

JOE EASY

always sat on the same barstool with the same smoke, sipping the same drink, telling the same run-down stories. hell, half the time, he'd forget to put his choppers in. when he heard i was going to Mexico that was all he needed. "sure, i speak just like a native. all you gots to do is put a 'o' on everything. take your name, Roberto. see? or cat, cato. o.k., no problem." of course, i didn't believe him but maybe that didn't matter. Joe Easy believed himself ....

RANDOM MAN

Jules opened the white pages and dropped his finger on a name. Virgil Later.

Jules imagined Virgil was near retirement, almost bald; an Elk. Virgil liked cold spaghetti and watching his grandson's little league games. Jules carefully dialed the number. "hello, heLLO, HELLO." Jules waited with no sound then hung up. Virgil shrugged, deciding it was an obscene call. Jules put the phone book away, satisfied it wasn't a wrong number ....

-- Robert Underwood

Redlands CA

THUNDER AND LIGHTNING

mad woman slams the door gets in her toyota whips out of the driveway and drives away with a small squeal of the tires.