

Yed Ink

I was playing pool with my friend Fred. We get together ever so often to play “look-ahead eightball,” where you have to call your next shot. It’s an awesome game, and El Castillo, a bar near Jocotopec on the far west end of Lake Chapala is our pool home. Not many people know about it, but it is the only place on the lake with the right equipment.

I broke, smashing the balls all over the table, the six ball going in the corner pocket. I called “four in center, seven next in the corner” pointing to the other end of the pool table. I was all ready for my shot when we heard some very peculiar noises outside.

“Wop-wop-wop...umpah-umpah...blaaaaaat...wop-wop...blaaaat...umpah...” It sounded like an odd combination of mariachi music keeping exact time to some bizarre percussion instrument.

We ran out the door to see....there was a helicopter landing in the middle of the street, music blaring out the windows, mystery solved. It could only be the Hose brothers, José and Josb□, identical Chicano twins and by far the most inventive entrepreneurs in Mexico, huge sombreros on their heads. Half the village began to congregate as the helicopter blades stopped wop-wop-woping and the doors opened, José blasting away on the trumpet and his brother on the tuba as usual. They boogied into the bar, the entire entourage ordering beer and tequila sours over the din. The Hose brothers saw me, waggled their instruments in my direction and finished their piece. Josb□ ran over, hugged me as I handed him a bottle of Negra Modelo.

When the noise had died down a bit, we sat in the back of the bar.

“*Hola, amigos,*” I said, Fred and I clinking beer bottles with them. “*Que pasa?*”

José, usually the ringleader, said, “Jou not tell nobody?” he whispered.

“I promise,” Fred and I said in unison.

“Ok....big deal coming up,” he said.

“More yadders?” I said, using José’s pronunciation, and referring to their plan to build millions of 51 foot ladders for the 50 foot wall they thought was going

to be built on the border. I read it wasn't going to happen because no money was available, but you never know with this administration.

"It be pronounced 'ladders'," Josb□ who had taken English lessons corrected me.

"Jes," José chimed in. "It be 'yadders' like Josb□ say. Yadder business no good. Big wall on border not be done so yadders not needed." The Hose brothers often mixed up their 'y's, 'l's and 'j's when they spoke English, and sometimes their 'v's and 'b's. But they said my Spanish was so ugly they insisted we converse in my language.

"Well, what is your latest scam, then?" I asked.

The brothers both looked hurt. "Not scam," Josb□ said. "We be business guys like Slim," he said, sternly.

"Ok, ok," I said, trying to placate them. "Then what is your latest business deal?"

"We be called 'Yed Ink'," José said, hand cupping his mouth and looking around the bar to make sure nobody was listening.

"What the hell is Yed Ink?" I asked, not sure I wanted an answer.

"Shhhhhh," he whispered. "Jou know...Yed....heavy stuff in old time turn into gold. Ink be big company."

"Ohhhh," I said. "You mean 'lead'. Nobody ever actually turned lead into gold, you know. That's a fairy tale. And I guess you mean 'Inc.' as in Incorporated?"

"Jes. We be Midas now, make damn big gold on yed," he said. "We be in commodities, make *mucho dinero* in yed." He jumped up, bumped chests with his brother, both doing some complicated, synchronized combination of hand, elbow and hip wagging, the Hose brother secret greeting method.

"For God's sake," I said, exasperatedly. "First of all, lead is all over the damn world. The price of lead in the commodity market can't be high. You guys are loony this time."

“Not yoony,” they both yelled, standing up, then slowly sat down as the crowd they brought in with them all looked their way. “Yed price go through roof. Yed Ink is name of new broker company we make.” They ran over to the bar, ordered beer for the whole room, picked up their tuba and trumpet and started wailing away, the entire contingent doing some Aztec cha-cha or something, weaving around tables. Bartenders loved the Hose brothers because of the business they brought. Finally they came back to the table and sat down, puffing heavily.

When they regained their breath, I said, “You guys will never convince me that you can make money in lead. It’s worthless. There’s too much of it.”

Josb□ looked at me condescendingly. “*No mas*,” he said. “China and drug company make sure of that.”

“What the hell are you talking about?” I asked. “What’s China got to do with it?”

“Bitching be making toys, *verdad?*” José said.

“You mean Beijing, and yes, China makes toys and all manner of junk. They are fast becoming the manufacturing division of the entire USA,” I said.

“And you read about yed paint on toys,” he said.

“Yeah....we’re sending them back as fast as they manufacture them. So what?” I asked suspiciously.

“Bitching use up much yed now for paint. Now is yed for paint cars, boats, house....*todas cosas*....whole world paint business now be Bitching paint. Drug company use rest.” Josb□ said smugly, giving a resounding high five to José.

I waved to the bartender and switched from beer to straight tequila. “I know I shouldn’t ask,” I asked. “But what does a drug company have to do with the lead business?”

“Tio Fernando work for Cialis, tell us it got *mucho* yed in it,” he said. “He say yed be secret sauce for four hour hardon.” They jumped up, did the Hose brother fandango again and sat down, while a straight shot of tequila came snorting out of my nose. “Jes,” José said. “Ads on TV all say four hour big

bone with pill, go see doctor for refill. Simple. Four hour good, ten hour better. Bitching y Cialis use all yed in world now.”

I sat there with my mouth open. Who would have thought lead would ever be in short supply? If they were right, lead would soon be as scarce as uranium.

I apologized to Fred, hugged José and Josb□ as they picked up their horns and headed to their fans at the bar, and said, “Gotta go, jou guys,” my syntax, as always, like theirs when I have too many beers and tequilas. “See jou yater,” I bellowed as I left El Castillo, lurching out to the main street where the Hose-a-copter was warming up. “Wop-wop-wop” outside, “ooooompa-pa” and “blaaaat” coming in perfect time, inside.

I hastily dialed my broker. Sure enough, lead stock was out of sight and ‘Yed Ink’, Hose brother spelling intact, was being offered on the Dow. I decided to switch my entire portfolio to paint and drugs. If the war kept up as it was going, I thought, every Humvee in Iraq would be covered in lead and every man in the world would want to be invincible in bed. I didn’t need Excel to prove to me that three billion ten hour rigid digits would be an unbeatable marketing strategy.

“*Viva Yed Ink,*” I shouted to nobody in particular, on the way to the *farmacia* for a refill.