss Brown would rather associate with someone of means, rather than a no good for nothing like you? And since you can't have her. You're trying to destroy my good name. Before

you start accusing someone unjustly of cheating, you better be damned sure you're right in the future you slimy-Mick."

Realizing everyone in the entire bar was staring at the both of them, Tad pulled the table back to an upright position and kicked the tin tankards at his feet. Dramatically he then straightened his suit coat and took his seat again. After confidently leaning back in his chair, with a snide look on his face Tad added for the benefit of those who were listening, "Hear me real good O'Flaherty. People get themselves killed for trashing the good name of honest folk here in the America."

"BULLSHIT! There ain't an honest bone in yer body. And I caught ya dead to rights!" as he flung himself across the table with his first blow clipping the corner of Tads eye. Knocked off balance, Tad fell back in his chair onto the floor of the pub. Recovering quickly, Tad jumped to his feet and flung himself onto his attacker. Gilbert, anticipating Tad's reaction, made his way around the table to deliver another blow to Tad, but found the taller man pinning him down across the table with a forceful strike to the head instead.

The remaining men that had been sitting around the table jumped from their seats as the two men continued striking each other with their fists. Within moments the fight ended abruptly when the owner of the pub, breaking a whiskey bottle on the side of the bar, yelled, "Get out Irish! We don't need the likes of you and that bad temper of yours tearing up my place. Get out and don't come back."

"Me! I ain't the one who's been just caught cheating? You'd let that bastard remain but yer throwing me out? What the hell is going on here!" Gilbert demanded.

“That’s right Irish. I said get on out of here and don’t you be coming back! Or the next time I’ll send for the constable and throw your ass in jail, to have ya deported back to Ireland, where you belong!”

With victory in his eyes, Tad again picked up his chair and after brushing his blonde blood- soaked hair back across his head, yelled at his attacker, “You heard the man. Get on out of here ya damned lying bastard!”

From the look on Gilbert's face it was obvious he was outraged, glaring at the rest of the men around the table who had been playing cards, he yelled, "Tell em! Tell em what ya saw, damn it!”

None of the men would come to his aid and glanced away from his accusing eyes."What in the hell is the matter with you dumb bastards? His lordship steals your money right from under your noses and you protect him." Disgusted, he waved his arm at them. "Ah the hell with ya.” Then turning his attention back toward Tad, Gilbert glared at him with contempt, grabbing his money, and spouted, “Watch your back ‘yer lordship’, cause I’ll be getting yer ass! You can count on that, and the rest of you lying bastards too!” Then he stormed out of the pub indignantly.

Daniel glancing over at Tad announced to the rest of the onlookers, “That dirty stinking liar has tried to dishonor my good friend’s reputation here. A round for the house, on me!”

Dramatically patting Tad on the shoulder he added, “I tell ya all, Honeycut is a man of honor! It was that low belly O’Flaherty. I saw the whole thing. Isn’t that right?” he yelled, looking at George Hornsby and Harry Pike to back him up. Readily, the other

poker buddies agreed, but they knew differently, seeing Tad deal from the bottom of the deck as well.