

Two Words to the Wicked

The Old Reprobate

Spring 1994

I've a word I want to say to some of you folks out there, if you're the kind of folks what live a bit beyond yer means, as some is wont to do. And that word, you good-hearted simple-minded thieves, is this one: overconsumption. It's a long word, I know, but it's worth chewing on.

Y'see, we had a fella out here, a couple-three weeks ago, one of these liberal-minded fellas from Californie, who figgered that since the All-One-Capitalist-Industrial-Ecorazing-Corporate-State was destroying and degradating our dearly loved earth, then it ought at least buy his lunch as well. I mean this fella had a case of the light fingers, and *bad*. Couldn't hardly walk past a store with him without his backpack, pockets, overcoat and hat getting about three pounds heavier each.

You couldn't have asket for a more considerate guest. I'd start at frying up a batch of waffles in the morning and afore I'd be done there'd be two new bottles of syrup on the table, pure maple too. Look at something in a window and it'd be there when I got home. Thing was, all sorts a other stuff started showing up too. Automatic cherry-pitters and elk figurines and whole libraries of new books. Thought about puttin' another add-on to the trailer just to have a place to keep it all.

Now I don't mean to sound ungrateful but it sort a took the fun out a being poor. There I'd been, trying to figure out whether I was going to buy *Riders of the Purple Sage* or *Red Harvest*, and thinking that each one was somethin special and it was gonna be a treat either way, and now suddenly I got the complete works (Norton critcal editions no less), of Grey and Hammet both— and Christie and Lamour to boot (neither of which I've ever had much time for). Seemed to make them somehow less valuable.

To my thinking, each little thing has *got* to be valuable, if we're going to get ourselves and our world out of the handbasket. A book should be a rare thing, paper being so hard-bought of the forest. A fella ought to have to stop and count his change when he buys a bottle of syrup, and think of all that long way it's come on roads that oughtn't be there. The good thing about being poor is you can't use up so much. The only bad thing about it is that everybody isn't.

But I shouldn't a said that about thieves being simple-minded. It isn't that. I know there's plenty of good reason for it, and I sure don't hold no truck with Johnny Law neither. Thing is, I was in the thievin' way myself oncet, and I know how it can be. I got wealth-blind. I could have anything I wanted, which is a pretty powerful thing when you keep being told how much you want. I stole too much, and I seen others doing it too.

I seen "vegans" eating Haagen-Das that they thought was okay 'cause it wasn't paid for. Only, when you think about it, it was paid for, just not by them. The store had already ordered it, and since it was off the shelves they were going to order more. Same with stealing building materials from a lumber yard or construction lot. Stealing still creates a demand, and the demand creates more resource consumption, which is just another way of saying ecocide. Think about it.

Well, that was the bug I wanted to put in y'all's ear for you to chew on, just the idea that just because something's free don't mean it's free, if you see what I mean. But you know what got me started on all this was something else I was thinking about. So it coming on Spring here I'd just like to add a word about poaching.

Poaching could be a whole concept here, about something like thieving only getting the stuff before market so's you don't create any demand. Seems like it could refer to a whole slew of different kinds of things, I don't know, but it seems all I can think about is sheep. Sheep being those rapacious little wooly things that destroy soil stability quicker'n spit and cause any number of wolves, bears, coyotes and other wild 'n' native critters to be untimely murdered.

Thing is, they can make awful good eating—'specially the young ones. The store-boughten meat has that acrid taste of dead predators and degredated watersheds... but the taste of poached sheep is different: sweet and tender and the clear cricks runnin' through the thick meadows, and the old bears ambling along. Thing is, when you poach one a them little mowers, you're not creating any demand a-tall. You're making production more costly, and most importantly you're relieving the land of a small part of the year's burden. What's more, if you take your dumps out in the great outside you're turning a menace to the native flora into something of a boon.

Course, all the same and more can be said for cows, 'ceptin' they're bigger and uglier and harder to deal with. They are awful slow, though, and you're more like to run into one in a nice out a the way place.

Now I didn't mean to rile the dander of all you militant vegetarians out there; I know you still got reasons not to muck about in such waters. Like I said, I think this poaching idea might have broader applications, I just haven't the mind to come up with them. Might be a way for all you thievin folk to keep feathering your nests without putting quite as much strain on the old planet. I'm hoping folk'll pass the idea around, and someday I'll hear it and not even know it's the same one.

Well, like the fella says, take it easy—but take it.

The Ted K Archive

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