

SIDE 6

(Please prepare to read for Lincoln; Context: Lincoln works as an Abraham Lincoln impersonator in a game at the town fair; fairgoers come daily to shoot him for a chance to win a prize. He used to hustle three card monte, a card game where those who choose to play have to follow a black card as it is shuffled quickly with two red cards.)

LINCOLN: No fucking running water. Hate falling asleep in this damn shit. Shit. Ripped the beard. I can hear em tomorrow. Busiest day of the week. They looking me over to make sure Im presentable. They got a slew of guys working but Im the only one they look over every day. “Yr beards ripped, pal. Shit. I should quit right then and there. I’d yank off the beard, throw it on the ground and stomp it, then go strangle the fucking boss. That’d be good. My hands around his neck and his bug eyes bugging out. You been ripping me off since I took this job and now Im gonna have to take it outa yr pay, motherfucker. Shit.

(Rest)

Sit down job. With benefits.

(Rest)

Hustling. Shit, I was good. I was great. Hell, I was the be all end all. I was throwing cards like throwing cards was made for me. Made for me and me alone. I was the best anyone ever seen. Coast to coast. Everybody said so. And I never lost. Not once. Not one time. Not never. That’s how much them cards was mines. I was the be all end all. I was that good.

(Rest)

Then you woke up one day and you didn’t have the taste for it no more. Like something in you knew—. Like something in you knew it was time to quit. Quit while you was still ahead. Something in you was telling you—. But hells no. Not Link thuh stink. So I went out there and threw one more time. What thuh fuck. And Lonny died.

(Rest)

Got yrself a good job. And when the arcade lets you go yll get another good job. I dont gotta spend my whole life hustling. Theres more to Link than that. More than me than some cheap hustle. More to life than cheating some idiot out of his paycheck or his life savings.

(Rest)

Like that joker and his wife from out of town. Always wanted to see the big city. I said you could see the bigger end of the big city with a little more cash. And if they was fast enough, faster than me, and here I slowed down my moves I slowed em way down and my Lonny, my right hand, my Stickman, Lonny could draw a customer in like nothing else, Lonny could draw a fly from fresh shit, he could draw Adam outa Eve with that look he had, Lonny always got folks playing.

(Rest)

Somebody shot him. They don’t know who. Nobody knows and nobody cares.

(Rest)

We took that man and his wife for hundreds. No, thousands. We took them for everything they had and everything they ever wanted to have. We took a father for the money he was gonna get his kids new bike with and he cried in the street while we vanished. We took a mothers welfare check, she pulled a knife on us and we ran. She threw it but her aim werent shit. People shopping. Greedy. Thinking they could take me and they got took instead.

(Rest)

Swore off thuh cards. Something inside telling me—. But I was good.