

Two Novies

by Mike Sheedy

The Contest



Posy Toe

**Novie \ 'nă-vē \ (n):
novel + movie = novie**

An excerpt from *Posy Toe*.

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NOTE: This work uses film language to describe action as if it's unfolding on a screen. I call pieces written in this style novies (novel + movie = novie).

Imagine we're watching a movie. Dreamlike music comes up as we fade in on a jumble of slow movement. Dark follows light, over and over, and we see flashes of legs, boots and shoes. We're tumbling.

And then we're falling. Darkness rises around us. We fall, then we come to a stop and see a large circle filled with clouds. We're on our back and looking up at the sky from the bottom of a hole in the ground. Our legs run up the side of the hole and the toes of a pair of cowboy boots point inward, toward the center of the circle of light.

After a moment a face appears at the edge of the hole, then another face, and another. Faces of children, each painted with a different pattern and color. All the colors of the rainbow, eventually, when a dozen or so kids ring the hole. They shove one another to get a better look as the light begins to dim, the music trails off, and we fade to black.



The man we'll know as Norm Strange awakens to see old Lou Daklooski in pajamas and robe. Lou is gaunt, pale, spotted and bald. He's standing next to Norm's hospital bed, one of two against a wall of the room. A toilet stool, a wooden-armed easy chair and a door to a bathroom are on the other side of the room.

Norm's about twenty-five and has black hair. His body is obscured beneath a sheet, but he's lanky and suntanned. He's wearing a hospital gown, and the head of his bed is tilted up.

Lou's in the middle of a story. ". . . so on her honeymoon she found out he spelled sex with a pee. He wouldn't spell it for meals, or when the maid changed the bed, and that's why she was a

blushing bride with a rosy toe. Then over time *Rosy* Toe got mutilated into *Posy* Toe.”

Norm rubs his head and blinks. “Wha . . . What’re you talking about?”

“About how the town got its name. The *real* story. Not that Spanish word nonsense.”

“Who are you? Where am I?”

Lou rolls his eyes. “Oh, lord. Not this again. I’m Lou Daklooski. You’re in Texas. The *Posy* Toe Home for the Aged. It’s Monday. P.M. Earth time.”

Norm looks at a scrape on the back of his hand, looks under his sheet.

“You remember *this*?” Lou asks. He shoves a newspaper in front of Norm’s face.

Norm squints. The paper goes in and out of focus, and then the headline becomes clear. “STRANGE DISRUPTS MOSEY.”

“Our local rag,” Lou says. “*The Posy Toe Nosy*. They meant ‘*Stranger* Disrupts Mosey’ but left the R off the end of stranger. Can’t spell. Next month is the annual fall issue. Last year’s headline said ‘End of a Long, Hot Cummer.’”

Lou cackles, then he looks at Norm.

“You remember your name yet?”

“My name?” Norm thinks. “No, I . . . I don’t remember.”

“Then it *is* amnesia. That’s what we figured this morning. You couldn’t remember squat when you woke up then, either. And you don’t have any I.D., so people’ve started calling you Mr. Strange, from the headline.” Lou looks at the paper again and shakes his head. “Never thought anyone could get trampled in the Mosey.”

“What’s the Mosey?”

“Chamber of Commerce thing where tourists mosey around town and spend money. We have it each August.”

“So . . . folks call me Mr. Strange?”

“That, or Norm . . . the name they found in

your underwear. ‘Norman,’ to be exact, but we thought you’d prefer ‘Norm.’”

Norm looks puzzled.

“What’s wrong, son? Ain’t that your underwear?”

Lou breaks into another cackle just as nurse Cora Huggins bustles into the room. Cora’s a black woman in a white uniform. She’s about forty-five, medium height and build. She goes to Norm’s bed and examines his scraped hand.

“You boring this poor young man with your stories, Mr. Daklooski?”

“No, Cora, we haven’t been talking about you.”

“Ignore him, Mr. Strange, if you can. Do you remember me?”

“I don’t . . . I don’t think so. Your name’s Cora?”

“That’s right. And I’ve been tending you two days now, but I *don’t* have the time.”

Cora turns to walk to the bathroom. Lou shuffles over to his bed. He sits on the edge of it and watches through the bathroom door as Cora takes a plastic bucket from beneath the sink. She puts the bucket under the tap and turns on the water, muttering while she works.

“Emptying bedpans . . . People lazing around . . . Not *my* job . . .”

When the bucket’s half full, Cora turns off the water and addresses Mr. Daklooski. “*You* know how it is, Mr. D. We’re full up. Next it’ll be beds in the broom closet.”

Cora carries the bucket into the bedroom and sets it on an arm of the easy chair.

“Here you go, Mr. Strange. Come soak that scabby hand while I change your bed.”

Norm throws back his sheet and swings his legs over the side of the mattress. He stands up and wobbles a bit as he walks toward the chair. Cora goes to the bed and begins stripping it. More muttering.

“Thirty beds today and half the people could have done their own. If I don’t get some help I’ll . . .”

Lou chuckles and Cora looks at him. He points. Norm’s seated on the toilet stool beside the chair with the bucket on the arm. He’s nodding off and one of his feet is in a bedpan.

