

SHOCK

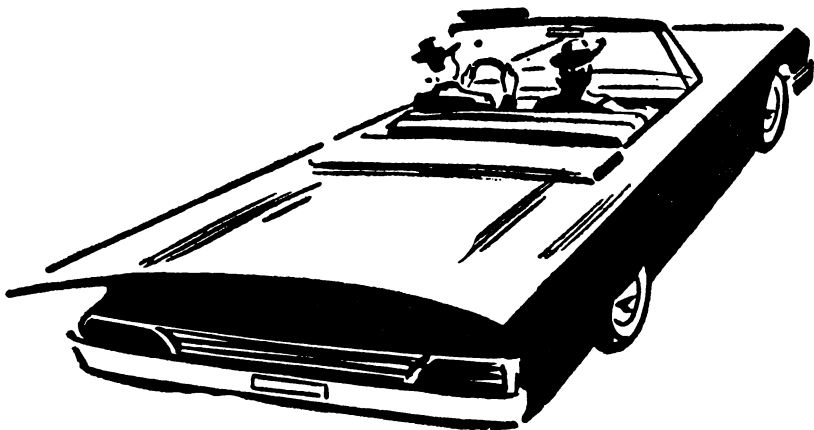
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The moral: don't drive into a strange town. It may be almost impossible for you to ever get out again. Alive, that is.

CHANCEYVILLE

by JOHN ANTHONY WEST

IT WAS A BLUE SEDAN THAT STOPPED for him.

"Where y'all headin', Sonny?"

"New York."

"Kind a long way from there . . . two, three days hitchin'."

"That's what I figure. I'm in no

hurry. How far are you going, Mister?"

"Well now, that depends."

The driver was a big man, unkempt, in grey trousers, khaki shirt and poplin jacket. His hair was shaved up a rough weathered

neck almost to the crown of his head.

"If you're going as far as Savannah I'd appreciate it . . ."

"Hop in, hop in, Sonny."

Galliano climbed in, tossed his rucksack in the back.

"Know what town you're in yah?" the driver said.

"No. I didn't notice."

"Town of Chanceyville, Gawgia."

"I see."

"Fahn town, Chanceyville. Sort a small. Sort a quaht. Fahn town."

"You come from Chanceyville?"

"Yep. Honeycutt's the name. Henry Honeycutt."

"Well . . . thanks for the ride, Mr. Honeycutt."

He drove at twenty miles an hour. Galliano looked at him with just a shade of apprehension; the road was deserted, straight, dry; it was early morning.

"Speed limit's twenty mahls a hour, town of Chanceyville," Honeycutt explained. "Wouldn't seem raht to go tearin' round. Ah'm Constable round these parts."

"Oh . . . I see . . . I guess things must be pretty quiet most of the time." He could think of nothing else to say.

"Pretty quaht. Fight once in a while. Drunk driver . . ." He slowed to ten miles an hour.

"Y'all know that hitchhiking's 'gainst the law in Chanceyville?"

"Is it? No, I didn't know. I mean, I didn't see a sign or anything."

"There's a sahn."

"Oh! Sorry. I didn't see it. Must have missed it."

"Sahn blew down two, three years ago."

Galliano laughed. "I guess it wasn't my fault I missed it then, was it?"

"Guess not . . . Town of Chanceyville still don't 'low hitchhikers."

"Listen, Mr. Honeywell . . ."

"Honeycutt."

"Mr. Honeycutt. What's the game? I'm sorry I hitched through your town. If I'd seen a sign I'd have walked through."

"Town of Chanceyville don't 'low vagrants neither"

"I'm not a vagrant, Mister. I'm a guy hitching his way to New York. I don't make trouble for anyone. If I can't hitch through your town and I can't walk through it, I'd appreciate it if you'd drive me back to the town limits and I'll wait and catch a bus through."

"Couldn't do that, Sonny. Picked you up insahd town limits."

The Constable pulled off the road and stopped the car; turned in his seat to face Galliano.

"Y'all American, Sonny?"

"Sure. Sure I'm American."

"Y'all don't look American. What's your name?"

"In New York it's as American as any other name."

"You ain't in New York, Sonny."

"Nobody knows it better than me."

The Constable bit off the end of a cheap cigar and lit it with the lighter from the car. "Folks round Chanceyville mostly Southern Methodist," he said, "Don't cotton much to popery round here."

