

Benjamin Rader

### An Evening Special

A local news team was coming around to do a few minutes on the house. Channel 17. Karen told me this right as I walked in, before I even could get out of my work shirt.

She goes “camera’s, lights, the whole thing” she goes, “a special for the news, can you believe it?” She turns back to the mirror and goes to herself “A real live reporting crew. In my house.” And smiled... Not to me, to herself.

The special was titled Junk Trunk, or something big like that. It had flavor.

Karen got out her best sweater for the deal, earrings too. She thought it was a real special something. Her very own fifteen minutes of fame. I was still trying to get my head around the whole thing.

I wen’t downstairs and took a seat in the middle of the couch. My elbows were held up by a box or two. You wouldn’t think it would be, but it really was a comfortable couch. I thought about making coffee.

There was a pile of newspapers on the coffee table and I picked one up and wen’t through it. I’ve always had a thing for papers. Show me the local section and I’ll show you the happenings, the up and up, the going ons. Real racy type stuff. An ad for a shoe warehouse out in the city did it for me and I circled it in pencil.

There was a knock at the door. There it was. I called up to Karen to tell her. This wasn’t my thing, man.

She calls back “Go on and open it up, would ya hun? Offer them some coffee”

I threw my cap on. Me and the people from TV, well how do you like that?

“That’s a fine looking pony tail you got there” I go to the camera man. And I turned my head, giving him a solid profile. Besides for that he was a regular looking man in cargo shorts. I invited him in.

He goes, “Yep. 5 years and runnin. The other guy should be here real soon and we’ll get started.”

I shook my hands in the air, “It’s not me your looking for...” And pointed up...”Her”

He understands. And just then Karen comes waddling down the stairs in her best sweater, with these tiny bells sewn on the chest. She’s done up her make-up real nice, styled after one of those oriental queens, with the long eyelashes.

The cameraman goes, “Didn’t you say somethin about coffee, Bill?”

“Coffee...? Well how’d you know my name?”

He throws a finger at my shirt, and then I get it. He’s a real observant one, this cameraman.

Karen and him start chatting and hit it off right away. The cameraman stands in a little open space in the room, and gets on his knees to start setting up his equipment.

A second knock at the door and this thing is off and running. Only, here’s the thing. This second cameraman is sporting a pony tail too, and a camera! Two cameramen with pony tails? That makes three, in my house? I couldn’t do it, it was too much. I guess I’m not cut out for television.

Karen goes, “And this is where I keep the calendars.” While I grabbed the newspaper and slowly backed my way out of there.

The bathroom was in the back of the kitchen and when I got there I thought well hell, why not go the whole nine. I grabbed the keys off the little cow-holder on the wall and slipped out the backdoor. In the other room bells were ringing and the cameramen were laughing. They would get along fine without me.

I went over to the side of the street and saw the news van next to the car. It was channel 17 all right. I hunched down into the car, adjusted the seat, and rolled down my window. The paper with my pencil mark was on the seat over from me, and from time to time I looked at it for the the address.

I hit traffic on the highway and smoked cigarettes. There was a Steely Dan tape at the bottom of the glove compartment and I popped it in. You ever listen to Steely Dan? Real talented musicians. They always bring it, and bring it good. Hell if I wasn’t grooving by the time it let up.

We started moving again soon after, and for some reason or other my exit was blocked off and had to take the next one about six miles down. My watch read quarter till seven by the time I made it into the city. Karen must

have been showing those guys a real good time by now. Maybe they were on to the picture frame's, or maybe it was key rings. I couldn't say.

The building's on my right, but there's no parking on the street so I circle around looking for a pay-lot. A man in a purple jacket waves me in and leans his arms on my window.

"How much?" I asked.

"For you?" He looks up and down the street. "Twenty-five"

I didn't like it. "Any other lots around here?"

He shakes his head and spits. "Not for ten miles, easy"

The man had me. Had me good. I grabbed the paper from the seat over and paid the man, and left the car with him. The place wasn't more than three blocks from the lot, and I zipped up my coat and set out. When I got there I pressed the room's call button and waited. No one answered, and I made sure I had the right place. I tried again.

