

FW 322.16-24

THE TERRIBLE TERSSE

by
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Disclaimer

These are tentative annotations, liable to be adjusted, modified or discarded. Many of them are highly questionable, definitely far-fetched and a few on the verge of insanity. So use them at your own risk. My aim is trying to put together controversial data in order to build a possible system. The results may not be satisfactory, but I am convinced that the strategy is the right one. McHugh's Annotations and Fweet should be always at hand.

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Porter goes on with his narration recounting how the clients (of the original scene) keep provoking Kersse.

**322.16: -- And, haikon or hurlin, who did you do at doyle today, my
322.17: horsey dorksey gentryman.**

This may be just a greeting, following the motif of "*How are you today, my dark/fair sir?*". In this case it would be a "*dark*" sir, justified by the "**dorksey gentryman**". But "**haikon or hurlin**" is kind of puzzling. If "**hurlin**" may easily hint at "*hurling*", what can we make out of "**haikon**"? Let's try first to circumscribe the semantic horizon of the sentence.

There are a couple of references which point to “*horse race*”, with a clear “**horsey**” and a “**doyle**” that could be the “*Baldoyle steeplechase*” already met in 322.02 (**Boildawl stuumplecheats**). In fact there are more “*horse race*” references in the rest of the paragraph. But I am of the opinion that the “*horse race*” of which Kersse gives an allegoric running commentary (describing a detailed fabrication of the suit) is the result of a misunderstanding.

It's true that the clients allude to “*sports*”; not a “*horse race*”, though, but a game of “*balls*” (with all its ironic “*baloney*” connotations). In this case “**haikon**” could be football “*hike*”; whereas “**hurlin**” a baseball “*hurling*”. In fact “**haikon**” could also be “*strike one*”, so we would have a “*catcher*” and a “*pitcher*”.

“**horsey dorksey**” does not pose problems, since he is a “*dark horse*”, that is a person with hidden abilities. But what about “**doyle**”? The meaning of “**doyle**” (*Dubhghall*) is “*black stranger*” (*dubh* “black” + *gall* “stranger”), so that “**who did you do at doyle today**” might be rendered as an apparently enigmatic “*Who is the stranger you met today and whom you made black?*” In English that may sound weird and grammatically incorrect, but Italian “*fare nero*” (to make somebody black) is “*beat the shit out of somebody*”. And if we read “**doyle**” as “*dole*” (archaic “*sorrow, dolour*”) that could be a further hint. In conclusion, the clients' sarcastic question could be rendered like this: “*Now, talking about your game of “balls” (fibs, lies), were you the one who “caught” the beating (haikon → strike → catcher), or the one who gave it (hurlin → hurling → pitcher)? And in case you dished it out, O noble fighter who hides unknown resources! (horsey dorksey gentryman), who was the stranger whom, today, you beat the shit out of (who did you do at doyle today)?*” Or “*whom you had a fight (at doyle) with?*”.

It seems that the clients are used to hear Kersse's daily deeds (*did you do*).

Of course we might read “**haikon**” as Japanese “*haiku*”, a most elegant form of poetry; thus in total opposition with the yelled “**hurlin**” (French “*hurler*” : to yell, to shout, to scream). Thus an invitation to recount the story either in a moderate and elegant or in a vehement and passionate way. Or in an alternate style.

And Kersse, taking advantage of the “*equestrian*” references, seems ready to unbridle “*the horse's mouth*”. But the “fight”, in fact the “*race*”, that he describes, as I suggested, is the allegoric confrontation between his sartorial abilities and the “*suit*” he must give shape to. A suit which is, in this specific context, an allegory of the Captain.

322.17: Serge Mee, suit! sazd he, tersey ker-

322.18: sey.

So few words and so many allusions. Textile ones: leaving aside the obvious “**suit**” we have “**serge**” (a strong fabric used for clothing); “**kersey**” (a heavy wool or wool and cotton fabric used especially for uniforms and coats); and of course a Turkish tailor (*terzi* → **tersey**), hinted at by “**Ter-sey + Ker-sey**”. Then we have horse races references : “**tersey ker-sey**”, pointing to Italian horse racing “*terza corsa*” (third race). And we have Kersse's ironic reply to the clients' sarcastic greeting. His “*terse curtsy*” (**tersey kersey**); his openness and willingness to answer their questions (**Serge Mee** → search me); his pride and self confidence (**Mee** → capital M and stretched double “e”); his readiness to take the clients' challenge (**Serge Mee** → “*So you urge Mee!*”) and pick up the gauntlet.

322.18: And when Tersse had sazd this Kersse stood them the whole

322.19: koursse of training how the whole blazy raze acurraged, from

322.20: lambkinsback to sliving board and from spark to phoenish.

