

*Robert Frost*

It's hard to be in a strip club  
and not seem like  
a pervert  
or a scoundrel

I look around  
at the other men  
and at the people I'm with  
(for I'd never go alone)  
and think-  
do *we* seem  
that filthy,  
that creepy?

Every man looks so hopeless  
in a strip joint,  
most of them married  
some with girlfriends  
and it makes the whole  
thing seem sinister

I watch a man  
fling dollar bills  
at a woman who  
collects them  
while on all fours

and it makes me unhappy  
rather than horny

I sip my drink  
making each draw  
mean something  
for the price  
was equal to the price of admission...

this all goes on  
while woman after woman  
approaches me  
with the same opening pitch...  
*Where are you from?*

*Have you been here before?*  
and the entire transaction  
is based upon lies and bullshit  
for I change my answers  
each time

she doesn't care what you  
have to say

and some men  
feed into it all  
and believe these  
women want more  
than just their money

and I look at them  
and laugh  
watching the word  
*sucker*  
appear on their  
forehead

Now,  
I don't blame  
the dancers for this

that is their job  
that is what they are  
there to do  
and I can admire it  
in a strange and  
indifferent way....

I pass up  
on a few lap dances for  
the girls don't put on a good enough show  
their bullshit isn't convincing enough

but then a knockout  
approaches,  
she walks over like a lemon tree  
everything swaying  
in her stride

she doesn't even  
have to feed me those  
slick lines

she just asks  
if I want a dance  
and I accept  
as if I had traveled  
there solely  
to see her  
and not on  
some whim of  
boredom and lonesomeness

*\$30 for the dance  
and \$20 extra to touch*

No touching, I say  
my wallet is light  
as it is

*Are you sure?  
It's everything but my pussy*

I'm sure,  
I say

I lay down  
on the leather upholstered  
couch, she undresses  
and mounts me  
like I am her favorite  
racehorse

as soon as her tits  
hang freely,  
or perhaps  
*hang*  
isn't the right word

as soon as her tits  
*bounce* freely

I ask,  
can I change my  
mind about touching?

she laughs  
as she places her hands  
on my belly  
and I am reminded  
of what a fat, hairy  
creep I must seem to be

She begins to  
ride me,  
my nude jockey  
as I make the turns  
like a real thoroughbred  
steam coming from my nostrils  
and all

and then it is over  
and I am ready to  
ride one more lap  
but there isn't enough  
bread in my wallet  
to feed her-

Did you get a hard-on?  
one friend asks

No. I say

*What!? You didn't get a hard-on?  
They take that as an insult, you know.*

Goddamn it,  
I think

a strip joint  
is much more stressful  
than you'd first imagine

you worry about tips  
and who to tip

and what to tip  
and how much

now I had to worry  
about getting a hard-on,  
it seemed like  
too much trouble  
than it was worth

I got laid every now and again  
and even though there was just as much bullshit  
in a real relationship as there was  
with a stripper  
at least you could put it off longer

it seemed that all the bullshit  
of a relationship  
was somehow  
shrunk down  
and packaged into  
a brief exchange with a dancer-

a dark princess  
strolls over  
with her ass hanging out  
from under her dress

*You might want to think about  
upping your standards a little bit. She says  
I've seen the girls you've been talking to...  
I'm the best you're going to be able to find.*

I tell her to go pound salt  
for the cunt attitude may work on some guys,  
but not me, baby

she walks away  
as if I were an eyelash  
she had to brush away  
from her face...

Just when I'm starting  
to feel depressed

a beautiful, unaffected girl  
lingers over to me,  
gracefully

my wallet is so empty  
it may as well be  
a dead leaf  
that could just break up  
and blow away

*How about getting me naked?*  
she asks

I'm sorry, baby...  
I've got no money

*There are ATM machines*

No there's not

she laughs a fake laugh  
that somehow hurts worse  
than if she didn't laugh  
at all

but she sits down anyway  
and her long,  
beautiful legs  
reach across  
what seemed like  
the entire room

and she asks me what I do

I'm a writer and a poet,  
I say

*Oh! I like to write.*  
she says  
*I wrote a lot*  
*of poetry in highschool*  
which by the looks of her  
couldn't have been long ago

and I think to myself,  
what could this stripper  
know about poetry?  
They are all good looks  
and no brains...

well,  
we get into a conversation  
and she tells me of the books she's read  
and I tell her mine

and I am truly impressed  
by what she says

I find myself  
more interested in her mouth  
than in her tits and ass

only a moment before  
I saw her pussy for a dollar  
and now I find myself  
discussing Melville  
and how overrated  
*War and Peace*  
was

we talk about e.e. cummings  
and T.S. Eliot  
and Franz Kafka  
and Scott Fitzgerald...

she begins to recite  
Robert Frost

*Some say the world will end in fire;  
Some say in ice*

and I think  
it was the strangest place  
Robert Frost  
had ever been

at a strip club  
at 4 am  
with me  
and the smartest  
stripper I had ever known

she was a woman  
I could love

and I saw  
that if you spoke  
to these dancers,  
these hustlers,  
these demons of desire

they became human  
quicker than most  
people on the street

their phony pitch  
*Where are you from?*  
melted away like the ice  
in Frost's poem

and I found myself  
as one of those poor men  
I pitied

wanting to believe  
she cared.