

**Your on the  
Street Reporter**



**Uyless Black**

**Slim's Wisdoms**

# **Slim's Wisdoms**

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## **Slim's Wisdoms (I)** **Breakfast at Betty Sue's**

I usually drink my tequila shots after breakfast. Jose Quervo washes down the eggs real good, 'specially if Betty Sue's put too much pepper on 'um. Not the tequila, the eggs.

I made an exception today. I'd been waitin' to pick-up pain pills from the drug store. Why the hell was it takin' so long to pour pills into a bottle? Goddamn druggists. What do they know about pain? I was big-time hurtin'.

Down the block from the drug store is the best place in town. It's got Tammy Wynette on the jukebox and right smack dab in the middle of the bar---a full-size, regulation shuffleboard. Matter of fact, it's the only place up here in north Idaho where I've come across an honest to god standup shuffleboard. Okay, it leans a little bit to the left...or the right depending on which end you're at. But it's a standup shuffleboard, bubba, don't see 'um much anymore.

A couple buddies 'n me been playin' the 'board this week. They's my buddies 'cause I'm real good at acquiring buddies. Hell-fire! Just buy 'um a drink. It's a lot better than a handshake.

Anyway, being sorta' new to town, my neighbors told me this saloon is the local biker's bar. It's called Betty Sue's. That's where Betty Sue's eggs come from. That and the tequila.

About this biker's bar: Truth is, I'm an outsider. I guess the drinkers in Betty Sue's kinda tolerate me 'cause I play shuffleboard and buy drinks for just about ever'one.

Betty Sue, she puts up with me, too. I pay my tab. Plus, I don't put slugs in the shuffleboard machine. Betty Sue told me she gets real upset 'bout those slugs. And not paying for a beer? This here north Idaho is a different country hoss.

I don't really fit in at Betty Sue's. First, I don't have a tattoo. Second, I have a beard but it's not long enough to dip into my shot glass. But the worst part is I'm driving a Toyota. I'm damn near ashamed to pull up to Betty Sue's. Good thing her windows are blacked out.

Just want you to know that the Jap car I drive ain't mine. It's my wife's. I ain't allowed to operate my own vehicle. The law took away my license to drive my pickup.

My way of gettin' around used to be a Dodge Ram. But the judge didn't say nothin' about my driving somethin' else. So, I drive this slant-eyed thing down to Betty Sue's, and my wife drives my pickup down to the hairdressers. There ain't no justice.

Anyway, back to my pain. It's been goin' on for a long time. You'd think I lived in that socialistic country...what's it called? Europe I think. But it's worse here; even worse than Canada, just up the Idaho panhandle a short piece.

How do I know all this stuff? Good buddy, I got eyes. I can watch TV with the best of 'um.

The reason the pain's worse is 'cause I can't get good medical service. I've been to four doctors. Count 'um! Four! They never told me what was wrong with me, but they never charged me a red cent either. Just kept sending me somewhere else and sending someone else the bill. Is America great or what?

Anyway, I ordered a couple of double shots of tequila with my eggs. That got me some bonifides from the regulars at the bar; most of them was drinking beer. I think they even overlooked my T-shirt. It had a picture of a Heineken beer bottle on it, a present from my sissy brother-in-law.

I swear, I get pissed off at them so-called macho bikers. There they sit in Betty Sue's, taking up space, nursing their watery Buds, generally parked on their worthless asses; while out there in America are the Easy Rider roads, just waiting to be explored---like Jack Nicholson did

in that *real* biker movie. Damn, I loved Jack's football helmet! Just like my old days in high school.

Anyway, if those mealy-mouthed bar flies had one ounce of shit about them, they'd at least play Betty Sue's shuffleboard or get some other good exercise. Never seen any of 'um ever get their asses off the bar stools.

I'll bet my last Jose Quervo that none of these guys at Betty Sue's has ever banged anyone in a New Orleans cemetery. You know, like those bikers did in that movie.

Bikers? Most of them are older than me, sitting around this bar, pissed off at Uncle Sam, but pulling in Uncle's unemployment checks. Dennis Hopper must be turnin' over in his grave.

Okay, I admit I'm out of sorts. That's what the lack of drugs and booze will do to a person. So, I polished off the tequila shots, even 'fore my eggs arrived. That impressed the bar maid. Even the bar flies; they were startin' to pay attention to my wild habits.

I ordered up two more shots of tequila. The eggs came. I downed em' all...along with two Texas Toasts.

I was sort of contented, but I had to get back to the drug store for my Percodan. So I put down a 20 dollar bill on the table, "Keep the change, honey."

"Honey, there ain't no change to keep. You done a lot of tequila."

"Ok. Other 20?"

"That'll work."

"There you go. As I said, keep the change, if there is any."

"There's a lot. Say, where you headed?"

"To the drug store. Gotta' get me some pain pills."

"Honey, you don't look like you're in much pain. Would' ya like a ride to where I'm heading?"

"Where you headed?"

"Where would' ya like to go?"

"To hell with those pills. I'm headed any where you're headed."

"Honey, let's go!"

## Slim's Wisdoms (II) Supper at Norma Lynn's

Hot damn. That bar maid at Betty Sue's sure earned her name. Bar-none, she made me real happy. I even forgot about them pain pills at the drug store. She served up supper and ever' thing else. I'll tell you, last night was one of them special days.

I swear, just close to midnight, that girl starting looking closer to a 10. Least 'till this morning. Okay, I suppose she didn't look too bad this morning either, but I'd pretty much stopped lookin' at her. I sorta' lost interest.