In taking the challenge the tailor has acted like “*Turko the Terrible*” of the so often cited pantomime (in our case the Terrible

Terzi/Tailor), but then he assumes the more human traits of Kersse (the Third → Italian “*terzo*”), and, as such, standing before his audience, he gives a detailed account of the confrontation he had with the suit (the whole *koursse of training*), seen from the allegorical perspective of a racehorse, with its related terms:

“*koursse* → *course*”, “*raze* → *race*”;

“*acurraged* → *Curragh racehorse*”;

“*lambkinsback* → *The Lambkin*, famous horse, winner of many races”;

“*from spark to phoenish* → the race's start and finish”.

“*sliving board*” may hint at the “*Horserace Totalisator Board*”, a bookmaking company; although “*sliving*” referred to horse races is not so easy to situate. But it's possible that it points to “*tote board*”, with a sarcastic pun “*living* – *tot* → German : *dead*”. Pointing to those who try to gain their “*slivers*” of life through betting.

But of course many terms apply also to “*tailoring*”, so that “*the whole koursse of training*” is a complete lesson on how to prepare a suit, in this case of a “*blazer*” (*blazy raze*) type : uniform garments, e.g. for airline, school, *yachting* and rowing clubs; starting from lambskin wool and finishing on the tailor's board, where the fabric is cut to pieces and the starting “*spark*” gives the suit its final, flamboyant shape (*phoenish* → phoenix).

322.20: And

322.21: he tassed him tartly and he sassed him smartly, tig for tager, strop

322.22: for stripe, as long as there's a lyasher on a kyat.

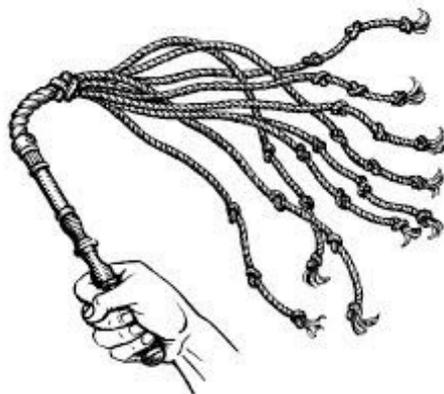
Before parsing the lot of tricky words of this short sentence I think we should point out who is the “*him*” talked about. I am of the opinion that it is the “*suit*” in a human (the Captain's) shape: a “*humanized*” suit, which is indeed “*maltreated*”.

“tassed” may hint in fact both at French “*tasse*” (cup, goblet), which, reversed, is like the Captain's “*hump*”; and at Italian “*tessere*”, French “*tisser*”, Latin “*texere*”: to weave, to put together; here in quite a “cutting” (tartly) way . And we may pick up also Italian “*tasse*” (taxes), that morph easily into a reproaching “*tax*”. Reproaches that become “impertinent speeches” (sassed); and since “*sasso*” is Italian “*stone*”, here it might suggest “*lapidation*”.

In “*tig for tager*” we detect “*tit for tat*”, and the children's game “*tig* or *tag*”, or the baseball “*tag*”; or a rod (French “*tige*”) that beats a tiger (*tager*). In conclusion “*an eye for an eye*”. Continued with a “*strop*” ,



the band of leather that whips the Captain's “*ass*” (t-assed & s-assed) forming stripes on it (*strop* for *stripe*). A flogging, until exhaustion, like those made with a “*cat-o'-nine-tails*”.



How did I get it? Parsing “a lyasher on a kyat”. Let's get rid for a moment of the “Y”. The result is a “*lasher*” on a “*kat*”: thus a flogging with that special whip, which, not a coincidence, shows many “Y”s.



And since “*kya*” is Burmese for “*tiger*”, we have a good whipping of an alleged tiger (tig for tager), in fact an innocuous kitty : striped for good!

But “*kyat*” may be “*kite*”, the predatory bird, a “*hawk*”, with its own “Y”, triumphing over its prey.



322.22: And they peered
322.23: him beheld on the pyre.

Here again we have the “**him**”, which may be both the “*hawk*” the clients look at (**peered**), flying high over the “**pyre**” on which the Captain (the other “**him**”) is chained. Here we may detect the Dantesque “*contrappasso*” (the law of retaliation).

Contrapasso (or, in modern Italian, contrappasso), from the Latin contra and patior, "suffer the opposite": refers to the punishment of souls in Dante's Inferno, "by a process either resembling or contrasting with the sin itself." [WP]

The Captain threw the suit in the “*oasthouse*”; now he suffers the same punishment, “**paired**” (**peered**) by Kersse who throws “**him**” in a symbolic “**pyre**”. And that's indeed a fate quite worse (French “*pire*”).

322.24: And it was so. Behold.



What is the punishment like is soon to be seen!

(to be continued)