"To tell you the truth, Mr. Honeycutt, I don't cotton much to popery myself. All I want is to get to New York without..."

"What you do for a livin', Sonny?"

"I'm a painter."

"Hell, Sonny, painter gets two, three dollahs a hour. No reason to be hitchin'. Ought to travel like a white man."

"Not that kind of painter. I paint pictures."

"Pitchers! Ah'll be damned... Don't seem like much of a occupation for a man."

"Maybe not in Chanceyville." Galliano reached for the door handle. "Look, Mr. Honeycutt, how about letting me go my way? I won't make any..."

The Constable patted a holster that Galliano had not noticed before. "That'd be resistin' arrest,

Sonny. More serious charge than jest hitchin'."

Oh Lord! Galliano thought, a night in a southern jail. He had four dollars and sixty five cents with him, enough, he hoped, to keep him in hamburgers to New York. Certainly not enough to pay the fine he expected. The Constable blew cigar smoke at him.

"What you doin' round these parts, Sonny?"

"I was painting in Mexico and ran out of money. I thought I'd go back to New York to try for a show. I went to Florida to see a friend. That's why I'm coming up through Georgia."

"Hell. You get around, don't you, Sonny? Never been further than Atlanta myself... Didn't like it."

"Living's cheaper in Mexico," Galliano explained.

The Constable eyed him sharply. "Where you got all them pitchers you talk about?"

"I waited around the Greyhound terminal until I found a guy who'd check them on his ticket. I'll pick them up in New York."

"Right clever idea."

Galliano tried persuasion. "So you see, Constable. I have just enough money to get me to New York. I couldn't pay your fine for hitching and what's the point of

using Chanceyville money to feed a stranger in jail? Why don't you just let me on my way? I promise I won't . . ."

"Jedge'll decide that, Sonny. Mah job's to uphold the law." He shifted the car into first and nosed back on the road.

"Mawnin' Henry."

"Mawnin' Jedge." Chanceyville's Justice of the Peace was a small paunchy man with watery eyes behind steel-rimmed glasses.

"Caught this fellah hitchin' in town, Jedge."

"Hitchin's 'gainst the law in Chanceyville, Young Fellah."

"So I've been told."

"Yew talk when the Jedge asks a question." The Constable's voice had a hard ring to it; it occurred to Galliano that this might turn out to be more than an amusing anecdote to tell at parties.

"Hitchin's twenty-fahve dollah fine in Chanceyville. Guilty or not guilty?"

"Look, Your Honer . . ." The Constable cracked him across the mouth with the back of his hand. Galliano stifled the impulse to strike back. The slap sent blood rushing to his face.

"The Jedge ast guilty or not guilty. That means yes or no, Sonny. He don't want no stories."

Galliano thought quickly. Not guilty would come to the same thing and a bigger fine. He fore-

saw a week in some bug-infested jail.

"Guilty," he said.

"That means you owe the Town of Chanceyville twenty-fahve dollahs, Young Fellah."

Galliano said nothing. The Constable stood poised in front of him. He waited for someone to break the silence.

"You heard the Jedge, Sonny. Twenty-fahve dollahs."

"I told you before I don't have any money. I have four dollahs and change. You can have that if you want it . . . Your Honor, I don't want to make any trouble. I was on my way from Mexico to New York. All I want to do is get there."

"Sorry, Young Fellah. You broke the law. Twenty-fahve dollahs an' you're back on your way."

The Justice was slightly palsied. Probably alcohol, Galliano guessed; the burst blood vessels in the nose, cheeks and earlobes.

"Young fellah like you ought to have twenty-fahve dollahs on him, seems to me."

"I told you, I don't have it." He saw that the Constable had his fists clenched and was staring at a point out the window.

"What you do for a livin', Young Fellah?"

"Says he's a painter, Jedge. Paints pitchers."

"Don't say! What kind a pit-

chers you paint?"

"I'm an abstract painter."

"That's them lahns and things?"

"I guess you could call it that."

"How much you get for one of them pitchers, Sonny?"

"Not enough." He spoke without thinking. The Constable hit him hard. He tasted blood in his mouth.

"Ah ast you a question, Sonny. You a wahse gah?"

Someday, somehow, Galliano vowed he would even the score.