Anyway, yesterday I'd been listening to the juke box at Betty Sue's. Just in case you're interested, along with TV and my shuffleboard buddies, that's where I get my learning. That and listenin' to the Reverend on Sunday morning. He's got a way of makin' me want to give up my tequila and drug pain money when the offering plate gets passed around. He talks to us real good about sin and all. He even allows anyone in the congregation to say they've sinned and need salvation. He then talks with the Good Maker and the two of them do all that saving!

Yep, I go to church. 'Specially on Sundays, 'cause Sundays come after Saturdays. And Saturdays, well...

That's what I want to tell you about. Well, in a minute. For now, I listened to the Reverend's sermon. He said a lot of things about the Bible. I guess my sitting there was good, but I did think the Reverend was mighty lazy. Just quoting the Good Book and then shouting about all his quotes.

Hell-fire, you'd think he could think som'thin up by his'self.

Sur'nuf, he did. He had this to say in his sermon:

"Oh Lord, this is your humble servant. Grant my flock a filament to your firmament. Help my sheep to be generous."

I don't understand much that he says, but it shore sounds good. The way I look at it, I just wait to the end of the sermon, when the Good Lord and the Reverend saves ever'body. I'm a regular saved person. Ever' Sunday, I tell ever'one I sinned the night before. I get saved all over again.

*Good buddy, I'm headed for Heaven!...long as I don't die between Saturday night and Sunday morning.*

Anyway, after last night, I'm still hurtin'. Betty Sue's bar maid---I think her name was Norma Lynn, maybe Norma Ann---well, she told me my problem was Jose Cuervo.

I'd never thought much about it. So, with her being a bar maid and all, I thought I'd get some expert advice. She told me that Cuervo stuff was doin' me in.

I said something like, *OK, I'll switch to something else.* I told Norma Lynn I saw a bottle at the back at the bar at Betty Sue's. The bottle said it was Patron tequila. I told Norma Lynn I'd drink it, but I didn't want to.

Just think, the stuff 's called Patron. You know what? Patron sounds Mescan to me.

Hoss, I only drink Made in America. Like Bud and Jose Cuervo.

I'd like to take a short break here, bubba: Mescans! They're takin' over our country. They can't even spell, much less sing our national anthem, *God Bless America*. They send all their money back to Mexico and won't even learn English. If them wetbacks could talk as good as me 'n you, that'd be another thing. All they can say is "see." See this, see that. What the hell?

Lookie here, compadre, I'm a well-traveled man. Been to Juarez and Tijuana more than I'd like to brag about. So, I know 'bout foreigners. And I liked my visits to those towns. Couple

times I stayed overnight. Not trying to be contrary, but they don't serve-up much of a breakfast in their jails. Up here in the Idaho, I get scrambled eggs and a donut ever' time I get up in the morning.

There's a bond that's circulating-around town....something about building another jail up here. One with air conditioning and all. In case you're interested, I'm all for it.

Anyway, down there in Mexico, my only complaint was that nobody talks English. That, and they're too many foreigners.

I'm losing my train of thought. ...Oh, back to whatever I was thinking about.

Norma Lynn said somethin' about Jose Cuervo being Mescan. I told her that couldn't be, as there's a song on Betty Sue's juke box about...well you know the words, "Jose Cuervo, you are a friend of mine."...and other stuff.

Betty Sue's not gonna put a *foreign* song on her record player. Neighbor! If it ain't American, it's un-American, and Betty Sue's a sure-fired American watering hole. Her bar is in the smack-dag middle of White Aryan Nations. What could be more American than that?

Well, Norma Ann...eh Lynn told me a couple things that still rile me. I'll wager my last Percodan that they'll rile you, too.

First-off---like I said---she told me flat out that Jose Cuervo was a Mescan drink.

Goddamn! And there it is, on Betty Sue's juke box. I play that song ever' time I go into Betty Sue's. What's wrong with that woman? She a Communist or somethin'?

Second-off, Norma Lynn told me the Patron stuff probably wouldn't help me all that much. She said something like, "Slim, it ain't the brand of tequila you're drinking. It's the amount of tequila you're drinking."

Well, there you go. All the while, I'd thought I'd just been drinking bad tequila. I never know; a fifth here; a fifth there. Before long I gotta get to the liquor store in time for it to open.

Anyway, Norma Lynn lowered the hammer, "Slim, *all* tequila is made in Mexico."

I was plumb floored! Most of my life, I'd been spending my hard-earned money on those damn socialistic foreigners. Eh, I mean most of my *grown-up* life. I didn't start drinkin' 'till I was twelve.

I told Norma Lynn I was pretty put-out about learnin' how I'd been leadin' a life that went contrary to my way of thinkin'. I told her I'd never do anything---least wise while I was sober---that made Good Ol' USA more socialistic....like that Europe country.

I'm not sure about Norma Lynn. She sort of tested me. She said something like, "What does drinking Mexican-made tequila have to do with socialism?"

Well, she had me there---least for a spell. But, good buddy, I had my ammo. I said, "Norma Lynn, ever' thing that's foreign is socialistic; ever' thing that's not American is foreign. So, ever' thing that's not American is socialistic."

I'll tell you what, that got her goat! It's pretty hard to get one-up on ol' Slim.

She wasn't all that happy about my facts, but she's not too educated. So, I didn't press my argument. Fact was, I was startin' to think she was lookin' pretty good...even in the morning.

I told her, "Norma Lynn, if I told you that you had a good lookin' body, would you hold it against me?"

That got her and me going again! 'Fore we knew it, it was high noon. Then, she had to get back to work at Betty Sue's, and I had to get back home to Slimette.

Slimette's my wife. She's the one driving my pickup.

