

A Turkey Tale
May 2001

Something was wrong, terribly wrong that day when I entered the 210 Tavern. Remember the old-time 1950s western where the stranger enters the saloon and the piano player stops playing. Then everybody stops talking, looks up at the stranger, stares at him for a moment, then they all look away and quietly stare into their beers. Well that was the atmosphere in the 210 tavern that day, except there was no piano player and I am no stranger. Everyone was there, Digger Dan, Quick Vic, Big Dune, DQ, the owner Foster Fenster, and Sweet Amy in her usual place behind the bar. But there was no talking, no camaraderie, no jovial bantering. Nothing but the backs of heads staring into their beers. I pulled up a stool next to Foster. I started to speak, but he hushed me and pulled me away from the bar. We sat at a table in the far corner of the 210, out of earshot of anyone. There Foster told me a tale that immediately struck fear into my northwoods heart.

Foster ordered up two beers (free of course because he is the owner). Then he related this tale to me. "Wade, it may be the end of the line for Spike and Sweet Amy." I said, "No way, man I was just beginning to get to know ol' Spike. What happened?" (For those of you who don't know Amy, she has what we call disposable husbands. No one knows what number Spike is, we just know he is the last one before the next one.) Foster continued his tale. "As you know, Amy can out drink, out cuss, and out shoot any man north of Saginaw, except for a few Yoopers. Well, she has taught Spike everything he knows about hunting and shooting, as well as drinking and cussing. She did a good job too, despite having to finish off Spike's elk last year. Anyway, I invited them to go turkey hunting with me. Sweets went out and bought Spike a brand new Remington 12 gauge shot gun and taught Spike how to shoot it. I picked them up and went over to Bummer's Roost where I had scouted some roosting turkeys. I'll tell you Wade, there is nothing more beautiful and romantic than a young couple in love with matching shotguns going into the woods together to shoot turkeys. I had no idea how quickly this idyllic situation could change. Anyway, I did the scouting and calling for them and I'll have to admit, I was gobbling and clucking as if I were one with the turkeys. I had never called this well in my life and it paid off. Out of the woods came the biggest tom turkey I have ever seen. His beard reached the ground. He was huge and was moving towards my call. Amy whispered to Spike and me, 'Guys, this freakin giant turkey is mine! Don't interfere if you know what's good for you.' With that she raised her shotgun and fired. My God Wade, she missed. She missed clean. The giant bird took to flight." Now Foster's whispered voice quivered with excitement. "It took off like the Phoenix from hell. When this magnificent bird was airborne it blocked out the sun! My greatest feat of calling was going to get away! Then, Blam! The turkey fell from the sky like a sack of flower. I turned to see smoke coming from Spike's brand new shotgun and a smirk on his face. Then the poor, arrogant fool turned to Amy and said, 'Wham, Blam Daddy just put the turkey on the table ma'am.'" I looked at Foster in total amazement not believing what I just heard. What was Spike thinking?

Foster continued, "Sweets went and picked up the downed turkey and brought it back to us like a good retriever, not uttering a word. But instead of dropping it at our feet, she started plucking the bird. After she had plucked considerable feathers, she calmly started stuffing them all over Spike's 28 year old body. While she was plucking and stuffing she said, 'Daddy put the turkey on the table, huh? Who taught Daddy how to shoot? Who bought Daddy the shotgun? Who taught Daddy how to hunt? AND who is it that is stuffing this turkey's feathers up Daddy's nose?' Then Amy said as only she can say, 'I'll be damned, I just made a joke. Do you see the irony here dearest? You shot a turkey and here I am stuffing you, hah! Now do you get it, Daddy.' "Wade," Foster continued, "all that poor boy could mutter was a muffled, 'yefthth durflthth'. When Amy was done stuffing Spike, he had feathers sticking out of every orifice in his body. He had feathers in some places I'm not sure we even have orifices and some places I won't even mention because it hurts me just thinking of them. Of course after all this, Sweets will probably get rid of Spike now, just like she did the rest." And with that Foster ended his tale.

"Holy Doodles!" is all I could say as I looked at the bar and its inhabitants. Now I knew why no one spoke. They weren't concerned so much about the fate of Spike and Sweet Amy, after all, Amy disposes of men like they were paper towels. We all knew that probably good ol' Spike wouldn't be around forever. No, it wasn't Spike and Sweet Amy. Everyone was thinking of where Amy stuffed those feathers. As I write this, it even pains me to think of some of those places. In fact it hurts so much, I will end this true tale here. I must admit I will never look at a turkey the same way again.

Epilogue

Big Jake tells me that everything is back to normal with Spike and Amy. Spike, considerably more humble, is now very adept at extracting turkey feathers from inaccessible places. Spike and Amy will be moving into their new house soon and everyone is happy for them. I hear that they have used a decor which creatively features turkey feathers. Foster hasn't been spending much time in the 210 lately. Rumor has it he spends a lot of time in the woods in his camouflage, gobbling and clucking, trying to call in another giant turkey. Now you can again enter the friendly confines of the 210 Tavern without feeling like the stranger and the piano player. (I thought I better put that in lest Foster cut me off from my free beer.)