



Stirring
Within

POEMS
and TALES
from Mount Carmel

G. Emil Reutter

Stirring Within
&
Tales From Mount Carmel

poems

G. Emil Reutter

BlazeVOX [books]

Buffalo, New York

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Published by BlazeVOX [books]

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Printed by CafePress.com in the United States of America

Book design by Geoffrey Gatza

First Edition

good books gone bad

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blazevox.org

Stirring Within

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Tales From Mount Carmel

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Introduction

I do hope this small collection of poetry causes a stirring within the reader. Love, loss, hope, laughter and even the death of a loved one bring about change in the human condition as we evolve into who we are toward who we will become.

I am thankful for the inspiration of my daughter, Katie, my friend and editor, Sandra Moser, and all those who have inspired and contributed to my view of the world. Perhaps the view isn't perfect, but it is one that continues to evolve.

G Emil Reutter
Levittown, Pennsylvania
June 2005

simple things

a glance
touch
fingers entwined

lips brushing
tension
electric release

passion builds
climax
a glance

simple things

stargazer

smooth
touching slowly

delicate
petals parting

moist
sweet aroma

scent
fills the air

inviting
spreading wide

inhaling
filling my being

desire
taking beauty in

spring
a new beginning

stirring within

seasons come
sometimes cold or hot
often barren
void of feeling
till one day
a new season begins
stirring deep
heating the soul
emotions passion
erupt from within
causing the heart to flutter
mind to wander
focusing on the beauty
of all that bonds
desiring
it never to end

new morning

black and white
images vivid
people places
pass through quickly
in no particular
order

purpose and meaning
not defined
events skewed
like a bad
Hollywood movie
rolling on
without direction

dead folks
speak
arising from the recesses
of the mind
heaven just may be
in the dreams
of those left
behind

sleep escapes
haunting images
of past events
let go so long ago
in conscious mind
rise from within
insomnia takes hold
like a life preserver
chasing them away

until one day
the unconscious mind
rids itself of the past
new dreams appear
peaceful sanctuary
never to go back
sleep comes quickly
a new morning awaits

sweet comfort

gazing upon
the face of an angel
waiting
for her wings to spread
to take me up
deep inside
feeling
the sweet comfort
embrace
emotional eyes
enchanted
call upon me
resist i do not
powerless
i submit
to paradise

one

eyes meld
as one
dancing in delight

arms reach
becoming one
sweet embrace

hands held
palms together
fingers entwined

lips caress
moist soft
sensual anticipation

eyes meld
as one
dancing in delight

lunchtime

noon time on Monday
it all begins
descending
from up high
into the caverns below
dirty water carts
fill the sidewalks
hot dogs two for three bucks
fifty cents for soda
chinese japanese soul food
if you like
pretty girls sit on ledges
cell phones in hand
not noticing construction workers
leering their way
an hour passes by
they make their way back up
all thinking
the same thoughts
hoping
what they ate
hadn't
been in that water
since
last week

muzak

rock and roll will never die
sang neil young
i ride in the elevator
listening
a cover of jumpin' jack flash
plays
thinking
neil may have been wrong
walking
off the elevator
the strings start once again
dream on
begins to play
neil may have been right
pondering
badfinger would sound much better
in an elevator
on a weekday morning
my daughter looks up at me
saying 'how cool, they play oldies
on the elevator'
smiling at her
hoping
nirvana would not be next

eternal entrapment

mud seeps through
dry rotted wood
staining satin

hollow vessel
blood drained
unable to move

maggots cover
decayed eyelids of
hardened flesh

decomposition
no escape
spirit sealed within

night dance of the mind

shadows line
the walls at night
as if demons
escaping hell

subdued light
in the darkness
causes tree limbs
to dance upon ceiling

flicking on the switch
they dissolve
or are they simply
incognito

minimum wage

waking in the dark of the morning
working two jobs to get by
home by ten
surrounded by the darkness of night
sixteen hours a hundred and eighteen bucks
eighty after taxes
rich and poor
poor and rich
where have the good jobs gone
climbing the ladder
broken rungs prevent ascent
more jobs created
hours cut
profits increase
another broken rung
time to get
a new ladder

