



Land
of the ***Free***

written by M. Lathrom

LAND OF THE FREE

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FADE IN:

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Cripples nod off at tables, alcoholic businessmen joke at a table in the back. All wearing the same gray-brown wool suits, the dregs of the city and their babysitters behind the bar.

A general grime coats every surface.

SAM REED (32), sits at a lonely table in the corner. He sips a white ale. He people-watches sympathetic condescension. His hip-casual chinos and plaid shirt insist he's salt of the earth just like them.

He fixes on the finest among them:

WILT JONES (57), long, stringy gray hair in a loose white v-neck and jeans, pulls his pants down and waves his crotch in front of JILL (43), the unimpressed bartender in a black tank-top and jean shorts.

WILT

(slurred)

Ain't gotta thing where by balls
used to hang. Since I came back
from Luang Prabang.

He loses his step with his pants half down. He catches the bar, knocks a pitcher over. A businessman, MR. JAMES (45), jumps up as beer flows onto his sleeve.

MR. JAMES

Piece of shit, Wilt! Fucking...

Jill eyes the bouncer by the door. An obese man with a rat tail, PERRY (38). He lifts himself off his wobbly stool. Walks over to Wilt. Grabs him by the arm.

JILL

Night, Wilt.

Sam sets his beer down. He squints for focus.

POV of Wilt. A PURPLE HEART just pinned to his belt.

Sam rises out of his seat, rushes over to Perry escorting Wilt out. Sam grabs Wilt's other arm.

SAM

Hey, he's fine. Come on.

PERRY
(insistent)
He's done tonight.

Sam yanks on Wilt.

SAM
I got him. He's a vet, for Christ
sake.

WILT
Well, I ain't a fuckin' tug-o-war.

Wilt shoves Sam away.

Sam goes to the bar, pulls out a \$50 bill, slams it on the
bar.

SAM
(to Wilt)
Pull up your pants.
(to the bar)
I got him. Let him stay.

Jill shrugs. Grabs the bill. Flicks a nod to Perry.

Wilt, deflated. Wobbles in place for a moment. Sam smirks,
takes a seat on the barstool, waves for Wilt to join.

Wilt scowls. Hikes up his pants. Wobbles over to the bar. As
he approaches.

SAM
Saw the chest candy on your belt.
What are you having, it's on m--

Wilt grabs a half-full beer from James.

JAMES
Wilt, what?

Wilt lifts it over Sam. Dumps it all over his head. Sam
closes his eyes, still as the beer pours over him. Taking it
like a champ.

Wilt pulls the medal off his belt, waves it in front of Sam.

WILT
Look at that. You respect that?
Huh? I lost my balls fighting for
the right to get kicked outta this
shit hole, Sammy boy.

Wilt wobbles off. He walks up to Perry, yanks on his pony tail. Perry grabs him by the arm. Shoves him out the door.

Sam, furious, hops off the barstool, heads for the door.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Wilt wanders down the street.

Sam pushes through the door. Throws his arms out in irritation.

SAM

What the fuck, old man?

Wilt, stops. Turns around.

WILT

Wha? You know, beer is good for your hair. Shine it up real nice. I read that on Facebook.

SAM

Did I miss something?

WILT

You're fuckin' up my routine, Sammy boy.

Wilt turns back around, walks away.

SAM

Fuckin' ungrateful.

Sam heads back into the bar. Wilt stops in his tracks.

WILT

What'd you say to me?

SAM

I said you're fuckin' ungrateful.

Wilt hobbles toward Sam. Sam remains firmly in place. Wilt picks up speed, then shoves sam. Sam stumbles back, but mostly unfazed.

Wilt grabs him by the collar. Pulls him in.

WILT

Ungrateful? What are ya gonna do, huh? Go back in there, sip on your bitch beer, stare at us and write a poem about the salt of the earth?

Huh? Your boyfriend break up with you? Feelin' real pensive.

Wilt pokes his finger into Sam's chest.

WILT

You listen, Sammy boy. You wanna be a miserable bastard, you be one with us and check your ego at the fuckin' door.

Wilt pull reaches into his front pocket, pulls a couple of \$100 bills. Plants one in Sam's hand.

WILT

Because you don't know shit about shit.

Wilt pushes Sam away, wanders off down the street.

Sam stares down at the \$100 bill. Then peers up at Wilt.

SAM

How'd you know my name's Sam?

WILT

Everyone's Sammy boy.

Sam smirks. Wilt sings as he disappears into the night.

WILT

I gotta wooden medal and a fine harangue, now I'm a fuckin' hero.

FADE OUT.

THE END