### **Slim's Wisdoms (III)**

#### **Betty Sue's Closes**

I've got some real bad news. Worse news than my hangover. Betty Sue's has closed her doors. Goddamn it, not just the front door, but the back door. Can't even get into the place from the alley.

Damn recession must'a got to her, but she did gripe about customers walking out the door without paying their tab. I told her just to collect on ever' drink. She looked at me sorta funny; said her customers would be insulted, like she didn't trust them or somethin'. I dunno, looks to me like she had a good point about that not trusting thing.

Still, I paid my tab. Never walked out on one. And I've told you already about my big tips to Norma Lynn, the lady behind the bar. She sure does react to a tip, but I've already told that story, too.

Anyway, I never done nothing to Betty Sue, and there she was, closing her bar to a loyal customer. I even paid for my Fritos. What's happening to America? If you can't trust your bartender, you're in real bad shape.

Could be that Betty Sue's customers didn't drink enough. Who knows? Next thing you know, they'll be closing the tattoo places around here cause' we ain't getting enough tattoos.

The only thing that happened good today, other than getting my pain pill prescription re-filled, was the opening of two new tattoo parlors. Yep, two! They're just down the street from Betty Sue's place. I'll wager my last tequila that Betty Sue's old bar will become a tattoo parlor. Perfect location; on the corner between two big streets; lots of traffic.

A whole bunch of this traffic is comin' from folks from California. They're driving up here like hogs taking to their slop.

Dunno why they would ever leave Orange Country. Well okay, the White Aryan Nations is pretty big in this part of America. The newspapers say the Aryans got put out of business by the IRS, but looks to me like they still hang around.

I can't figure out what the hell is wrong with these Aryan folks. It's not like a black man had a choice about his skin. I got born white; wasn't like I told my mama to make sure about all this. I just dropped-out white. Those other folks just dropped-out black. Wasn't my fault. Wasn't theirs either.

Well, anyway, I'm sure gonna miss Betty Sue's. Nearest thing to a breakfast now is from my wife at our house, and she won't serve up a Jose Cuervo until around 10 in the morning. I guess that works, cause I don't wake-up much before 11.

Anyway, her and me has been having some issues. I told you about some of 'em, so I won't re-tell ever'thing I already told.

Slimette's just out of sorts, especially 'bout a Methodist Church being built down the street. Up here in God's country, Methodists are welcome, just as long as they become Baptists. I tried to tell her that Methodists don't like Baptists, and visa-versa; that a good ol' Methodist ain't likely to become a Baptist, and visa-versa.

She don't look at it that way. But then, she don't drink and do drugs, so she don't have much to occupy her time, other than that Methodist-Baptist thing. She'd be a lot better off just leaving those Methodists alone...and cook me some breakfast.

## **Slim's Wisdoms (IV)** **Opry Music**

Howdy. It's been a while since I wrote anything. I lost my EverSharp and had the dickens getting it replaced. Slimette offered to lend me hers, but it was the wrong color. Her's is purple; mine was black. Who the hell wants to write in purple?

Anyway, I'm letting you know that I'm headed down the road a few miles to watch two of my favorite singers sing. They're Merle Haggard and Kris Kristofferson.

All at the same time. On stage---just like the Grand Ole Opry! It don't get no better than that. Truth is, I thought Merle and Kris was dead. Hell, they're older 'n my kitchen sink. But they're appearing live on the stage as live as they can be.

More about Merle and Kris later. For now, I d like to add that I ain't had much luck attending them shows that sponsor live music. I got off to a bad start when I won a door prize at the opening of a café called the Texas Roadhouse up here in North Idaho.

Damn Texas carpetbaggers. Ever' one is coming to Idaho. There's more Californians drinking at bars up here than people like me and you. And they don't drink normal stuff like shots of Jose Quervo; just watered-down wine. Hell, before we know it, our Taco Bells'll have Mescans cooking the grub.

The door prize was two tickets to an Opry show coming to town! I figured I'd just saved me an expensive Greyhound ticket to Nashville to see my stars on the Opry. That's right, I didn't have my driver's license back then neither. Had a run-in one night with my tequila bottle, and then ran into John Law on my way home from Betty Sue's (that was 'fore she closed her bar).

Anyway, my uppity brother-in-law was always braggin' that he'd seen Barbara Mandrell at the Opry. Live, like in-person. That was in the past I told him, so that was history; and I told him to stop rubbing it in. Well...past history about this particular in-law, let me tell you just a little bit about him.

### **Little Jimmy Dick**

Little Jimmy Dick is what we call him. That's because he's little all over, like that big Opry star, Little Jimmy Dickens. My relative don't take to the name, so we only say it behind his little back. Anyway, Little Jimmy Dick bragged about the Opry and Barbara thing to one of those guys who sit around and don't do much of nothing but think about the past. Hell-fire, the past is past. What's the past got to do with anything? Anyway, this guy called hisself a historian, and Little Jimmy Dick got into trouble 'cause this history guy was a specialist about rear-view mirror things.

You know what? He told Jimmy that Barbara Mandrell had *never* sang anything of note at the Grand Ole Opry! He knew this true fact because Barbara was discovered singing her songs just down the street *from* the Opry, but *not* at the Opry. Jimmy Dick was sore about all this, but one thing about Jimmy, his tail may be little, but his tales ain't.

About that Opry show that was in town. Well, I was sore about it, too. Here's why good buddy. I didn't pay much mind to anything; just noticed the ticket said there was a big-time singer on the show. I thought that it must'a been like Barbara Mandrell down there in Nashville--you know...a new star. I hadn't never heard of this person. But there she'd be; singing at the Opry. After all, her full name was on that little-bitty ticket.