colors of discontent

american dream
exclusive club
once open to all
closed by the colors of discontent

i am black white yellow red or brown
fighting for the crumbs
left behind
by those whose only color is green

fight amongst ourselves
denying common ground
recognizing only differences
fueling the colors of discontent

cast the division aside
for we are all the same
desiring the best for our families
a future together

i am a white man in my forties
and i can dance damn it
content i reach out my hand and say unto you
come dance with me

let them feel the pressure
of all us folks
united in purpose
turning them green with envy

as they watch
their paper of green
with the knowledge
we are coming to get what is ours

faces

thousands of faces have passed me by
each unique each the same
blurring as the grass in a field
until they become as one

kitchen table poetry

raisins dance among the flakes
a fruit cup
sweet orange juice rests next to decaf coffee
spoon in hand
a fork would have been better
thinking
to hell with my arteries
eggs and bacon muffins smothered in butter
a couple of pancakes too
decaf coffee serves no purpose
a frown comes to my face
a pack of red 100's sits off to the side
the patch is not far behind
healthy i will become
bored but healthy

holiday dinner

drifting to sleep after a full meal
side shows clowns ringmasters galore
rides go round and round
cotton candy stuck to fingers
like glue
oh how nice
the bearded lady likes me
turning to flee
tripped by a dwarf
i find myself
sitting front and center
in the little car full of clowns
speeding in circles
the big top begins to shake
as the five hundred pound woman
flies through the air on trapeze
the tent begins to cave
she tumbles through the air
as the little car stalls
eyes close awaiting impact
i suddenly wake
realizing
it was just another holiday
with my family

awakening

love blooms in the darkness of night
illuminating heart and soul
stirring feelings within
lost so long ago
eyes open
searching no more
reality causing pause
patience unknown before
desiring the soft caress of lips
we wait

restoration

drifting
a grain of sand
powered
by wind currents
as in a summer storm

heading
in a direction unknown
swirling
clouds gather overhead
darkness fills the land

gazing
at the sky above
streaming
sunrays burst through
as if heavens opened up

breathing
scent of spring
restored
clouds head eastward
western skies call

very simply said

it isn't what you want
nor where you have been
doesn't matter if you're pretty
or a manly man
petit or plus size
slim or husky
educated or not
fluid in linguistics
or plain-spoken
in the end
at any given moment
very simply said
it is all about
who you have become
what you will get
where you will go
when you will love
how you will live

echoes

deep in the valley
my voice cries out
coming back to me
as echoes in a canyon

rain pelts the ground
as the stream begins to fill
water rises overflowing
the walls of the banks

steadying my footing
i begin my ascent
as the trickle becomes a river
her voice calls out to me

my voice echoes no more

widow

she kneels
in front of the marker
consisting
only of a weapon helmet dog tags
trembling
tears pour forth
i grieve with her
at the loss of a soldier
or so i think
for she grieves
not just for this soldier
but
for a husband
lover
father to her children
how can i understand
loss so profound
it is unspeakable

Tales From Mount Carmel

The Tale of Virgil Oakes

My name is Cleveland Dillworth and I have lived in Mount. Carmel all my seventy years. I know just about everything that goes on here, even with the young folk. You see, I've been postmaster most of my adult life.

Now, you have to understand the nature of my work. There are things people get in the mail that they won't talk to the good Reverend Bishop about, but they will talk to me. You see, I can't really tell anyone what I see when the mail comes in. I *can* tell you this: People ain't what they seem to be.

There are things delivered by the U.S. Mail to citizens in Mount Carmel that would give the Reverend Bishop subjects for a year's worth of sermons about moral conduct. What amazes me most about this is the fact that the Mount Carmel Baptist church is the only house of worship in town. Everybody—and I do mean *everybody*—attends Sunday and Wednesday services to cleanse their souls and repent for their sins.

