

Strung
Out

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and
Strung Up

featuring
a few of
Glory's Guarantees

by
James Curtis

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Introduction

We savor beauty in the deep reds and oranges of a sunset, the multi-colored rainbow ending a stormy day, the wiggly tiny fingers of a newborn baby, and the lacy delicate trim of a pure white wedding dress.

Beauty is also there for us to discover in an old cigar box, a piece of red string in a window, a rescue ladder saving lives, and an old open Bible with worn-out cover and yellow pages. But maybe the most beautiful of sights seen by Heaven, is an old man's rescue attempts, amid tears, of those near him, those lives the tears and cries of Calvary purchased.

The following words have been directed
and inspired by Jesus Christ in me.

It's important to thank Bill Johnson for his enthusiasm
and encouragement in this and other efforts.



Chap. #1 – Peaceable Strings Guitar Shop

Don't touch nothin' in here, no matter how bad you want to,” was the soft spoken command from Jake, the oldest of the 4 boys and 1 girl. His other command was, “Monte, you and Dee better silence your cellphones, or we'll be thrown out of here forever, if they ring.” Each of the preteens felt they could spend all day in the shop and never see all the goodies.

They cautiously walked past the shelves of all kinds of tone-woods of every description, that included their world-wide origins. There were the woods with familiar names; maples, basswoods, poplars, and mahogany, to name a few. And then were odd ones like Paulownia, Wenge, Agathis, Cocobolo, and Pau Ferro.

Being the only girl in this adventure they'd been invited to, sort-of held Dee in a quiet mode, exercising her gender attributes of sensitivity in what was said and learned. It would be later in their visit to this Peaceable

Strings Guitar Shop they'd learn, that using the different woods for the guitar body, for the fretboard, the bridge and other parts would give a guitar a different sound – a different personality. It reminded her of some of the differences she saw in the four boys and also folks at church.

Tony was the first to notice a wall chart that described some of the different guitar strings and how they become dead because of salt and oils from the fingers. Some strings (often wire) are wrapped with a wrap-wire and even treated for longer life. He noticed that some guitar strings are wrapped in silk to protect against corrosion with the guitar bridge.

The real 'find' was made by Ben as he tugged on the shirt sleeves of Jake, Tony, and the others, to follow him. Ben's treasure-find was terribly out of place in this Peaceable Strings Guitar Shop and Store of high-quality custom made instruments. What they quietly all stared at, was a cigar box, carefully cushioned in the softest of packing. What really sprouted the questions in those

preteen minds was, “Has someone tried to make a guitar out of a cigar box?”

Chap. #2 – The Birth of Lester

I see you all have discovered Lester,” came the comment from the shop owner, walking up behind them. He continued. “Hi. I'm Don Kleese, the owner here. And I can easily see the same questions on your faces, I get from the other young people that have accepted my invitations for a shop visit. Yes. Lester is a genuine guitar I made out of a genuine cigar box, when I was about 17, no foolin'.” The preteen eyes all turned wide-eyed with mouths that all exclaimed, “WOW...” almost in unison.

Mr. Kleese, gestured with a sweep of his extended arm, saying, “We make and stock some really expensive guitars here. Their high price often relates to the inlaid wood, ivory, and gems included in their custom designed appearance. But know what?” With no close seconds, my favorite and most valued is little Lester (cigar box),

here.”

“Frank! Would you take care of the customers for a while? I'm gonna take these boys and girl back in the warehouse office and tell them how Lester was born.” Frank looked up from his inventory clipboard, “.. Sure will, Mr. Kleese.” The quick reply made with a bit of a smile, knowing what was about to happen, as it had so many times before.

Bottled water was handed to each preteen as they found seats in the office of the warehouse. Mr. Kleese closed the office door behind him, with one hand, as he held the box that protected Lester, with the other. He sat on a three-legged milking stool, which likely had its own exciting story.

Choices – Good and Bad

Lester's creator made eye contact with each of his visitors, in a serious way. “You've all looked through some of our inventory of different types of woods we

choose to build an instrument for a customer. We have to make the right choices, first, last, and always.”

“There was a time in my young years, before Lester here was created, that I casually made a terrible choice that has affected my whole life, in one way or another. I chose to follow the crowd, to be a cool dude, and began using drugs. If we make a wrong choice of wood to create a guitar, it destroys the sound, and quality of the instrument forever. The bad wood choice cannot be undone. The guitar becomes useless junk, in the same way that drugs destroys a life that began with opportunity and joy.”

“As some would say, I was strung out on drugs, that brought shame to my parents, distrust from those who knew me, and darkness in my heart, greater than the deepest blackest coal mine shaft. I couldn't even look at myself in the mirror.”

