

Robert Frost

It's hard to be in a strip club
and not seem like
a pervert
or a scoundrel

I look around
at the other men
and at the people I'm with
(for I'd never go alone)
and think-
do *we* seem
that filthy,
that creepy?

Every man looks so hopeless
in a strip joint,
most of them married
some with girlfriends
and it makes the whole
thing seem sinister

I watch a man
fling dollar bills
at a woman who
collects them
while on all fours

and it makes me unhappy
rather than horny

I sip my drink
making each draw
mean something
for the price
was equal to the price of admission...

this all goes on
while woman after woman
approaches me
with the same opening pitch...
Where are you from?

Have you been here before?
and the entire transaction
is based upon lies and bullshit
for I change my answers
each time

she doesn't care what you
have to say

and some men
feed into it all
and believe these
women want more
than just their money

and I look at them
and laugh
watching the word
sucker
appear on their
forehead

Now,
I don't blame
the dancers for this

that is their job
that is what they are
there to do
and I can admire it
in a strange and
indifferent way....

I pass up
on a few lap dances for
the girls don't put on a good enough show
their bullshit isn't convincing enough

but then a knockout
approaches,
she walks over like a lemon tree
everything swaying
in her stride

she doesn't even
have to feed me those
slick lines

she just asks
if I want a dance
and I accept
as if I had traveled
there solely
to see her
and not on
some whim of
boredom and lonesomeness

*\$30 for the dance
and \$20 extra to touch*

No touching, I say
my wallet is light
as it is

*Are you sure?
It's everything but my pussy*

I'm sure,
I say

I lay down
on the leather upholstered
couch, she undresses
and mounts me
like I am her favorite
racehorse

as soon as her tits
hang freely,
or perhaps
hang
isn't the right word

as soon as her tits
bounce freely

I ask,
can I change my
mind about touching?

she laughs
as she places her hands
on my belly
and I am reminded
of what a fat, hairy
creep I must seem to be

She begins to
ride me,
my nude jockey
as I make the turns
like a real thoroughbred
steam coming from my nostrils
and all

and then it is over
and I am ready to
ride one more lap
but there isn't enough
bread in my wallet
to feed her-

Did you get a hard-on?
one friend asks

No. I say

*What!? You didn't get a hard-on?
They take that as an insult, you know.*

Goddamn it,
I think

a strip joint
is much more stressful
than you'd first imagine

you worry about tips
and who to tip

and what to tip
and how much

now I had to worry
about getting a hard-on,
it seemed like
too much trouble
than it was worth

I got laid every now and again
and even though there was just as much bullshit
in a real relationship as there was
with a stripper
at least you could put it off longer

it seemed that all the bullshit
of a relationship
was somehow
shrunk down
and packaged into
a brief exchange with a dancer-

a dark princess
strolls over
with her ass hanging out
from under her dress

*You might want to think about
upping your standards a little bit. She says
I've seen the girls you've been talking to...
I'm the best you're going to be able to find.*

I tell her to go pound salt
for the cunt attitude may work on some guys,
but not me, baby

she walks away
as if I were an eyelash
she had to brush away
from her face...

Just when I'm starting
to feel depressed

a beautiful, unaffected girl
lingers over to me,
gracefully

my wallet is so empty
it may as well be
a dead leaf
that could just break up
and blow away

How about getting me naked?
she asks

I'm sorry, baby...
I've got no money

There are ATM machines

No there's not

she laughs a fake laugh
that somehow hurts worse
than if she didn't laugh
at all

but she sits down anyway
and her long,
beautiful legs
reach across
what seemed like
the entire room

and she asks me what I do

I'm a writer and a poet,
I say

Oh! I like to write.
she says
I wrote a lot
of poetry in highschool
which by the looks of her
couldn't have been long ago

and I think to myself,
what could this stripper
know about poetry?
They are all good looks
and no brains...

well,
we get into a conversation
and she tells me of the books she's read
and I tell her mine

and I am truly impressed
by what she says

I find myself
more interested in her mouth
than in her tits and ass

only a moment before
I saw her pussy for a dollar
and now I find myself
discussing Melville
and how overrated
War and Peace
was

we talk about e.e. cummings
and T.S. Eliot
and Franz Kafka
and Scott Fitzgerald...

she begins to recite
Robert Frost

*Some say the world will end in fire;
Some say in ice*

and I think
it was the strangest place
Robert Frost
had ever been

at a strip club
at 4 am
with me
and the smartest
stripper I had ever known

she was a woman
I could love

and I saw
that if you spoke
to these dancers,
these hustlers,
these demons of desire

they became human
quicker than most
people on the street

their phony pitch
Where are you from?
melted away like the ice
in Frost's poem

and I found myself
as one of those poor men
I pitied

wanting to believe
she cared.