From what I see in the mail, there is a lot of cleansing to do. Ladies in town getting catalogs from Victoria's Secret, Adam & Eve. Men folk getting dirty magazines from just about everywhere. Of course, there's the lady that lives in the doublewide outside of town. Now, she gets boxes and boxes of

stuff delivered from some place called Leather and Lace. I understand there are men from town who visit her out there and she ties them up and—things I just don't want to know about. There was even rumor that the good Reverend Bishop was seen sneaking out of that doublewide one night. He stood up in front of the congregation and proclaimed that while he was a sinner like everyone else, he went out to that doublewide to try and bring Christ to that sinful woman, but he hadn't been at there for anything else. That put a stop to the talk about the good Reverend. Still I kinda think he was out there having a visit with that lady, being his wife didn't speak to him for a good six months afterward.

People in town call me the town gossip. I like to think of myself as the town historian. Of course, that brings me to the strangest tale I know of in Mount Carmel, the tale of Virgil Oakes.

Virgil Oakes was a quiet young man, not one to date or chase the girls, as they say. He was a straight-A student all the way through Mount Carmel High School and never missed a day of school from kindergarten to his senior year in high school. The other kids bullied Virgil until they all reached high school and Virgil sprouted up a bit taller than most and became very good with a set of wrenches fixing cars. Then Virgil saw his life change in a dramatic way when he attended the senior prom with Pauline Withers.

Now Pauline was not a bad looking girl. She stood about five-foot-four with blonde hair and green eyes. Pauline, though, had the appearance of a young lady who liked the dinner table more than the high school gym. You might say she was a bit thick.

Pauline had taken a big liking to Virgil before the prom and had decided that Virgil would be what we call here 'lucky' on prom night. About a month and a half after the prom, Mr. Withers showed up at Virgil's house with Pauline and had a talking to with Virgil and Virgil's parents. Shortly after Mr. Withers' visit, the good Reverend Bishop stopped by and it wasn't two weeks later when Virgil and Pauline were united in marriage.

Now, of course, the whole town was counting the weeks until Pauline gave birth. Mr. Withers had given Virgil a job in his filling station fixing cars and had set up a trailer outback for the newlyweds to share as their first home. Virgil didn't complain much, though he had wanted to go to college.

Their first child just happened to be born nine months on the dot from prom night. Time passed quickly for the Oakes family and soon there were four children running around the trailer outback from the filling station. Virgil built an addition to the trailer so they would have more room.

Twenty-five years had passed. Old Mr. Withers left his filling station to Virgil when he died and the last of Virgil's kids was getting ready to leave

the house. Now, Pauline, you see, had put on twenty-plus pounds with every child she bore. She had gotten so large that she made Virgil cut her toenails 'cause she couldn't see her feet. She couldn't fit in the bathtub anymore and had to take showers, which she only did twice a week. Virgil never made enough from the shop to have a dental plan and, though he had all his own teeth, poor Pauline was losing hers one at a time and had lost three of her top teeth.

There was nowhere for Virgil to run. Home was right behind the shop. Pauline would sit on the couch in the trailer all day while Virgil was working. The kitchen was a mess when he arrived home and he would spend a good hour cleaning up the mess just so he could make himself a couple of hot dogs for dinner.

Now you see, Virgil was not a happy man. His only sexual experience was with Pauline, who had made it very clear to him by now that she preferred a bowl of ice cream to any type of encounter with Virgil. He was married and all alone. The kids rarely came to visit—I always thought they were happy to get away from Pauline.

Then, one hot summer day, Virgil met with his accountant who had some new ideas for Virgil and his book keeping methods. The accountant recommended Virgil get a computer to keep his records on and he could

provide his customers with a professional looking printout of services he rendered. The accountant explained to Virgil he could hook up to the internet and shop for prices on materials he needed and maybe save a few bucks while he was at it. The accountant showed Virgil his computer and offered to order one for Virgil right there and then. Virgil agreed on the condition the accountant show him how to set it up.