### **Beverly Sills of the Beverly Hillbillies**

I think the name on the ticket was Beverly Sills...something pretty close to that. And being pretty up-to-date on things, I figured she came from the Beverly Hillbillies TV show, so I knew she'd do a good job.

Plus I had two tickets. I gave a thought about inviting that barmaid from Betty Sue's to take the second ticket. But Betty Sue's had closed and the barmaid hadn't showed up at any of the other bars in town. So, I settled on taking my wife. Somebody had to drive.

'Cuse me, I keep getting off track. Slimette tells me my talking is like going through Indiana. I didn't know what she was talking about, but being a good conversationalist and all, I said,

“What the hell are you talking about woman?”

She said, “Slim, I could travel from one end of Indiana to the other before you ever finish a story.”

I had her on that one! Not many get the goods on Ole Slim. I nailed her to the wall with this one: “Indiana ain't very big. Just be glad you don't have to go through Texas.”

Anyway, Slimette and me went to the local Grand Ole Opry to hear that Barbara Sills singer do her thing.

### **The Opry that Slim Attended**

That damned Opry was the worst experience I ever had....'cept for Slimette shooting at me one night. I'll try to stay in Indiana on this one good buddy. But first: That singer Beverly Sills couldn't sing her way out of a paper bag. All she and a sissy-lookin' man did was shout at one another!

No guitars. No fiddles. No hats. No spurs. No boots. No nothing like good ole' Barbara Mandrell had. And they never smiled; just pranced around the stage in weird clothes yelling in a foreign language.

I thought it musta' been Mescan talk. Them wetbacks; they never stop at the border. They just swim across the Rio Grande to steal our jobs.

Anyway, you and me know by now that I'm real good at solving problems. And the problem I was having was why the hell the show was called an Opry? Okay, the ticket said “opera,” but everyone knows that's not spelled right. That *opera* weren't nothing close to a real Opry.

And was they ever serious! I just had to find out what was bothering them. Maybe somebody had died or lost their welfare check. Something pretty awful had to be happening on that stage.

The man sitting next to us had been real nice to Slimette and me when we came-in and claimed our seats. Don't know why, but he sort of shut-up after a couple minutes of me telling him about how we won our Opry tickets at the Texas Roadhouse, n' how we was looking forward to tunes like “Get Your Tongue Otta My Mouth, So I Can Kiss You Goodbye.”

Whatever, I leaned over and asked him, “Say, why are they so damned upset?”

He said, “They're arguing about whose turn it is to walk the dog.”

Well, they sure fooled me. Besides those foreigners shouting in Mescan, they was into...walking dogs? I thought to myself, *No wonder they're shouting; their damn dogs can't walk*. Still, for the life of me, I couldn't see much sense in getting so upset about some measly hound dogs.

This guy knowed a whole lot about the show. So, before Slimette and me got otta' there, I leaned over again, "What the hell'er they shouting in? Sounds like Mescan to me."

"Sir, they are singing in Italian."

EYEtalian! Good buddy, I was real happy. There weren't no foreigners on that stage, stealing jobs from Opry musicians. They was from back east, like New Jersey. They was Yankees, but they was still Americans. I ain't got no grudge about real Americans talking EYEtalian or even English....jest as long as they don't talk it to me.

Hoss, I talk American and ever' body in this good country better talk American. That's why I'm pumped-up about seeing Merle and Kris. I'm hoping Merle will sing that song about ...eh, goes like this: *Whenever yur runnin' down the country hoss, yur walking on the fightin' side of me.* Damn straight! And Merle sings it in American.

By the way: Padner, I know some stuff about EYEtalian. I keep up with the news. I watch the *Godfather* ever' time it comes on TV.

Anyway, I ain't never going to go to no more Oprys, leastwise less they're in Nashville. But I'm headed down the highway to see Merle and Kris!

More later good buddy. I got my EverSharp ready.

## Slim's Wisdoms (V) EverSharp Opinions

Howdy. I found my EverSharp---a problem I told you 'bout the last time me and you talked. I got it in my left hand, and as you can see, I'm writin' up a storm!

Speaking of writin' with my left hand, it ain't my fault. I musta' plopped out of my mama favoring my right hand to break the fall.

Anyway, I'm left-handed when I write and right-handed when I drink. Guess that makes both-handed...you know, bambidexterous. I got that word from *Popular Mechanics* 'bout how to use one hand or the other underneath your Dodge Ram if a bolt ain't positioned right...doggone!...Or left, you know what I mean.

My buddies, down at the place where Betty Sue's used to be, tell me that drinking my Jose Cuervo with my left hand means I'm a Communist. I did some inquiries like asking them what they was talking about? They said anything with "left" in it is like that country Europe. I asked them where they got their facts, and they told me Rush said that left-wing folks is Communists. Rush said they was Communists or Socialists, but it didn't make no difference to Rush.<sup>1</sup>

That got me thinkin' 'bout the Red Scares we had back in the Cold War days. Wonder why them Communists was called Reds? That color "red" 'bout Communists bothers me, good buddy. Us Red States is All-American. Ain't nothing but Reds here where I live. But hotdamn! Some Hollywood fairy---I heard this on TV---make a movie about Communists and named it "Reds"! That's plain stealing. And confusin'. Some folks has taken over a Communist color for the color of their states.

Hell fire, ole' buddy! I ain't no chicken. I'm left-handed, not left-winged. I swear, I don't understand that left-wing and right-wing stuff I hear on TV. Why don't they just say you're a Communist or a Christian? That would clear up things real good.