“You’re supposed to be soaking your *hand*,” Cora says.

Norm rouses slightly. “I thought you said this water was warm.”



A pickup truck is parked in the shade of a tree, out of the blazing sun. The back of the truck is full of shovels, picks and buckets. Big letters spell out “POSY TOE DEPT. OF HOLES” on the driver’s side door.

Cesar Salado’s sitting behind the truck’s steering wheel, talking on a cell phone. Cesar’s trim, Hispanic and about forty years old. An articulated steel brace is strapped around the left calf and thigh of his khaki pants. The patch on the chest of his khaki shirt spells out his name, which everyone will pronounce as “*See-zer*.”

“An official receipt for one thousand will be ready when you get here,” he says into the phone, then he looks down at an envelope on the seat beside him. The envelope’s been torn open and shows several hundred-dollar bills. Cesar smiles. “I *know* you sent two, Juan, but the extra thousand’s for . . . personal considerations. Adios.”



The nameplate on a large antique desk says “SEÑOR HWAN,” and the oriental man sitting behind the desk is thin, prim and in his thirties. Hwan has well-barbered hair and wears a brocade smoking jacket and silk ascot. He’s alone in his office and is reaching to hang up the phone.

An ancient-looking map fills the center of his

desk. The map's weighted down at the corners with books about treasure. Hwan runs a finger over some calligraphic lettering below a bird's-eye view of a fortress. The lettering spells out "EL DEPOSITO." He traces his finger along the outside wall of the fortress, then along an inside wall, and then he *stabs* at a spot marked "Sitio Secreto."

"The 'Secwet Pwace,'" he says dramatically. "Posy Toe's tweasa is almost in my *gwasp*!"



Norm awakens again and looks over to see Lou sitting up in bed and eating from a tray. The old man's wearing different pajamas than he was before. A third bed, curtained off, now occupies the space where the chair and toilet stool used to be. Norm lifts a hand and notices the fingertips are black. Lou smiles at him.

"That's ink on your hand. Marshal came by and took your prints."

"Oh, that's right. No I.D. We talked about that a few minutes ago."

"A few *minutes* ago? Try yesterday. But at least you remember it. That's an improvement. Do you remember anything before then?"

Norm shakes his head.

"Well," Lou says, "maybe the fingerprint check'll turn up something. And Cesar said he'd be back to look in on you later. We need the room."

Lou points to the third bed and goes back to eating.

"A nursing home," Norm says. "That's where I am, right? In Posy Toe. And there was a newspaper. Strange. You said my name is Norm Strange."

"Gotta call you something, and that's a good enough name."

"And why am I here, again? I got . . . trampled in a Mosey?"

Lou nods, chewing.

“Has a doctor checked me?”

“Don’t have a doctor here. Not a regular one. Town’s too small. We used to have a veterinarian, but he’s gone now. He was good at nipping the goobers off pets and treating them for worms, but . . .”

The curtains around the third bed suddenly *snap* open, and Tammy Lane is glaring at Lou. He shuts up.

Tammy is beautiful. She’s about thirty, has shoulder-length red hair and glittering green eyes. Norm swallows hard and runs his eyes down her body. Medium height and an hourglass figure. She’s squeezed into a pink western shirt over big breasts and tight blue jeans over rounded hips. Her pink cowboy boots have shiny silver caps on the toes.

“Uh, sorry, Miss Lane,” Lou says. “Forgot about your dad. I’ll keep it down.”

Behind Tammy, a gray-faced old man lies unconscious in a bed. The curtains snap shut. Norm continues to stare at the place where Tammy was standing.

“Uh-oh,” Lou says, his voice lowered. “Here comes Cesar.”

A rattling sound’s approaching in the hallway outside the room.

Norm is still staring at the closed curtains. “Who was . . . who was that?”

“Cesar Salado,” Lou says. “He’s on the council with Benny and Trey.”

The rattling gets closer, and closer, then Cesar’s leg brace swings into view at the bedroom door. He plants the leg, pivots and looks in. He surveys the entire room before fixing his eyes on Lou, who points to the curtained bed and makes a book-opening gesture. Cesar turns and walks back the way he came.

As Cesar’s rattle fades, Cora Huggins returns

with a box of clothes. An old straw cowboy hat and a pair of black cowboy boots are also in the box. She sets the box on the foot of Norm's bed.

"The things you checked in with," she says. "Get dressed. Cesar'll be waiting for you in his truck."

Norm sits up and dangles his legs over the edge of the bed, and as he does he notices that one of Cora's hands has painted fingernails—an elaborate paint job of blue and gold. But the nails on the other hand are plain.

Cora bustles out of the room. Norm digs through the box of clothes and finds a pair of underwear. He holds them up and sees the name "NORMAN" hand-lettered inside the band. He stands and pulls them on.

When he's finished dressing, he's wearing jeans, a yellow western shirt and the boots and hat. The edge of a red bandanna sticks out of a hip pocket. He's strapping on a wristwatch when Cora comes back into the room carrying a big black garbage bag, half full.

"I brought you some extra clothes, Mr. Strange. About your size. The previous owners don't need them now."