Well as I told you before, Virgil was an A student in high school and was a quick study. He had that computer up and running and knew all the programs he could use to operate his business more efficiently. Virgil also found something new on the computer. Virgil found *Yahoo!*. Now, I'm an older fella and not too familiar with these computers, but from what I was told, Virgil started to visit chat rooms in *Yahoo!*. It seems you don't have to tell anyone who you are and can be just about anyone you ever wanted to be.

Well, I guess Virgil didn't behave like the Virgil we know here in Mount Carmel when he was in those chat rooms. Being the postmaster, I noticed more then anyone else in town. I noticed the packages and letters coming from all over the country to his post office box. All of them were in ladies handwriting and most smelled of perfume. Many of them were marked in black ink, "Photos—do not bend!"

So anyhow, a year goes by and all this mail is coming for Virgil. I have to get my car fixed, so I take it over to Virgil and I noticed something else: If you paid with a credit card, he printed out a receipt from the computer. If you paid in cash, he hand wrote a receipt. Now, I don't want to say Virgil was doing anything illegal, but it seemed very strange to me.

Sometime about two months later, Virgil furloughed his two mechanics, telling them how business was bad and he couldn't keep them on. He gave them each two thousand dollars and promised them he would agree with unemployment 'til they got other jobs. Then things got real strange in Mount Carmel.

One night, Virgil packed his car, locked up the filling station, left a note taped to the trailer door and drove out of town. Well, Pauline woke up the next morning to find Virgil hadn't come home. She waddled out of the trailer and saw the closed sign on the filling station. When she waddled back to the trailer, she found the note.

Virgil had wrote her that he was leaving town and wouldn't be back. Pauline started sobbing right there on the trailer steps and called her eldest son to come to the trailer. When he arrived, they went into the station and the son brought up the computer and went into the archives and found out just what his father had been up to. He walked his mother back to the trailer and

said he was going to get his father. Pauline sat on the couch, eating a gallon of ice cream, crying that her Virgil had done left her.

Well about the time Pauline and Virgil Jr. had gone into the filling station, Virgil was driving into a small town by the name of Crosier. It seems that the lady friend he had met online lived there. Virgil had twenty thousand dollars in cash on him and was ready to make a new life for himself with a new woman who was thin and had teeth.

Virgil couldn't wait to meet his lady friend. She had sent him hundreds of pictures and he couldn't wait to meet her.

It took Virgil over an hour to find the small bar she asked him to meet her at. He parked his car in front of Pop's Bar and Grill and walked through the front door. He sat in the last booth, like she told him, and waited for his new love to arrive. An hour passed and she had not shown up. He was getting nervous, thinking about how he'd left Pauline and the business behind. He began to wonder where his Brenda was.

About fifteen minutes or so later, a large burly man entered the bar and walked right up to Virgil. The man asked him if he was Virgil and Virgil said yes. Well, then the guy tells Virgil to take a walk with him, that he is here to check him out for Brenda. They walk out to the car and he asks Virgil if he brought the money like he had promised Brenda. Virgil says yes and

takes a briefcase out of the trunk. Virgil opens the briefcase and shows the guy the money and closes it.

The guy takes the briefcase off of Virgil and laughs at him. Virgil, stunned, tells him to give it back. The guy starts laughing and tells Virgil that *he* is Brenda. Virgil stands there in shock and the guy hits him over the head with the brief case and ole Virgil is knocked out.

Virgil woke up and sat on the curb. He couldn't believe what had happened. He sat there for over two hours until Virgil Jr. pulled up on him. Virgil Jr. walked up to his father and pulled him off the curb. Young Virgil was a college graduate and looked at his father with pity.