“I'm not sure to this day, the full reason why he did it, but a man I knew little about, invited me and two other boys to his little shop where he made guitars. His name was Lester. Lester Bates.” The listeners in that warehouse

office noticed how the eyes of Don Kleese were turning a little red as the name Lester Bates was spoken. Don's tone became as soft-hearted as someone describing a fireman that reached into a burning building to save a life, at the risk of his own. Maybe that's what Lester Bates did, long ago.

“It wasn't hard to see that Lester Bates was not a well provisioned man. We wanted to call him Gramps, but he preferred L.B.” “Those six or eight weeks we spent with L.B. were like heaven to the three of us boys, strung out so many times. Little did we understand that L.B. probably thought of himself as the one on the ladder, reaching into my heart to save worthless me.” As Don continued with his details, he wiped his nose more than once with a big red bandana, that had certainly gathered in many tears over the years.

“L.B. taught us boys how to begin making good choices, slowly, weighing the 'out-there results', as he'd call them. He taught us how to select one of the thrown-away cigar boxes, and check all the seams with care. Not right off,

but we three boys began to notice that 'ol L.B. would often exclaim a, “Thank Ya Jesus!” whenever one of us fellas accomplished a simple step in making our cigar box guitar.” While pointing toward the area Frank was now working, he chuckled, “And talking about habits, Frank will even tell ya that even now, sometimes he'll hear me exclaim, “Thank Ya Jesus!”

“Maybe building a guitar, whether cigar box or Wenge wood, comes out better with some “Thank Ya Jesus!” words along the way,” Don said with a bit of smile. The red bandana was put away. “The other thing Gramps, I mean L.B. did, while we were working on our cigar box guitars, was tell us stories – Bible stories, with such feeling and love, it was like we were there.” Little did we three boys realize, till some time later, was the Throne-Grabbin' prayers of L.B. had drawn us away from our destructive drug habits and toward our best efforts to our guitars. Now that's a REAL “Thank Ya Jesus!”

“L.B. not only taught us how to string up our guitars, but also how to play simple tunes on them. We tried to write

a little chorus about the Lady Rahab that saved her whole family from death. She didn't even have to climb a ladder. All she had to do was to obey with love and trust, to display a red string out her window. Now is that 'strung up' or what?!"

Chap #3 – Glory Guarantees

Don reached over to a dusty file cabinet, pulled out the top drawer, and retrieved a piece of paper with an appearance like some kind of a certificate. Holding it out so each preteen could glance at it, he explained, "I want to show you the guarantee we provide with each new instrument that leaves this shop. It says 'Satisfaction Guaranteed' in large letters, but includes the word 'limited' in smaller letters, right here where my finger is."

He continued, "I'm probably not explaining this right, but we humans aren't capable of creating anything that carries the 'ultimate guarantee'. We just can't, no matter how hard we try. Only God can provide guarantees like

that.”

“L.B. helped us to remember some of the guarantees we were to pass on to others, as they'd ask us about Lester and the other c.b. guitars we made. Let's see... ol' L.B. drilled into us boys, that guitars wear out, our bodies change – sometimes in scary ways, the world is crazy for new stuff that's bigger, faster, flashier than before. But the new things will no more satisfy than those that came before. The included guarantees became more meaningless each time.”

“But L.B. would pull out his always-open well-worn Bible, that appeared to have gone through as many stormy days as his ragged bib-overalls. Making sure we all looked close, silver-haired Bates pointed to the Old Testament verse Malachi 3:6a *For I am the Lord, I change not.* He'd add, in a courthouse lawyer tone, 'You boys can anchor your lives and hopes on the love, forgiveness, purpose, and provisions of the Lord, knowing they'll always be there.'”

Mr. Kleese loudly shoved the file drawer closed, with, “Now that's gotta be a REAL *'Thank Ya, Jesus!'*”

The four boys and Dee learned that day of several other guarantees in scripture. Her favorite one planted real peace in her heart, that still echoed the endless anger and bickering of her mom and dad. The verse tells of a guarantee only Jesus Christ gives: *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.* John 14:27.

One of the boys could hardly wrap his mind around a verse describing the power and purpose of the Holy Spirit, to bring joy into the life and heart of boys and girls, and their parents too. *Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,* Ephesians 3:20.

Mr. Kleese ended the Peaceable Strings Guitar Shop visit that day with his most heartfelt guarantee from Glory.

“L.B. taught us boys as we were building our cigar box guitars that we should use them with these and many other guarantees in reaching out to others around us. Whether we have a Lester, a ladder, a piece of red string, or a fancy piece of wood, our greatest joy and purpose in life, is to show love and mercy toward others. This is most effective when we include Glory's Guarantees in scripture, in the person of Jesus Christ.”

I will share a favorite guarantee in the book of Psalms; *He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.* Psalms 126:6.

God has reserved an opportunity, a joy,
the angels of Heaven can't experience.
It includes our heart tears.

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My Notes