Anyway, the reason I taken up my EverSharp is 'cause I'd like to get some opinions from someone other than my friends at the bar here, so I'm taking notes from the TV shows. My drinkin' buddies are pretty good at giving opinions the first hour or so after they show up. But I think that Bud gets to 'em, and they sort of stop eatin' and hold on to their Buds too long. That bothers the bar keeper a lot, 'cause she sells beer to pay the rent.

I tell them beer sots to drink Jose Cuero 'cause it's better on the constitution, but they're on Social Security and tell me that they gotta watch their billfold. I'm on Social Security myself and tell them so. But they always come back with "Yeah Slim, but you're making a lot more money than us. Besides Social Security, you're on Agent Orange, too. We can't match your pocket book."

Ain't Uncle Sam great?! He pays me for my heart condition. ...Don't matter that Uncle gave it to me in the first place.

OK, there's this thing about me and my buddies, at least some of them. It's about being on Medicaid. Slimette brings in good money selling lipsticks and stuff, and at being a cosmetics expert. She works at the local beauty shop and all. Anyway, 'cause of Slimette's paycheck, I can't get no Medicaid check worth very much. Hell dude, I'm rich, least compared to them veterans that don't get Agent Orange checks.

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<sup>1</sup> Underlines are mine. Excerpt , Rush Limbaugh, "Speech," Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), 2009. Rush, "So here we have two systems. We have socialism, collectivism, Stalin, whatever you want to call it, versus capitalism." Rush associates socialists with Stalin, and the man is still on the air.

Still, I got some real bad problems with my teeth. If I could just get poor enough, Medicaid would fix my cavities. Damn government expects me to take care of my own mouth. Anyway, Slimette and me has got this plan: For a while she won't cash her checks. I'll be able to get my teeth fixed. Then, she can cash her checks, and we are right back where we started from...except I can chew my Fritos real good and sleep at night.

+++

'Nother thing I'd like to put my EverSharp to: It's about grown men doing all that damned hugging! Shit fire!...

Yeah, I know, Slimette's told me if I was goin' to amount to anything in life, I had to stop using four-letter words. So maybe I better 'pologize to you folks that don't cuss. Anyway, she told me, "Slim, when's the last time you saw a four-letter word used on 'Wheel of Fortune'?"

I ain't no speller, but I know well as anyone that Pat has four-letter words on his billboard all the time. That's why I work with an EverSharp---doin' this writin' to you---to get things straight. Slimette works with toe-nail clippers down at the beauty shop. That's why our thoughts just run in opposite directions. But she always gotta' get on top of an argument. She said, "You know what kind of four-letter words I'm talkin' about!"

I swear, that woman would badger me to death to win an argument.

Anyway out where I'm from, you'd never hug a man. It'd never happen dude. Well, maybe your dad, but I never hugged mine...just saw it on TV, like "The Waltons." That was the huggin'est bunch I ever saw! And all those "Good nights." No wonder they always looked sleepy, too busy saying good night all night long. Just go to bed and be done with it.

OK, maybe we'd hug a dying man, just to make him feel better about leaving this world. I swear, I never understood havin' to tell a person, lying there in his deathbed: "I'm real sorry." I just couldn't help but think he was saying, "What the hell do you have to be sorry for? I'm the one dying."

You know? That word *sorry* bothers me. Always has. We ain't sorry at all. We're damn-- -...eh, We're glad it ain't us. ...That better, Slimette?

This huggin' thing makes me think of this: "I love you" thing. "I love you this." "I love you that." "I love Dodge pickups," and so on. If we go 'bout saying we love ever'thing, it don't mean nothing when we say it. That's what I told Slimette yesterday when she asked me why I never said I loved her. I just told her I don't like to over-use the word.

She said, "If you ain't using the word on your wife, who'ya using it on?" She had me on that one. She's pretty good at arguing. I gotta say, 'tween me and you, I save up those words for those fillies down at the bar. Well, anyway, I said to Slimette, "OK, I love you. Feel better?"

I think that did the trick. She turned off the light, rolled-over, went to sleep, and didn't bother me no more about it.

Now, about men huggin'. I'll shake your hand, good buddy. But don't start any huggin'. And for sure, none of that chest bumping...unless you're a woman.

## **Slim's Wisdoms (VI)** **Talk English!**

Howdy. I'm glad you and me got through that man hugging stuff. Why I even heard about this subject from some men up north. They told me they don't hug one another. Well, 'cept for huggin' their dad. And depending, of course, if dad does it, huggin' that is. Like I say to my buddies at the bar, the worst thing for me is that Slimette comes from a family of huggers. They'd hug a dead tree if it had a leaf left on it.

Even around here in God's country, there's some huggers that have come out of the closet. And it puts us non-huggers in an awful fix. They come-up to say hello, and before I know what's goin' on, I feel like I've got a rope around me! My arms are pinned to my sides. I sort of bend my elbows and pat the lower side of their back. Which makes my position even worse, as they might think I'm gettin' familiar. You know, men pat men's shoulders, nothin' lower.

OK, I know athletes pat one anothers' butt. I did the same when I played football in high school. But those butt pats were manly. We patted for a real short time and real hard, just to make sure we...well, I got diverted again.

Slimette warns me about goin' though Indiana with my talkin.' You know, meandering about. I told you before, I shut her right up by comin' back and saying "Least I don't go through Texas!" I tell you, Slimette 'nd her family's got big voice boxes.

Anyway, I'd like to move on to something else but I just have to get this off my chest. I went over to one of Slimette's cousin's house for a birthday party. I was introduced to the cousin's friend, "This is my friend from New York." Somethin' like that. I just assumed he hugged so I leaned forward and prepared myself, even opened up my arms. He looked at me like I was some kind of fairy! He took my right hand and shook it...real good; even had a firm grip. Can you believe that? First, he was a Yankee and didn't hug. Second, he thought I was a fairy and still shook my hand.

