

# **BREAKING IT**

a real shorty by Peter Black

Shake a hand, shake a hand  
Shake a hand, shake a hand  
Shake a hand if you can  
Shake a hand, shake a hand

Gene got up. "Jesus. Dood-da wad-da. Dood-da wah." And made the gestures for a million rock fans everywhere which tonight, as usual, meant LaVern sitting across the room pounding shit out of the ancient snare drum Gene had received from his father in '58, an eighth grade graduation present.

"You know, I got that drum over ten years ago."

"Dooda wadda, doodawah."

"Just listened to Little Richard records and beat hell out of that thing until they kicked me outta the house."

"Dooda wadda, doodawah."

"Then I rented the whole set. The bass drum was so huge it belonged in a marching band. A tom-tom and a cymbal with pennies scotch-taped to it to make it buzz good. All in matching white mother of pearl. Oh Jesus. They sent me out to the guest house to work it out. I finally graduated up to Fats Domino."

"Dooda wadda, doodawah."

"And never changed a beat. Jesus Christ, no matter what, I always played the same thing. I never mastered a single riff."

"Dooda wadda, doodawah."

Duke-duke-duke  
Duke of dope  
Duke-duke

Duke of dope  
Duke-duke

LaVern broke one of his battered sticks on the rim of the drum, and, though still on beat, ended his effort as he collapsed in laughter. The remains of two six-packs of Rainer Ale, LaVern's "Green Death," lay spewn about the room, the third quickly disappearing. Roaches carefully placed about the lid of the ceramic cheese jar stash marked the time like some strange clock. Gene raised the window and stuck his cock out, listened to the splatter on the gravel path below.

"You know, that's why I live in the country. Nothing is worth shit if a man can't piss out his own window."

"Amen."

Laughing like hell, Gene stuck it back in and shut the window, snapped open another can of brew.

"I don't know. It's just that tonight I can really feel all the poison I've let get stored up in me and I just don't know how in the hell to get it out."

"I know man. I just hadn't realized how contaminated I'd become these last few weeks."

"Whew."

"Yeah. Whew."

Gene turned the record over and raised the volume as LaVern started back up on the drum.

Come alonga baby  
A whole lotta shakin' goin' on

Gene picked up the washboard hidden in the corner and started scratching a huge flat pick across the grooves. First, just single solid strokes backing LaVern and his beautiful dominant drum, then something else, crazy strokes, something solely within the realm of inspired washboard playing which drove them both up into an even wilder frenzy.

Come alonga baby  
We gotta whooole lotta shakin' goin' on

LaVern looked up at Gene with his huge spastic grin.

"Come on, baby, let it out! Break it! Break out!"

Gene dancing about scratching the washboard until he has worn down the plastic pick to the point where there is nothing left to play with

at all, and so he just throws the stub away and tries his fingers, decides no bloodshed is needed and just starts beating the washboard on the floor.

Yeah, come alonga baby  
A whole lotta shakin' goin' on

Just pounding the floor with the washboard until it is nothing. A stick in a clenched fist which he then uses to smash, in rhythm, individual assorted ale cans and the Mason jar full of flowers on the bookcase which shatters the very instant LaVern picks up the snare drum and heaves it through the window, glass and all.

Still not satisfied, LaVern dances over to the window and ceremoniously kicks out the remaining glass to crash on the path below.

Gene has stopped jumping on ale cans to watch the final blow.

“Jesus, you're clear outta your skull.”

“Ain't it beautiful?”

“Nothin' left but to finish it off.”

“What's left?”

Gene produces, from behind the bookcase, a polished black .22 pistol, something to keep the semi's off you, traveling fast, Nebraska.

“You get first shot.”

LaVern smiles like an honest idiot, takes the thing, points it out the window in the general direction in which he had thrown the drum now completely lost in the darkness outside and pulls the trigger.

“Jesus”

LaVern moves aside from the window and solemnly hands the gun to Gene who finds something to take careful aim at, his arm stiff out from the shoulder. He lets off a shot and leaves his arm straight out like that a moment staring out into the dark end off the tip of the barrel.

“Jesus Christ.”

And lets his arm fall.

“Whew.”

“Man, hear it in your ears?”

“Just this ringing...”

“Beautiful.”

“Yeah.”

And Gene lets go and hurls the pistol out the window with the rest of the shit.

