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Straight Line on a Crooked Highway — A blog by Luke Sommer Glenn

I've never been good at toeing the line. I've always been too sloppy, clumsy or inebriated. I can't draw a straight line, much less cut anything straight. It's hard to walk straight on a crooked highway.

I was hanging out with a bartender and her family. They were recent transplants from up north and had very different customs than my upbringing.

Grandma was into the whole Catholic, Virgin Mary weirdness. There were statues depicting the ladies of Fatima, Lourdes and Guadalupe, in every corner of the house.

Being Southern Baptist, I was taught that all that stuff was blasphemous, so I didn't regard it as "sacred" as I should have. Grandma was having wine and seemed to be loosened up. The rest of the family didn't mind their p's and q's, so I figured they didn't take their religion so seriously.

Totally unlike my own Bible-thumping Mother and siblings who NEVER indulged in any form of alcohol and didn't use coarse language

I thought Grandma would enjoy a little harmless joke about the priest and the nun with the "\$10 bucks, same as downtown" punchline. Boy was I wrong. There went my chances with the bartender's pretty-faced younger sister with the pear-shaped ass...

I had told what I thought were far more offensive jokes that evening, but I guess the wine turned psycho in Grandma Fatima and drama exploded. The entire family erupted into some kind of fight that had to have been festering just beneath the surface for a while.

The bartender's husband and her father came to blows over the son-in-law's inappro-

priate behavior towards the doll-faced little sister. Mom, little sis and Grandma were screaming simultaneously—who knew about what.

I made my exit with my bartender friend on my heels. When we got to my truck, I stuck the key in the door and turned around to apologize for stirring up the hornet's nest when she jumped up on me, threw her arms around my neck, wrapped her legs around my midsection and laid a stunningly passionate kiss on me.

It have lasted longer than I perceived because next thing I knew, Grandma was peeling her granddaughter from around my person and gave me a look like I was Lucifer incarnate.

The neighbors had called the police. The bartender's husband and dad both went to jail. After everyone, including myself, gave a statement to the officials, the drama was over. Grandma went to her room.

The bartender had wanted to hook me up with her sister, at least that was the original plan. Her sister was cute but lacked personality to put it nicely. The bartender saw something in me that she liked but her sister didn't. That's okay because, other than her being married, the bartender and I had natural chemistry.

Acted upon or not, animal attraction can awaken the hope of something better than what we have—or somewhere better than where we are. I think my bartender friend just wanted some excitement, something different than her day-to-day.

It's hard to toe the line in a hurricane and sometimes it really isn't my fault.

A few years earlier, a good friend and fellow partier made the mistake of marrying a girl nicknamed "Tits." She was the

closest thing to an actual succubus I had run afoul of at that naive age.

My friend wasn't the beach lover that I was, and she was a sun sponge, so he didn't mind her taking me to the beach.

We'd been acquaintances previous to their nuptials, and I let her read through my box of poems and stories I had been writing since I was a child.

Before things got weird, she spent months to convince me to hand over the box. She promised to type it all up and organize it for me. I repeatedly refused until she finally said, "If you were really my friend, you'd let me do this for you." I gave in. What a sucker!

It was all fun and games until she started showing up at my hangouts. I'd tell her to go back home to her husband. My guys would run her off when she would come around looking for me.

I was at the ABC Lounge drinking fifty-cent bourbon on ice, sink or swim night, because I've always drank for the buzz.

They had a jukebox. When it played a song I didn't like, I would hip check it and it would play the next song. All my buddies had gone home, but I had recently been dumped and was doing a fine job of drowning my sorrows.

After \$20 worth of rotgut bourbon, I thought I heard an angel calling out. Then an abrupt voice asked a question that cut through the blurry-eyed fog of inebriation; it took all the lead out of my pencil—"What about Joe?"

My heart sank as I realized who was doing the talking. A

rage shot through me—I was mad at myself, mad at her for putting me on the spot. She KNEW the ramifications.

The twist to it was she wasn't really interested in me; just wanted to cause great pain to Joe- who loved her.

Had it been an honest mistake she wouldn't have rushed home to torture him, withholding who her co-conspirator was for hours. When she finally told him it was me, he grabbed a gun and was mad enough to kill. Luckily for me he had reconsidered everything by the time he found me; he recalled the time I talked him through what could've been a bad acid trip and all the times he'd heard me admonish her for following me around.

All of our mutual acquaintances were dismayed, and I had a few hairy confrontations over it. They divorced and I went on the road. I've never seen the big box of everything I had written from first grade to the age of 25 again, she "lost" it or more likely threw it away. That was my punishment for dancing with the Devil.

Another cruel twist for human beings: everything fun, especially sex and food, is another fine line that moves as we age. It's extremely difficult for some of us to toe the line. Moderation is the key to life, and I'm wired to run wide effing open.

Luke Sommer Glenn is a local entertainer and Conch Character.

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