

BILL MONOLOGUE, 1  
From *Taking Up Serpents*  
By Mark Chrisler  
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## BILL

This was... hell, eight months ago, maybe? I always liked going to those revivals. Not because of The Bible shit--which isn't to say I don't believe it, just that it's not all that entertaining to me. I like 'em for the music, for the yelling, for the... they call it "ecstatic." You heard that? They call those things, the people in them--how they get--ecstatic. And that's just about the perfect word for it. I'd go to see the ecstasy, and there was plenty. Young girls and older ones too, dressed all fine and prude. Like they didn't even know what was waiting up their tights. But when they took to The Lord, all shaking and moaning and screaming in tongues... come on? You're gonna tell me there's nothing appealing about that? Seeing all that tightness melt away, all that control fall apart? That's as good as it gets.

To sweeten the deal--the experience, I mean--I'd taken to bringing in a flask. Taking some swigs, listening to the music and the preacher, and then watching the electricity climb through the thighs of all the nubile parishioners. This one particular day, though, I kinda slipped up--I thought, at least--because there I was trying to get my drink all stealthy and shit, not even noticing I was sitting next to Ms. Simmons, who as anyone could tell you is the town motherfucking crier for AA. Beat the fucking band at any and all times about the devil living in booze. Wasn't enough to stay sober herself; she needed to put herself on a cross about it. So she sees that flask, notices me drinking and while she doesn't go interrupting the service, you can tell she'd like to, to get a chance to call me out and tongue lash me good. But here's the crazy thing: when we get to the time where everybody starts losing their shit and getting all ecstatic, Ms. Simmons takes to some full-on, crazy-ass convulsions. Really losing herself to it all--crying and moaning and lifting her hands. And I, dumbfuck that I can be... I don't know what in Christ's name compelled me, but I see her all in the heat of it, and I pull out my flask

and put it in her hand. Whisper “have a swig.” Yeah, right?! Like I’m just asking for it. But crazier than that is that she does. She takes it. She downs a big old fucking glug. Reticent even to return it to me, I felt.

I’m watching her, whiskey pouring down the creases in her chin, and that’s when the revelation hit me. That was the epiphany. I’d been getting laid for years, lost my virginity when I was twelve, you know? Going to bars cruising for cooze. Which was... it is what it is, right? Hell, I remember a woman standing at the bar one night with a short skirt on, and I walk up behind and just run my thumb up her ass. Just right there in front of everyone, not even knowing her from Eve. And lickity split like I’ve got her cunt quivering around my member. But there’s just nothing right about that, about what she did, we did. All lust and wanting.

So seeing that straight-edge puritan cow guzzling down my whiskey right there in the service was eye-opening. I’ve always thought that nobody really gets to make their own choices. If we all got to just make up our minds and make decisions on stuff for ourselves, the advertising business would have gone dry decades ago. No, what we got is predispositions. Some of us tend towards praising and some of us tend towards fucking. But you get there at the right time, and you can beat the odds and probabilities and all that shit. You can make a preacher reject God, you can make a man kill his brother. And most of all, you can make a virgin wet as a used dish towel. I don’t get a lot of ideas, but fuck me did I have a good one that night.