"How much you get for one of them pitchers?"

"Hundred dollahs or so. When I sell one. I don't sell many."

"Henert dollahs! Jes for a pitcher?"

"Why, hell, Young Fellah. Seems to me y'ought to have twenty-fahve dollahs for breakin' Chanceyville law."

The Constable had an almost boyish smile on his face. "Hey, Sonny! How much you want to paint me?"

Galliano knew it was not the time for schoolboy heroics. The words came in spite of himself. "I don't paint portraits."

The Constable doubled him over with a jab in the solar plexus. His grin had disappeared.

"I'll do it for nothing if you'll let me out of here."

"Trahn to bribe a officer of the law, Jedge. Yew hear that?"

"Twenty-fahve dollah fahn. That makes fifty, Young Fellah."

"What the hell kind of frame-up deal is this! I'm trying to do a simple thing like get to New York..." The Constable doubled his fist.

"Jedge, Ah'd call that 'Contempt o' court'."

"Contempt o' court costs fifty dollahs, Town o' Chanceyville. You're up to a hunderd, Young Fellah."

Galliano wondered if he could survive a month in Chanceyville jail. The Constable seemed lost in thought. He brightened suddenly.

"Hey, Sonny. Kin you draw me a naked woman?"

"If I feel like it." He had no idea why he had to say these things. The crack in the face came as no surprise. "Yeah. I'll draw you a naked woman."

The Justice got him pencil and paper. He waited for his hands to steady and drew a nude.

"Chrassake! That's no naked woman. Ah want to see what she looks lahk."

Galliano drew an obscenely naked woman. The Constable was smiling broadly. The Justice ran his tongue over his lips. Galliano watched them, pretending not to. It seemed as good a way as any to get out of a jam. He signed it with a flourish. *D. Galliano.*

"That's more like it, Sonny. Now put a man on top of her."

Galliano drew a man.

"Right purty job, Young Fellah."

They savored the picture a while. "Now draw us another one, Sonny." Galliano drew another; more grotesque than before.

He waited for them to tell him he could leave.

"Boys at the store'll sure 'preciate them things, eh, Henry?"

"Guess they will, Jedge... But yew know what Ah think. Ah think we better confiscate them goods."

"What do you mean, 'confiscatre'? I drew them for you. They're yours."

"Shut up, Sonny! Can't let this fellah go walkin' round Chanceyville with them there pitchers."

"Ah think Ah see what you're drivin' at, Henry. Possession o' obscene littiture. Twenty-fahve dollah fahn in Chanceyville."

Galliano had been frightened before; it was pure terror now. "Then let me make a phone call. I'll get the money for you. It'll be here in the morning. You *have* to let me make one call. That's the law, isn't it?"

"Not in Chanceyville, Sonny."

"I swear I'll get the money for you. Can I make one call?"

"What Ah think Jedge, is that a fellah that kin draw them kahnd o' pitchers is dangerous."

"I drew them for *you*. You know I did."

"Imagine if them pitchers went circ'latin' Chanceyville school. That'd be what Ah call a corruptin' influence."

"Don't quaht follow you, Henry."

"Ah mean that a fellah oughtn't be allowed to draw them kahnd o' pitchers."

He turned Galliano's chair around; pulled his manacled hands onto the desk. Galliano fought because there was nothing else to do. The Constable took out his pistol.

At first Galliano didn't believe his own eyes. Then he heard himself screaming.

"No! Christ! Not my hands! Leave my hands alone!"

He clenched his fists and the Constable brought the butt down on them. Then again. Through the pain he heard the Justice of the Peace weakly admonishing the Constable to go easy. He heard the bones crushing. Before the pain knocked him unconscious he realized that no one, anywhere, had the vaguest notion of his whereabouts. Then he passed out.

When the Constable was done with the hands, he started on the head. When he finished Galliano fell off the chair. The Justice had turned away some time ago but came to his senses and went for

a pail of water and towels. He listened at Galliano's heart for a while, then stood up and shrugged.

"You oughtn't have done that, Henry."

The Constable was staring out the window, clenching and unclenching his fists.

"Anyone see you with him?"

"No."

"Still, you oughtn't have done that, Henry."

The Constable turned on him with blue eyes focussing on nothing at all.

"That'll teach them bastards to mess around Chanceyville." ■ ■

