

Mouth to Mouth

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PEOPLE WITH CROOKED TEETH
ARE BEAUTIFUL

If you want to buy silver, the pawnbroker was the go-to dealer. Always ready with a good price, or a swap, if you had something of value. No questions would be asked. And stupid question equaled stupid answer. But the pawnbroker was a talker and, if you were not cautious, the pawnbroker would speak for hours. Long passages of personal exhibition, no filter, and plenty of fillers. Rumour had it that the pawnbroker used to be a successful contractor, with a portfolio of estates in the inner city. Gold was the pawnbroker's side-business. Old-timers made it clear that the pawnbroker had a tarnished reputation. The pawnbroker used to be an extravagant character with tight connections to the establishment. Not even the law could catch the hustle. It was a multi-level scheme, and the pawnbroker was dragging bankruptcies alongside.

Everything was in the shadows.

In the gold business, people use alias and, at some points, the alter ego takes over the person. Traders use the name to avoid unpleasant home visits and shady diggers. Using cover names can be beneficial as a tactic when navigating within systems.

People didn't trust the pawnbroker, and when the pawnbroker mixed up names and faces, the trap snapped. Everything fell apart and Pandora's box was wide open.

New-comers showed interest in the pawnbroker's leftovers. They scrambled through the almost unvaluable rings and chains. The punks dug for treasures and I started to visit the pawnbroker's broken mind. With the tools of interviewing, I dived into the past to understand the person behind the two names. The pawnbroker shifted between using their given name and the chosen name. It was clear that the amount of indescribable stories was flickering from one endpoint to another.

Every day I went by for coffee, and I left when my ears nearly fell off. The punks were hanging out backstage, and the pawnbroker's shop slowly turned into a youth house. It wasn't a profitable business, and nearby, handmade signs were popping up. "Sell your dental gold" was written with blue spray paint on wooden boards. All the old-timers and new-comers knew, and all arrows pointed in the direction of endless talk from the rags of former riches.

Dedicated to all the curious minds out there.