About that party, I tell you, it was real embarrassing. I'm still trying to figure out how to let him know I ain't a hugger at heart.

Anyway, this here cousin-in-law (Henryetta) got herself married to a Yankee. I guess that's why she invited that foreigner to her birthday party in the first place. Her family is not only a bunch of huggers, but they talk funny, like a lot those actors on TV. That goes for her husband, Henry. That man talks just plain weird. Listen' up:

Last week, Henry and Henryetta had came over to our house (Slimette's and my place) so Henryetta and Slimette could do some sewing. I just can't get over why this sewing circle had to have Henry show up. He ain't a sewing person to begin with, but Slimette tells me I need to do some bonding with the family. So there we sat, watching one of ESPN's talk shows. What with all the sportscasters' conversation, it was good bonding stuff.

Henry got up from his chair and said, "Slim, I must run some errands. Come with me. We can do some window shopping and chat."

Errands? A man does errands? Errands are done by women. Hell fire. Slimette does errands. For me, I do chores. If Henry had said, "Slim, I got some chores to do," I'd have jumped up from my lazy boy and took on his chores like they were mine. But how does any self-respecting man take on somebody else's errands?

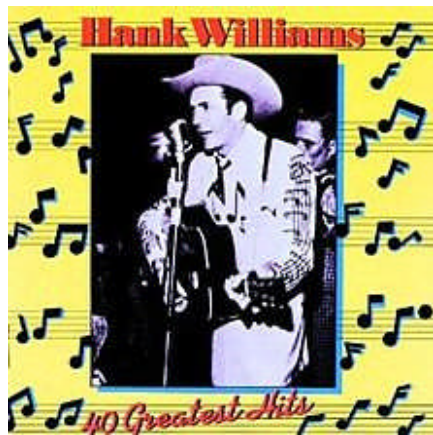
And chat? What kinda' talk is that? Slimette and Henryetta chat. My buddies and me chew the fat, or if we get serious, we parley.

But Henry is a Yankee. He don't know better. 'Spite of his huggin,' he's OK. Treats Henryetta just fine. Errands and chats I could put up with. But I drew the line with that window shopping thing. How can any grown man say they are goin' window shopping? It's worse than goin' on an errand.

And I told Henry so, "There ain't no way I'm gonna' to do any woman window shopping. Ain't in my blood. I ain't doing no errands neither, and I ain't gonna' chat about it."

Well, Henry came back to me with an idea that sure did make me think. I steer away from most anything Henry says, but this one got me in the middle of my forehead, "Slim, even Hank Williams did window shopping."

I knowed Hank was a southern boy, so I knowed he didn't do any window shopping. So I said, "The hell he did! Prove it. I'll put some money on the line. Better yet, I'll bet you a bottle of Jose Cuervo."



Henry looked at me like I didn't have good taste, "I drink scotch, but I accept your bet."

See what I mean? He even drinks funny. He walked over to where my Victrola was sittin.' By the way, I bought that used RCA box for a few bucks when I was a teenager. Slimette tells me folks like Henry will pay \$400 or so dollars for it, even it don't work.<sup>1</sup>

Anyway, Henry asked me, "Where's your Hank Williams albums?" As he looked through my record collection, "There it is. Mind if I play a song?"

I played along, "Sure."

Henry looked at the record for a spell, then put it on the player. "Now listen to this," as he placed the needle onto the record.



*You're window shopping.  
Just window shopping.  
You're only looking around.*

*You're not buying.  
You're just trying  
to find the best deal in town.*



Henry lifted up the record player arm, "And I drink Johnny Walker scotch, thank you!" Smart-ass Yankee. Can't drink right, can't talk right. What is that "thank you!" stuff? You're supposed to say "thank you" after somethin' good happens to you, not before. How can someone say "thank you" for something they don't even have? Henry didn't have his Johnny Walker and far as I was concerned, he'd have to take back that "thank you."

I said, "Henry, Hank ain't doin' any window shopping. It's his girl friend that's doin' it."

<sup>1</sup> Slim's facts are slightly askew, but what else is new? A working 1953 RCA Victrola 3-HES-5A phonograph record player on a high fidelity, two speaker stand, and one in excellent condition, is for sale on eBay for \$1,200.00.

Like most folks who get caught in a corner and about to lose a bet, Henry started splitting hairs, “Look Slim, the name of his song is ‘Window Shopping.’ ”

“If I tell Slimette she’s window shoppin,’ it don’t mean I’m window shoppin.’ Henry, women ‘window shop,’ men ‘look around.’ And I drink Patron tequila, thank you!”

That purty much finished off this argument with my Yankee cousin-in-law. Givin’ him credit, he bought me a bottle of Jose Cuervo. I was just pulling his leg about that Patron tequila. Shoot, once you toss down a shot of most anything with a mouthful of salt and lemon, it purty much tastes the same.

Speakin’ of taste, how about them fancy people that drink champagne? Why just last week, Henry and Henryetta told us they had some of Henry’s relatives over and served them that bubbly stuff. They said they had a snack...horse ders or somethin’ like that. Listen to this: If that champagne tasted so good, why did they eat snails alongside their sippings? Snails! And Henry tells me I don’t have no taste.

## Slim's Wisdoms (VII) Color Blind Slim

For this Slim saga, we add some background music. Faintly heard behind Slim's wisdoms is a famous C&W tune, "Hit the Highway."



My way is the way.  
Ain't no other byway.

There's no two ways about it.  
There's only one way to shout it:

My way's is your way!  
If not, hit the highway.