Norm takes the bag. Cora points to the bedroom door.

Lou clears his throat and says, "Since you're gonna be here for a while, Norm, go by and mow my yard. I'd hate for it to get like that jungle next door. Mower's in back."

Cora turns Norm toward the door and nudges him to get him started. "Cesar's *waiting*. But he knows you're unstable, so he said he'd give you an easy job to start off with."



A large banner stretches high across a street, between two telephone poles. The banner reads "POSY TOE MOSEY," and one of its bottom corners

has been untied. Norm's hanging from the rope at the corner and kicking his feet. He kicks away a tall aluminum ladder and it crashes to the ground. Cesar, stiff-legging back and forth at a safe distance, yells, "Don't damage that sign, Strange!"

There's a loud ripping sound as Norm's rope begins to tear away from the bottom of the sign. He holds on and starts a descending swing across the street.

He passes in front of an oncoming truck that blasts its horn and barely misses his legs. A car going the other direction screeches to a stop a foot short of hitting him. A kid on the sidewalk ducks out of the way as he passes over. And then Norm disappears into a hedge.

Cesar looks up at the torn banner, his mouth agape.



Two tanned teenaged boys are sitting in the sun, at the side of a road, beside a hole fifteen feet long and four feet wide. They're leaned back against two of the piles of dirt that surround the hole. They toss pebbles at each other listlessly.

Paco is seventeen, medium-sized, Hispanic. Spaghetti is seventeen, Caucasian, and gangly. Both boys wear T-shirts, jeans and sneakers. Spaghetti pets a dog stretched out on the ground beside him. The mutt's tail lifts and falls once, raising a puff of dust.

Then the dog hears something and sits up. He runs off. Paco drops down into the hole, out of sight. Cesar's truck pulls up, and Spaghetti drops into the hole too. Sudden sounds of digging.

Norm gets out of the truck and stands at the open window on the passenger side. The Mosey banner and Cora's bag of clothing are in the back of the truck.

"I'll pick you up at five to take you where you'll be staying," Cesar says. "You'll work with

these two until then. Get a shovel from the back.”

Norm grabs a shovel and turns toward the hole as Cesar drives off. The hole is only five feet deep, but we haven’t seen the boys since they disappeared because they’ve been crouching. They straighten up once Cesar is gone.

“Thanks a lot, butt-face,” Spaghetti says to Paco. “You could’ve *told* me he was coming.”

“I could’ve told you about your mama and me last night, too.”

Spaghetti looks at Norm. “Hi. That’s butt-face over there. They call me Spaghetti.”

Spaghetti extends his hand, and Norm bends forward to shake it. And he falls headfirst into the hole, between the boys, out of sight. His shovel clatters in after him. The boys look down.

After a moment Paco says, “My name’s Paco, not butt-face.”

Norm stands up and puts on his hat. From ground level we see three heads sticking out of the hole. Norm’s in the middle. He dusts himself off.

“My, uh, my name is Norm.”

The boys lean on their shovels.

“I know about you,” Paco says. “You’re that ‘Strange’ guy from the paper. So how’d you manage to get trampled in the Mosey?”

The boys snigger. Paco stabs the ground with his shovel. We hear the dull sound of the blade striking dirt.

“I heard you got thirty days community service,” Spaghetti says. “We got a week from ‘Benny Too-big-ass.’”

Norm studies the hole. “You’re working here for a week? Kind of a crummy job, isn’t it?”

“Yeah,” Paco says. “I wish I was working for Mrs. Dweezer again, like the last time.”

Spaghetti smiles. “Mrs. Dweeeeeezer. She’s *still* hot.”

Paco nods, and the boys snigger and wink at

each other.

“Oh,” Norm says, “I saw a woman at the nursing home today. Her name’s Lane and she has red hair. Do you know who she is?”

“Sure,” Paco says. “That’s Tammy Lane. She used to be hot, too, before she got old. Must be thirty.”

Paco stabs the ground with his shovel and hits rock.

“Damn. I need the pick, Getti.”

Spaghetti grabs a pickax and hands it to Norm, who passes it on to Paco. Paco sets his shovel aside and repositions himself so he can swing. He’s facing the end of the hole, his back to the others.

“Getti’s mom is hot, too,” he says. “Last night she got me so hard, when she chomped my rod it sounded like *this*.”

Paco swings the pick and strikes rock with a sharp *crack*. He puts the pick aside and grabs his shovel. Then we hear Spaghetti’s shovel hit rock. Norm hands him the pick and Spaghetti positions himself to swing. He’s facing Norm, and he smiles at him and says, “I was out in Paco’s garage once, with his mom, and when she chomped *my* rod, it sounded like *this*.”

Spaghetti swings the pick. Solid hit, and Norm throws his head back and screams. Spaghetti straightens up and Paco turns around to look. Norm’s howl trails off and he begins tugging at his foot.

Paco says, “You know, Getti, I think I would’ve heard that from the garage.”

Norm stumbles back when he pulls his foot free, then he stumbles forward and bends down, out of sight in the hole. He grunts and pops back into view, holding the pick in front of him. The pick spike is stuck through the toe of his boot.