

IDLE CHAT:

By John Hildebidle

"Why not? Just tell me why the hell not."

David was, as he would have been glad to assure you, no fool. He could tell a sure loselose proposition when it was offered to him. Then again silence was no solution, either. A dilemma, no matter how you approached it.

She began to get impatient. He ordered another round, and a bowl of those mostlyunpalatable goldfish. He really had a craving for cashews, of course; but she had been after him to cut back on fats and calories.

"Dave, you can stall all you want. But sooner or later you'll have to open up."

"I think I vote for later."

"You always do. I need to go to the ladies' room. Don't try to sneak out while I'm gone, ok? That is worse than I deserve, for sure."

Still, ducking out was an awfully enticing option. He scanned the lounge t the visibility wasn't much, but they'd been there often enough so he could more or less fly blind. He concentrated on taking his mind off the situation. Which didn't work at all, of course.

The goldfish were soggy as ever, and the beer was watery. His socks were too tight. Had his shirt shrunk, or was he in fact putting on weight? In any case, his color seemed to be slowly strangling him. All he needed was a nice hot fire burning through the seat of his chair, or maybe a pin in one

pocket, and he would have achieved Total Torture Effect.

He hadn't looked at his watch when she left, and anyway he surely wasn't trying to keep track of the time. Hadn't she been gone an especially long while, though? Was she ok? How on earth could he check, without shaming both of them or starting up another one of those "Why the hell do you want to micromanage my life?" conversations. But then she appeared. Not looking any happier, though.

"Look, we both have to get up for work tomorrow, right? So let's just take a raincheck on the knockdowndragout fight. Just temporarily, I mean. We're getting pretty good at just fuming, anyway, aren't we?"

"We should be, by now."

-John Hildebidle