Given that excelsior verse, let's cut to more of Slim's wisdoms:

Howdy again. I'm done with talking about sissy men hugging, doing errands, and going shopping. I'd like to tell you 'bout som'thing that's been on my mind for a long time, all the way since this morning. ...It's about the color red.

That's right, red. For most of my full-blown life, I'd always thought red was bad. Well, not always. Our high school team color was red. Hell-fire, our football uniforms was red as all get-out. So was our cheerleaders' pom-poms and other stuff...you know, red carnations and all.

I'm talking 'bout som'thin' else. It's about politics. At least I think it is. It goes like this: I just don't understand why I spent most of my adult life thinking red was Communist, and now I find all my buddies and me are reds! But we ain't red Communists. We're red Americans.

Does that make any sense to you? I mean how can my buddies and me go along for years saying we'd rather be "dead than red," when we now learn, just because Russia ain't our enemy anymore, that we'd rather be "dead than blue."

Slimette keeps harping-on me that most of my buddies don't know much. But all-told, they seem convincing. They talk about red, and tell me everthin' red is good and everthin' blue is Communist. Like there ain't no in between. Like it's gotta' be one or the other.

Slimette tells me there's always another side to a story. Maybe so, but I'd get some serious blowback from my buddies down at Betty Sue's if I said there's another side of the story 'bout that color red. OK, maybe another color.<sup>1</sup>

For example, yella. You know, that mustard color. It seems that ever' day I hear more and more about China taking over being America's enemy. My buddy Horace told us Russia ain't no longer a threat. You know, "The Reds are coming." Well, they ain't, so we gotta' find someone who is.

Can't be the Mescans. Can't be "The Browns are coming." They're already here. So that leaves "The Blacks are coming" or "The Yellas are coming." Like the Mescans, the Blacks are already here. As much as I don't like browns and blacks, they ain't a threat to America. Hell-fire, someone's gotta' pick the fruit and flip the patties. Damn sure ain't gonna' be anybody with white skin.

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<sup>1</sup> For Slim's fan club members, Betty Sue's has reopened.



But them Chinese. They don't just deliver my newspaper, they take over the paper route. They don't just flip the patties, they take over MacDonald's. So, it narrows down to having only one color that's threaten' America: yella.

I'll get around to it. It might take some time. Before I know it, me and my buddies will be singin' and shoutin' "Better dead than yella."

Gotta' go, good buddy. Slimette just walked in the door. She went out to get us some Chinese food.

## **Slim's Wisdoms (VIII)**

### **Spelling Bee**

Howdy. I've got somehin' I need to get off my chest. Last night I turned on ESPN to get my daily news. That sports talk desk keeps me informed about national events. Us Americans gotta' be up to date if we are going to keep on bein' Americans.

Come to think about it, I got two things on my chest. First off, ESPN didn't have no sports news. Can you believe it? There was a spelling bee contest on that channel! Yep, right on ESPN...didn't even have no NBA highlights or nothin'.

I told Slimette that ESPN was a sports channel and not a spelling channel. As usual, she had an answer. She told me the "E" in ESPN stood for entertainment, and a spelling bee was entertainment. Now I ask you, how can a spelling bee be entertaining? Hell fire, I never ever even saw them words those kids were spelling.

Slimette wrote down some of the words. Here they are. You be the judge...I'll wager my first Jose Cuervo of the mornin' that you don't even know what they mean, much less how to spell 'em.

For instance, "corpsbruder." Know the definition of that word? 'Course you know how to spell it as I just did it for you, but you don't know what it means. Here's 'nother thing, the spelling judge gave the boys and girls the definition of each word and used the word in a sentence! ...Like that would help them spell it. Well, it would, but I'm getting ahead of myself.

Anyway, that word means...let's see, Slimette wrote it down..."a close comrade." Why didn't the judge ask them to spell "pal?" That way, everyone in the audience would know what was going on.

By the way, I was in a spelling bee once when I was in grade school. I got cheated out of ninth place 'cause the teacher didn't use the word in a sentence. She just said, "Little Slim, spell Mary."

Piece of cake! My ma's name is Mary, so I spelled it right out: M-a-r-y. I was headed for ninth place, ahead of that dummy in last place.

Then the teacher up and said, "Sorry, Little Slim. It's spelled m-e-r-r-y." Now ain't that cheating? I thought so, and told her and those nine other kids what I thought. Then she twisted the knife in my back, "You can't use a proper noun in this contest; only common nouns. Mary is a proper noun."

Of course it's proper. That's the name of my mother. Damn sure ain't common, and I said so. Well, I didn't say "damn." I was scared she'd fool me by saying, "It's d-a-m." Anyway, I sat down and vowed never to be in a spelling bee again.

Back to that ESPN spelling bee. It was a national contest, but there was hardly any Americans in it. That's my second gripe. The boys that tied for first place were foreigners! Look like they came from India or maybe Pakistan. One of them said he lived in Fort Worth. He didn't even have a drawl.

The problem with America in general is we've got too many foreigners in it. I told Slimette that fact. Yep, never to just listen, she said, "Slim, we're all foreigners."

That did it! I headed out the door for Betty Sue's Bar to see my p-a-r-d-n-e-r-s.

## **Slim's Wisdoms (IX)** **A Fancy EverSharp**

Howdy. We ain't talked for awhile. The fact is, I lost my EverSharp, and I was sure not gonna use Slimette's purple EverSharp. So, I have to write with a pencil, good buddy, but nothin' purple. Number 2 lead will have to do.

I've told you about these facts before, 'bout those purple pens that Slimette uses. ...Just making sure you know the skinny.

