

PLAYING DEAD

There was the time Todd 'shot' him and Tim had doubled up, groaning and thrashing, finally going limp, and with all their tickling and nudging they still couldn't get it to seem like he was breathing. Tim was tugged, face down, all the way to the creek. They held his head under -- for what was to him a delicious moment he hung there, mouth half filling with water, all eyes on his limpness -- finally he came out of it like a dog whose paw had been stepped on, the sixguns of his fingers blazing in all directions. The other four collapsed obediently in the water, floating face down for as long as they could. That day Tim had called the shots.

RAPE

Tim perched under the bridge waiting to ambush the girls. From his girder he could see Todd and those guys. They were wading around looking for carp still. They'd pick out spots where some tree falling had caved the bank in, there would be a pool where the roots had come out, and the guys would surround it, some above on the bank and some in the water. Todd would sneak up first since the spear his dad got him had a blade on the end; he would sight along its shaft into the water and plunge the spear straight to the bottom; if it touched something he'd squeal; by then, though, they'd all be ramming their sticks down and hollering; rocks and mud would be breaking loose and drifting and streaking into the current; and Tim, above, would have his eyes on the brown stain as it moved along and blended in with the stream.

So far the guys hadn't speared a thing. John wanted them to come up with a huge, ugly, gasping, bulging carp they could heave to the bank so everyone could slash at it, let the bastard bleed and flop on the dirt until even they had a hard time looking at the remainders, then when the girls came, corner one of the homeliest and try shoving the thing down her dress. The whole idea was so gross nobody would have dared object. But so far they didn't have a fish.

-- Bill Marsh

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