

The Yadder Boom

I was down at the Castle, my favorite hangout to play pool and drink. I was playing “look-ahead 8 ball” with my friend Theron when who do you think strolled in? Jose.

“Hey, Jose, que pasa, amigo,” I shouted. I glanced over at the bartendress, Maxine. She was jumping up and down with happiness. Whenever Jose and his twin brother Josb came to Manhattan Beach they stopped in the Castle. They were very good for business,

“Jose, where’s Josb?” I asked after a huge hug and high five.

“He be here yater, but he’s working now,” Jose said with a very happy look on his face. I knew he meant ‘later’ but both Hose brothers had trouble with English ‘s’.

“Great, Jose. Can you work with him?” I asked.

“Jes, but not right now,” he said. The Hose twins often got their “j”s and “y”s mixed up too. “Pretty soon all Mexico guys be on this job.”

I took him over to the bar, ordered a Dos Exxis and we sat down. “What kind of work is this?” I asked, not sure I wanted to know the answer.

“The Wall,” he said.

“What wall,” I asked, bewildered.

“They make big damn wall on Rio Grande,” he said.

“Yeah, I heard about that, Jose. But so what? That’s a bad thing, isn’t it? They want to build the wall to keep you guys out of America. That’s terrible. You really help our economy.”

“Jes,” he said, “pero no good por ours. This one be bery gangbusters por Mexico.” The Hose brothers pronounced all “v”s as “b”s because they come from Jalisco and they sometimes mixed in some Spanish too.

“How so?” I asked. “The Bush Administration will hire Haliberton or some big money company to build the wall. You guys won’t get squat.”

“No, no,” he said. “We get bery rich.”

“How? I don’t get it.”

“Yadders,” he said.

“Yadders?” I asked. “What the hell’s a ‘yadder’?”

“Cosas jew climb with...jew know...” and annoyed, he took me over to the cleaning closet in the back of the bar and pointed. “See? A yadder!”

“You mean ‘ladder,’” I said laughing.

“Jes. What I said. Yadder.”

“I don’t get it. What do ladders have to do with anything?” I asked.

“How else we get over damn wall?” he asked.

“You guys aren’t going to get over the wall, for God’s sake,” I said, exasperated. “That’s what the damn wall is all about. They don’t want to let you guys in and they’re not able to inspect the whole border, so they’re going to build a wall the size of the one in China that you can see from the damn moon so you can’t get in and help our economy.”

“I don’t think so,” he said, smiling. “They build damn wall 50 feet tall and fire all patrol guys but we build ten million yadders 51 feet tall. Every chicano in Mexico can get in easy and we have huge economy built on yadders.”

Before I could reply to this preposterous plan, there was a lot of noise in the front of the bar, hand slapping, dancing. I looked over. Jose yelled, “Hey Josb! Estamos aqui, hermano.” Josb had grabbed a bunch of people outside and pushed them in the bar. That’s why the bartenders loved the Hose brothers...they brought in a ton of business.

After ordering a pitcher of margaritas, I tried to keep a straight face as I asked Josb, “Hey amigo, you making yadders now?”

“What’s a yadder,” he asked with a straight face. I took him to the cleaning closet and pointed.

“Jew mean ‘ladder’” he said with perfect enunciation. He high fived Jose, bumped chests in the air and sat down.

“Si,” Jose said. “Josb taking English lessons so he can get job here building yadders. We gonna build them on both sides of damn wall. When jew guys see how our economy goes, jew will want jobs in Mexico. Jew won’t hire us so damn wall going to be berry expensive at Haliberton \$50 an hour workers. Jew be bankrupt pretty soon,” he ended with a knowing smile to his brother.

“But won’t our government stop the ladder business? I asked?

“Nunca...never,” the Hose brothers said in unison. Josb, the ladder expert I presumed, explained. “They be too busy building other damn wall.”:

“What other damned wall?” I asked incredulously.

“Canada damn wall,” he said. “Pretty soon jew guys stop sneakin’ over border up north.”

“But why would we want to keep the Canadians out?” I asked. “They make a lot of money and seem to be good folks.”

“Kanuks not want in...jew guys want out,” Jose said, brow wrinkled in concentration. “Kanuks want wall too. US labor be real cheap after bankruptcy. Josb and me gonna export yadder business to Kanuks, help US economy.” They yumped up and down, bumped chests, went around collecting customers, led the whole bar in some weird Aztec dance and came back out of breath.

“I’ve got to get home,” I said to the Hose brothers. “I hope jew guys will hire me to make yadders when I’m out of a job,” I said, the pitcher of margaritas converting me, as always, to their language.

“Que la vaya bien,” they both said to me, “may you travel well,” as I staggered out onto Sepulveda Boulevard, headed for the bank to convert my savings into Pesos while I still could.