Virgil followed his son to Virgil Jr.'s house. They all agreed he could stay there because Pauline was out for blood. The Reverend Bishop came right over after Virgil Jr's wife called him. Virgil never did tell his family about the money he had lost. In less than two weeks, he was back at the filling station, cutting Pauline's toenails and writing out hand receipts for his customers. You see, Pauline had burned the computer up.

So, when you're lonely and living with someone, don't chase a fantasy. Chase a reality, I guess. I think its time I visited the ole doublewide outside of town. Time to spice up my life a bit.

The Big Event

Now, crime is not much of a concern here in Mount Carmel, being that everyone knows just about everyone else. For the most part, the local police chief rests his self at the front of the lunch counter in Daryl's Silver Spoon, Mount Carmel's only eatery. You see, Daryl is known all over Monroe County for the fine donuts he makes each and every morning, and most times folks rush to get there before the Chief eats most of them up!

Town folk often say Daryl never needs to worry about getting robbed with Chief Pila sitting there on the first stool at the lunch counter. The greatest fear Daryl lives with each and every day is that a Krispy Kreme will open up near town and drive him out of business.

You see, Daryl has one of the last businesses on Main Street. We used to have a bank, beauty salon, barbershop, grocery store, hardware store and the such along Main Street, but they have all gone out of business since the Super Wal-Mart opened up about nine miles from here with all those chain stores attached to it. Even here in Mount Carmel the folks couldn't resist the draw of Wal-Mart.

Unlike most business districts in small towns that end up being boarded up and the such, our children, for some reason, desired to stay here in

this town and the owners of the buildings converted them into homes and apartments. And with the council looking over their shoulders, they developed a real nice stretch of property on Main Street. Mount Carmel is, for all purposes, an entirely residential town—with the exception of the filling station owned by Virgil Oakes, who I do believe you have already been told about.

Now, as I told you before I am the postmaster here in town and know just about everyone—that is, everyone except Wesley Golden. I know about him, but just don't know him. You see, Wesley doesn't have a post office box here at the post office and we don't deliver the mail here in Mount. Carmel anymore.

It angers me a bit about Wesley because there is no finer service than the United States Postal Service and, from what I hear, Wesley has a steady stream of Federal Express and UPS trucks coming and going from his house. Sounds to me like Wesley has himself some type of mail-order business. You see, that business could help next time the USPS decides Mount Carmel doesn't need a post office anymore. I do have an interest in keeping the post office open.

Well one day, two men pulled up in front of the Silver Spoon on Main Street. They were kind of gruff looking and weren't from these parts.

Large fellas, wearing jeans, boots, tee shirts with regular shirts over them. The Chief got up and left with them.

Folks say they drove to the little police station we have here in Mount Carmel. After a while, the Chief took these two fellas over to Ms. Ema and asked if they could stay in her boarding house. Of course, Ms. Ema needed the money and invited them in. I am close with Ms. Ema. I asked if the boys needed a post office box and the such, and she said no they didn't. Now, being a historian for the town, I did inquire as to why they were here. Ms. Ema said that they told her Mount Carmel was a model community without crime and they were from the United States government, come here to do a study on the town and the fine work that Chief Pila had been doing here in Mount Carmel. Well of course, it wasn't long before most of the town knew about Chief Pila being honored like this and folks were very proud of our Chief.

Funny thing though, the Chief wasn't at Daryl's donut shop anymore. He just came in during the morning and left with coffee and two dozen donuts. Chief Pila was greatly missed at the shop and we wondered when he would come back. Then one day, Daryl was at the shop early in the morning and when I got there, he had a stack of twelve dozen donuts piled by the register and a few big thermos filled with coffee. Now, I asked Daryl what was going on and he said the Chief was having some sort of meeting.

My post office is situated across the street from the police station. So, of course, I had an interest in watching out the window to see what this big meeting was all about. About nine o'clock in the morning there were four state police cars parked at the Mount Carmel Police Station, five blue sedans with government plates and a large van with government plates. There were cops in jeans and cops in suits and, from what a few of them looked like, slicked back and all, a couple of lawyers of some kind.

