

NOTHING TO BE ASHAMED OF

by
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Based on a short story by Jack London, 1902

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V.O.

When one hates something with a passion, the thing to be done is to rid oneself of it. This is a tale that holds no bungling, no brutality and nothing of which one can be ashamed of.

INT. PUB - NIGHT

JOHN HAMMERSMITH, a jovial farmer (mid 40s) sits surrounded by several other farmers listening to his rhetoric, hanging on every word. Every so often laughter breaks out. ERIC DAY, another farmer, small, wiry (late 40s) sits at another table, his face distorted with contempt.

ERIC (V.O.)

Look at him! Everyone thinks he's so great. I loathe him.

Just then, laughter breaks out.

ERIC (V.O.) (CONT'D)

That laugh! That face! He irritates me, maddens me.

JOHN

Hey, Eric, pull up a chair, mate.

Everyone turns to look at Eric. He stands, drinks the last of his beer and proceeds towards the exit.

ERIC

I gotta go.

As Eric leaves, laughter bursts from the group. He stops, turns towards the group who have dismissed him, and scowls.

ERIC (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I need to do something about you Hammersmith. Hammersmith! Even your name turns my stomach.

EXT. ERIC'S TRUCK - NIGHT

From the truck cabin, headlights pick up the name "Hammersmith" on the letterbox beside open field gates. The truck drives through.

EXT. JOHN'S BARN - NIGHT

Eric pours petrol round John's barn and sets it alight.

EXT. JOHN'S BARN - DAY

John stands and surveys the burnt barn. He holds his fishing gear - a sack and a dab net. His dog sits at his feet. Eric drives up alongside him and talks from the truck.

ERIC
Good God, Hammersmith. How did this happen?

John laughs loudly.

JOHN
It's nothing. It needed replacing anyhow.

Eric is incredulous. He notices the fishing gear.

ERIC
Your barn's burnt to the ground and you're going fishing?

John gives a booming laugh.

JOHN
Why not? (to the dog) Come on, Zeus, let's go and catch some.

Eric sits in his truck and watches John and Zeus walk towards the river.

ERIC (V.O.)
I don't believe it - nothing phases him. I'll have to think again.

Eric watches the interaction between John and his dog.

EXT. JOHN'S FARM - NIGHT

Eric creeps towards Zeus's kennel. The dog wags his tail. Eric puts something into Zeus's food bowl and scurries away.

EXT. JOHN'S FARM - DAY

Eric drives up to find John burying Zeus.

ERIC
What're you up to, John?

John leans on his shovel and laughs.

JOHN
Poor old Zeus. Died during the night.
Must've been his time.

Eric stares at John through slitted eyes.

ERIC (V.O.)
You're a menace to society.
Hammersmith.

Eric drives away.

INT. PUB - NIGHT

John is once again surrounded by an audience of admirers as he finishes telling a funny story.

JOHN
...and a great big puddle flew up and
hit me.

Everyone laughs and laughs. Eric's face pinches with anger.

ERIC
That's not at all funny.

Everyone turns to look at him. John's face lights up and he laughs, making Eric embarrassed.

JOHN
Oh, you - ha, ha - you don't get it,
do you? Let me explain. See - you know
a puddle...

Eric turns on his heel and leaves.

INT. ERIC'S BEDROOM - NIGHT.

Eric lies in bed, wide awake. John's laughter reverberates in his head.

ERIC (V.O.)
How can I be rid of you John
Hammersmith? Shooting and stabbing are
too good for you. No, it has to be
neat and artistic.

EXT. ERIC'S FARM - DAY/NIGHT

MONTAGE: Eric buys a retriever dog. Day and night he teaches the dog to fetch the sticks he throws into the river. The dog must not only fetch but deliver the stick even if Eric runs away.

EXT. JOHN'S FARM - EVENING

Eric drives up, the dog beside him in the truck. John comes out of the house to meet him. Eric takes the dog's leash and hands it to John, who beams.

JOHN

No - No, you don't mean it! I - I kind of thought, somehow, you didn't like me.

John laughs heartily. Eric cringes.

JOHN (CONT'D)

How could I have made such a mistake?

He bends over the dog and fondles its ears.

JOHN (CONT'D)

What's her name?

ERIC

Bellona.

John laughs loudly. Eric grits his teeth.

JOHN

Bellona! The war goddess. I like it.

Eric changes the subject.

ERIC

I hear that you're off to the city on Monday.

John nods.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Then you won't have a chance to get a mess of fish before you go.

JOHN

Oh, I don't know.

He chuckles, and pats the dog.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I'm going tomorrow to try pretty hard.

Eric smiles.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

Eric looks through binoculars and watches John and Bellona walk together towards the river. He hugs himself and gets back in his truck.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Eric has found a strategic spot overlooking the river and the surrounding area. He watches John and Bellona at the water's edge.

John opens his sack and takes out what looks like a large, fat candle. It's a stick of dynamite, the method he uses for catching fish. He ignites the fuse and tosses it into the river. Like a flash, Bellona jumps into the river after it.

From his view point, Eric jumps up and down in excitement.

JOHN

Bellona, you stupid animal. Come back.

He pelts stones at the dog. Bellona swims steadily on until she reaches the stick. She takes it between her teeth and heads for the shore. John realises the imminent danger and starts to run. Bellona makes the shore and takes off after John.

From Eric's view point there is a sudden flash and a burst of smoke in the distance. John and Bellona disappear, leaving a big hole in the ground.

INT. ERIC'S LOUNGE ROOM - MORNING

Eric sits with his feet up and opens the daily newspaper. He smiles as he reads the headline: "Death from accident while engaged in illegal fishing."

ERIC (V.O.)

And that is how I got rid of something I hated with a passion. No bungling, no brutality, and nothing of which to be ashamed of. No more can I hear his infernal laughter echoing through my brain and no more do I have to look at his loathsome face. My days are filled with peace and my night's sleep is deep.