I got a buzz in, and walked inside. I've never trusted elevators so I took up the stairs, and when I got to the door, it was barely open.

A tall skinny woman was smoking a cigarette, leaned up against the back of a chair. There was a patch stuck to the left lens on her glasses. You know the medical kind?

"What's that patch for" I go

"Don't worry," she goes "that's for the doctor"

I nod my head, "what'd you do?"

"Tugs mostly..." she goes, "but I suppose... we could work somethin out"  
And drags long on her cigarette.

"Tug'll do"

She stamps out the cigarette on the bottom of her shoe, drops it on the carpet, and points towards the chair. A real ugly thing.

I sit down, and she pulls out another one of these slim cigarettes and lights up, kneels down beside me, and starts on her business. The smoke is getting all in my eyes, and behind that patch her eye starts twitching, but I close my eyes and focus in.

She works up to a good speed, and I'm in it and she starts making these real loud squeaking noises out of the side of her mouth, and she's got this vein on her wrist, throbbing. I take a good hard look at that eye patch and below it I see these tiny flecks of grizzle at the bottom of her neck. And I look up a little closer, and I see her hair sort of ride back on her head, and that veins pulsating, and she's grunting.

Until it hits me, you see? I figure it out... But what was I gonna do? She already took the money. I wasn't going to waste it. So I closed my eyes and thought of something else.

## Lucid Phrases

There is beauty.

Such warm, true beauty.

But not the beauty of a landscape.

If you could be apart of the definition, apart of the actual word beauty, this is how you feel. Falling gracefully between the letters—above the tree's, through the grass, up by the sun and moon: You are both. You are the creator, the benefactor, the dweller. You're soul leaks out in colors and sounds and smells known to you from a different place. Everything feels as if its happened before.

And it might have.

Beyond what can only be defined as beauty, underlying and overtop and in between this sense of undefinable peace, are the soft minute pulses, the rhythmic beats of times' passing. These aren't heard. They're barely felt. An intuition perhaps, but still they are unmistakable. For a moment you feel complete. You feel safe. You're reminded of something that you can only now define as gooey, perhaps even aquatic, but as the process of defining takes hold these mnemonic beats escape you and the entire scene.

You try and remember. Eventually you find yourself between the letters again. Completely at peace.

You're sitting atop a hill gilded in soft dense fern. You look out toward the sun and below you see nothing but curves and lines and mounds of giant earth. You are nude, but the sun notices this and cloaks you with illumination, with warmth. A woman's voice echoes in your mind, but only as a sound. The language is foreign to you. And within the second it is no longer there.

Something

A terribly loud screeching sound cuts through the sky. If it is a sky you're not exactly sure. You only know wherever you are is completely and utterly natural and safe and calm and anything else you might know drops out of your mind. Almost simultaneously, this obtrusive sharp scratching of the sky sets off a series of reactions and in your mind an explosively urgent feeling rises, but you can not bring it to thought. It is there just an inch out of your grasp. An internal itch on the surface of the ribcage which you can not ignore nor relieve.

When the sound stops so too does your mind. You look around and see the infinite possibility of shade and texture and color. A hodgepodge of everything you have ever absorbed, both internally and externally, flowing out of you in streams.

Like

Everything reminds you of something. A quick jagged image forms in your head, but as you mentally try and grab it, try and process it, you find yourself empty handed, falling between empty space. The screech sounds again. It rings out beyond the valleys and the hills echoing between the mountains. At first the sound starts off slowly, quietly, but as you are more aware it rises; crescendo's up to a point of which you are not exactly sure. Violence might come to mind.

Violence.

If sounds from the place which you presumably know that you are apart of can be used in describing this one, you might say it sounds like a plane accelerating, or the grinding of gears, but you know it isn't either of those. You aren't sure, but you are acutely aware that the beauty and the peace and tranquility that you felt so recently before are leaving, quickly, and where their presence was now has formed into an absence greater than anything you knew.

Still, it all seems strangely familiar, as if you've done it before and you are doomed to do it again. Caught in a vicious cycle. As it would seem.

You close your eyes for a moment trying to place this — again sounding — shriek from the sky. When you open them: the tree's are gone, the mountain beneath you is shrinking; you're falling and your falling fast and you can't stop it —