Now, I was standing there minding my own business, looking out the window, when a man in a suit came across the street and entered my post office. This young fella smiled at me and identified himself as a United States Postal Inspector.

Well, by God, I had never met one these fellas. He looked me in the eye and told me what a fine job I was doing at the post office and how much Washington appreciated my work here in Mount Carmel. It kinda made me proud to work for the USPS.

Then he told me to go home. I said I couldn't go home, and he said he had to do a security inspection of the post office with all this terrorism stuff going on to make sure folks here were safe. I hesitated, but he told me to give him my keys and he would close it down and do the inspection. He said he would drop the keys off at my house when he was done.

Well of course, I went to the Silver Spoon and told the folks the USPS was looking out for them and making sure our post office was safe. The whole place was buzzing about the police and government men. Sure seemed like a lot of folks to inspect a post office.

Then we saw something we had never seen in Mount Carmel: Coming down Main Street, like they were in a parade, were all those police and their cars and that van. Chief Pila was driving out front, proud as a peacock followed by the state police and those government cars and they drove by and went about ten blocks away from the Silver Spoon to the home of one Wesley Golden.

The police evacuated the neighbors from their homes and sent them to the old elementary school to wait and they put up yellow tape and didn't let anyone near that section of town.

We heard two helicopters roar overhead and then seen them hover over Wesley's house. Now, Wesley owned a large plot of land and had a home, garage and small barn on his property. I was at a loss, everyone—and I do mean *everyone* in town—was at the Silver Spoon asking me what was going on and all I could tell them was they was inspecting the post office and maybe cause Wesley didn't have a post office box they were checking him out.

Then *she* walked into the Silver Spoon and a hush fell over the whole place. Ladies put their noses up in the air and the men looked down. It was the lady from the doublewide outside of town. She looked around the Silver Spoon and walked right up to me and asked me what was going on. I told her about the post office inspection and that Wesley didn't have a post office box and the such, and she asked me if I told the government men about her.

I don't mind telling you that I was a bit insulted and had only visited her the one time, but she told me I had a tendency to repeat what I knew, which, of course, insulted me even more. I assured her nobody had said anything about her to the government men. She smiled, pinched my cheek and strode out of the Silver Spoon swinging her hips. The lady folks in town didn't talk to me for a week after that.

Well, anywho, to get back to what the police were doing: It took a few hours to figure it all out. The television news from Winston-Salem helped out with most of the information.

You see, those were three news helicopters in the air over Mount Carmel and, of course, three news vans with those pretty folks who broadcast the news. They were coming into the Silver Spoon asking folks about Wesley and stopping folks on the street. They were filming Main Street and the such.

Now, the problem with Wesley was that he hadn't talk to anyone in town since he'd graduated high school. Nobody knew where he worked. He didn't have a girlfriend. He didn't even eat at the Silver Spoon. One of the news programs called their story "A Stranger in a Small Town" 'cause nobody knew anything about Wesley.

Turns out Wesley had a business here in Mount Carmel alright. The news said one ton of homegrown marijuana was seized from Wesley's house in addition to over two million dollars in cash.

Well, we were all shocked that this was going on here in Mount Carmel. It seems Chief Pila, in addition to spending a lot of time at the Silver Spoon, had been watching Wesley Golden for a few years. He wrote down the delivery trucks and the such and also noticed quite a few cars with out of state license plates coming and going from time to time at Wesley's house. The Chief had called the Drug Enforcement Administration who stopped one of the trucks and their dog went wild on the packages from Wesley's house. They'd transferred the driver somewhere and one of their agents took over for him.

