

Eggdawgs

By

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Based on a job by Jeremy Steiner

It's 10 a.m. and already I'm knee deep in fish guts. I listen to Penny sing, "The Gambler" for the fourteenth God damn time. Don't get me wrong, Penny ain't crazy, she's just hard up for money and Moe paid her fifteen bucks to sing it for an hour. Now Moe is a different story.

This is his third summer cleaning Alaskan salmon for the company. I wouldn't blame him if he was crazy. But today I think he's just bored. I guess this is how he gets through it. Working sixteen hour days only to sleep and dream of the conveyor belt. You've got to do something. There's only so much "Cheers" trivia you can go through before that gets old.

Cleaning fish on the line ain't that bad, but the cannery sure is. I don't even think Moe could handle the cannery. How Moe stands here year after year, he must have legs of iron and a will of steel. But even the cannery could break him of that. I was crying in my blood waders after only ten minutes in there. The noise is so loud you can't even talk or think or remember your own name.

You're left trapped inside your head to think up whatever sick you got.

Alone on the line was bad enough, forget about the noise of the cannery. One time when I was on the line, Bob got transferred for a few hours and it was just me and the fish. Each fish became an evil thought or a bad deed I'd done. As each one passed I tried to make it understand and beg its forgiveness.

I think this is how the guts fights start. When you're up to your knees in it, there's no shortage of ammo. Just make sure the company ain't watching. You do what it takes around here.

Cleaning fish ain't the best job neither. The best job goes to the two little ladies on the ground floor. Their job is to pick out the fish eggs so the company can sell the eggs for gold. Today they're doin' egg dawgs. A fish so horrible the company couldn't sell it to Charley, the stores, hell even Morris wouldn't touch it. All the fish have to offer the company is their precious eggs, and then they get thrown away. In a sense Frank could be an egg dawg. He's been here for ten summers. Now, he's no good. He's been staring at fish so long, he can't interact with people, can't get a job anywhere else, but the company keeps him on 'cause he's good with his hands. And that's all that matters. In a way, we're all kind of egg dawgs.

The company don't care how we are. Good, bad, smart, crazy. All they care about are hands. When Frank does finally climb to the top of the building to throw himself off, the company won't mind. They got his eggs a long time ago. And there'll be another one along to scoop out next summer.

It ain't that bad for me. I'll go back into my own ocean in another month. To swim away and never come back to this special brand of hell again. In fact I think I'll go to Mexico, thaw out, and escape the frozen tundra.

You've got to excuse me, it's time to do the backing vocals. 55 minutes and counting. Just go to show you what some people do for money.