

Leon Whyte

Soma Circa 2005

Night after night
it's the same scene,
it's all the same to me,
thin gin or cheap wine.

steal sly glances at
the ghost in the white slip
standing next to the
whisky stained dress
that she stripped off
and threw in the corner.
I'd love to have her,
but I'd settle for
second best.

Turn up the stereo
and make our toast
to oblivion, slip
on the hardwood floor,
get up and talk to Emily
about nothing much
at all.

Yet again a drunk night
equals another fist fight,
words get said, we sit back
and watch our ritual
dance of the dead.

Sarah says something
funny, tensions die down,
someone goes to the store,
David passes out,
and I pour one more.

It's getting lighter out-
side, morning is coming
and this party's dying.
Drive home in Kati's
car, singing off-key as we
death defy down the road
erratically.

In this life like a desert
all the tumble weeds
just want another drink.

Night after night
it's the same scene,
It's all the same
to me.

Dream With Kerouac

last night I had a dream
with Kerouac in it
he told me that
this land was a body
the highways its veins,
and we were cocaine
shooting raw electricity
through the nervous system

we became libertines as
we raced against reality,
and time, against poverty,
and our own impending insanity

but mostly we just raced,
because for us cool cats
life is just a
benzedrine dream
blurred faces
strange beds
and stranger women

we clung to the road
like an orphaned child
clings to his one
tattered picture of
his biological
mother

after awhile
each new trip became
the junkie's latest fix
at first sublime
but never enough,
this land is a body,
we're merely track marks

if home is where
the heart is
then what becomes
of the homeless?

Old Age

“Empty the register,” demanded the masked man, waving his Tech-9 pistol at the the cashier.

The cashier looked to be about 70, and wore his age like a wet wool sweater. Years of gravity had caused the man’s shoulders to slump slightly forward. While he contemplated the burglars request he scratched his head, then shook his head and whispered “no”. The burglar’s face visibly sagged behind his mask as he thought to himself, this was supposed to be easy. The burglar looked to be around 18. He had been in the store earlier that day, to case it out, and to buy a moon pie.

“Come on, be a good boy and just open up the register,” said the burglar, half pleading, half mocking.

“No.”

The cashier hid his fear behind a facade of quiet determination, but his face was starting to flush and the hands he hid under the register trembled. The robber looked down at his gun, wondering how it suddenly became impotent, raised it above his head, and fired a shot at the ceiling, causing dust and tile to cover the candy bar section of the Quick Stop. Both of the men flinched noticeably at the loud retort of the gun, and it’s implications. The old man started to choke on the dust and coughed for half a minute or so.

“I am not fucking with you.”

“Don’t do that,” whispered the old man, after a flash of fear lit his eyes.

“What?”

“I said don’t do that again,” commanded the old man, more forcefully this time.

The burglar pushed the cold metal of his Tech-9 against the wrinkled forehead of the old man.

“Give me the money.”

The old man looked back at him, with wide eyes, and mouthed “no.”

“If you don’t, I’m going to blow your fucking head off. Do you understand me, grandpa?” jeered the robber.

“I really don’t think you will, young man,” said the old man in a quiet flat voice.

Instinctively the robber knew that the old man was right, as much as he had tried to convince himself otherwise. He couldn’t kill in cold blood. He looked down at his gun once again, of all the connivence stores in the area, he had to pick this one. All of his friends had told him how easy this was to do. He wondered what Tommy or Joe would do, probably waste the geezer.

“We’re in a tough spot aren’t we, son?”

“Shut up.”

The masked man felt nauseous as he tried to think of what to do next.

“Hey, son, do you want to buy anything?”

“What?”

“I said, do you want to buy anything?”

Mumbling expletives under his breath, the masked man slipped his Tech-9 back between the elastic of his boxers and his belly.

“Sure, I’ll take a pack of Camel Menthols,” he said in a resigned voice, staring at his Nikes.

“That’ll be \$3.15”

The masked man searched his pockets for the money, then pulled out 3 crumpled bills and a dime.

“I only got \$3.10”

After the old man took the money he counted out 5 pennies from the little tray near the register, and then pulled down the cigarettes.

“Have a nice night, young man,” said the clerk as he handed over the Menthols.

“You too,” said the would-be robber, as he pulled off his mask and walked out the door.

As the young man walked out of the store an involuntary spasm crossed the old man’s face. After regaining his composure the man went to the back to get his broom and dust pan to clean up the dust in the candy bar aisle.