



## Rogues' Gallery

### Barred for Bragging: Purdy



A travelling salesman known to regulars as Purdy was talking to Marie, a philosophy student, about trust. Marie didn't trust Purdy and told him so. He laughed and she left. Then someone asked who would you trust more, someone who swore on their mother's life or someone who swore on a stack of bibles. That got Purdy started. From his seat in the shadows Peter Blegvad overheard every word:

Got a gun? If you're a good shot, here's a way to make some money. Buy a few pocket bibles, set them up against a wall and plug them from far enough away that the bullet doesn't go all the way through. A plugged bible is a very saleable item in some places, provided you can spin a yarn. You know, a story about how it was in your breast pocket when you were shot, how it saved your life. A miracle, right? So the plugged bible will be a talisman at least, it will bring the bearer luck. That's worth money.

On my travels I usually pack a couple of plugged bibles in case of opportunity. I wouldn't risk it here, I'm too well known. But on my travels, if I find myself in a strange town talking to a stranger in a bar and if it's pay day, say, and if he seems drunk and superstitious enough, I'll tell him the one about the GI on D-Day who's wading ashore on Omaha in a hail of lead – he's hit, goes down, but comes to in the wet sand with nothing more than the wind knocked out of him, thanks to the shield the Good Book provided. Amen. Hallelujah. A superstitious drunk will gladly pay £20 to own a plugged bible. There's one born every minute, thank god. I'll leave him sitting there at the bar with the book, dipping his finger in the wound like Doubting Thomas.