I tell you what, there'll never be a woman President. They like too many of those sissy colors. Purple. Pink. Baby blue. Now orange, that's a different story. Why don't you see women wearing orange? I'd like to tell you about some true facts to answer this question.

First off, it ain't dainty enough. Second thing, I heard on the news that this Putin fella in Russia was getting real excited about countries that took on orange as their color. I even heard about the "Orange Revolution" on the mornin' news. I had hit the wrong button on the TV and had to find TVLand later. Anyway, that man is onto something.

I shouted to Slimette, who was cookin' okra in the kitchen. "Honey! Orange is comin' back. Orange is Tennessee! The Big Orange! Orange is Syracuse! Jimmy Brown! The Denver Broncos! Orange is the color for that there country...eh, Ukraine."

Slimette came out from the kitchen, where she is supposed to stay during daylight hours...but never does. She said, "Slim, Vladimir Putin is not fond of 'orange.' The color represents ideas contrary to his way of thinking."

Well, that beat me. How can any red-bloodied Russian man not stand up for orange?

Slimette told me she was going to write-down her thoughts on this matter and send it to our local paper. But she had lost her EverSharp, too. How in the world can that woman stay up to date by writtin' with out of date EverSharps?

She said she wasn't very fond of orange to begin with. I asked her why? She said, "Why do you like black?" She knows why...just baiting me. I gave her the answer she already knew, "Johnny Cash."

Always in my face, Slimette came back with, "Ever see June Carter Cash wear orange?"

What a lame come-back. I racked up another checkmate.

Anyway, all we had were number 2 pencils. We were better than that. So I went shopping. I would get Slimette a brand-new EverSharp for Christmas. I've been thinking of getting' a black one so I can use it and not have to buy another one. But I'm one smart hombre. Slimette would definitely notice what I was up to.

Down at the local shopping mall, there's a store that sells paper with no lines on it. I can't figure out why anyone would buy a blank piece of paper with no lines. How're they goin' to keep their writin' straight? The store also sells fancy envelopes and other sissy stuff...and EverSharps.

The fact is, they mostly sell greetin' cards...rows on rows of sayins' people don't ever say, but play-like they say it. While headed to the EverySharp counter, I couldn't help but take a look at some of these cards. I remember some of their sayins':

*We have never met, and I don't know you, but we are friends forever.*

*Happy Mother's Day, to my favorite mother-in-law.*

*Do not send any more greeting cards to me. I don't remember ever meeting you.*

*Lay down, I think I love you.*

I liked the last card. It got to the heart of the matter with greeting cards. They tend to beat around the bush.

I need to buy that Mother's Day card for Slimettee's mother. It's perfect. It'll make her feel she is one-of-a-kind. Her and me don't see eye-to-eye on most things, but I always send her a card on Mother's Day. I wasn't born yesterday bubba. I'll do what I can to stay in her will.

Anyway, I found the pen and pencil counter. I'll tell you, pardner, I'd never seen so many EverSharps! Black, gold-lookin', silver-lookin'; lookin' like rocket ships; lookin' like guns; lookin' like anything but EverSharps.

I picked up one of them and clicked on the shirt clip: out went the pen. I clicked again: It went away. Slimettee would love this EverSharp. No gradual rolling the handle for the point to gradually come out. A sudden click to get things going. So I paid attention.

I thought this EverSharp would work real good for my wife, and it was black.<sup>1</sup> With a fancy box around it, I didn't even have to gift-wrap my present! Real men don't wrap presents anyway.



- I said to the clerk, I'll take that EverSharp, just so the box comes along with it. A dollar ninety-five is pretty steep, but that box is worth it. Slimettee will love that box. Looks like it's lined with silk, and she likes silk a lot. I keep telling her that rayon is better than silk, and buying a rayon sweater won't clear out my wallet. But when I bring up the subject, she casts a blind eye my way. I got that 'casting a blind eye' from last Sunday's sermon at church. So,

<sup>1</sup> Writer's note: Slim did not have his Kodak with him to snap this picture. I have taken license and snapped it myself...after Slim left the store.

wrap it up lady, and... ”

- The sales lady interrupted me, not a good way to sell EverSharps. She said, "Sir, the price is not one dollar, ninety-five cents. It is one hundred and ninety-five dollars."
- "...One hundred and...ninety-five dollars! ...Does it write in gold?"
- "It's the best pen we have in the store at this time. We also carry the Montblanc Black Meisterstück LeGrand for four hundred sixty dollars. But we are sold out of them. They are on back-order."
- "Sold out of EverSharps that cost over four hundred dollars! What's this country coming to? You know what? There's too many rich immigrants swimming across the river. ...Lady, I was looking for a dollar or so EverSharp."
- "I suggest you try the drug store at the end of the mall. They likely can fit your needs."
- "OK, good idea, that's what I'll do. ...Say, would you happen to have one of these boxes you could spare? I don't need the pen, but I could use the box."

She stared at me real good for a while, then said, "Sir, a Montblanc pen *box* is more valuable than the writing instrument you will purchase at the drug store."

It's the way she said "writing instrument" that persuaded me not to press the issue. She said the words sort of sarcastic like.

Anyway, I struck a gold mine at the drug store. They was having a sale on EverSharps! Four of them for five dollars. What with inflation and all, I knew that was a bargain. So, I ended-up taking home one EverSharp for Slimette and three for me.

Mine are all black, just like it should be. I looked for a purple one for my wife, but no luck. I suspect purple EverSharps is out of style. I got her an orange EverSharp, just so she can get up to date on things.

It's under the Christmas tree right now. It's got a purple bow around it. I'm real sensitive 'bout my wife's feelings.