Chief Pila looked happy at the press conference. They had showed video tape of the Golden barn and about a thousand marijuana plants growing inside with lights and an irrigation system in place. Chief Pila came up to the

podium and made a statement that Wesley Golden had no customers in Mount Carmel and how he thought it was his duty to investigate this matter and have the federal government come in to clean out the house. It was soon after Wesley Golden was arrested that Chief Pila was named Monroe County Officer of the Year. We were all proud of the Chief.

About a week passed after the big event, as we call it in these parts, and the Chief stopped into to see me. I asked him how my inspection went. He smiled and said I did just fine, that the USPS was proud to have me as the postmaster here in Mount Carmel.

Now you know, I am a thinking man, and I've been thinking about two things. If Wesley had used the USPS here in Mount Carmel, the Chief would never have noticed all those delivery trucks going to his house and maybe—just maybe—the USPS would have prevented Wesley from getting arrested. You see I never tell what I see in the mail.

Now the second thing is this: I do believe the Chief made up that nonsense about inspecting the post office to get me out of the way when they were planning the raid on Wesley Golden's house so I, as the town historian, wouldn't be put in the middle of it all. Of course, down at the Silver Spoon they all still laugh about the day the United States Postal Service inspected the Mount Carmel Post Office to prevent terrorism.

Well I have to get going now. Need some socks and stuff and have to drive way out to the Wal-Mart.

Ms. Lilly and the Doublewide

I was a bit upset at how the lady from the trailer pinched my cheek in front of all the town folk at the Silver Spoon during the big event, but I am a single man due to my missus passing away some fifteen years ago. That pinch on the cheek got around town so quick that the good Reverend Bishop came to see me the next day at the post office due to being concerned about my spiritual welfare.

Truth be known, I did go out to that doublewide outside of town one afternoon. Not for the services of the lady there but, as town historian, I thought I ought to get a first-hand look at the only known house of sin in Mount Carmel. After Wesley Golden was arrested by the fine police work of Chief Pila, I thought this lady would be next, but she is still out there doing business and no one bothers her.

So, I go out there to the doublewide and knock on the door. Ms. Lilly answered, thinking I had brought her mail out to her. I said no, I had just come to visit. Ms. Lilly smiled large and invited me in.

Now, Ms. Lilly was dressed a bit different than when she comes for the mail, and even then she is pleasing on the eyes. She had some sort of

leather corset on and leather pants, which didn't leave much to the imagination, if you know what I mean.

She took me into the living room and said how she appreciated getting her mail and that I hadn't told anyone what she gets. She sat on the couch next to me, rubbing my thigh a bit. I must admit it did feel good, but told her she was wasting her time, that my plumbing hadn't been used in a long time and didn't work anymore.

I asked her for a tour of her place and she took me all over the trailer, which was quite wide, being a doublewide and all. To my shock, Ms. Lilly has a...a basement, I guess you'd call it. She took me down there and I saw things I'd never seen in all my life. Ms. Lilly took me back up the steps and we had some iced tea. She bluntly told me that not all the fellas go down to the basement, quite a bit do, but not all of them. I said that was good to know.

I told her I had to go and she walked me to the door. She reached up and pinched my cheek and we said goodbye. Now I really don't mind that in private. I was walking back to the car and had a strange feeling I didn't recognize and I realized that after all these years my plumbing did work.

I was driving down the long driveway from Ms. Lilly's and waved at Chief Pila as he drove by me in his police car. Guess he had an investigation or something to do there at Ms. Lilly's.

Well, I'll be going now. I think I might just give the widow Mandy Jones a call tonight. I do think she likes me some.

Broken Hearts and the Silver Spoon

I have told you about Virgil, about the Big Event and about visiting Ms. Lilly out at the trailer, but I don't want you to get the wrong idea about my beloved town. There are fine, moral folks here in Mount Carmel and our kids are pretty well behaved most of the time.

Even though the Chief said Wesley didn't have any customers here in town, I always had a feeling the kids went to see him once in a while. This is one of those towns where folks tend to stay. It is a nice place to live. We have our problems like anyone else. Of course, when they happen, it tends to be a big event.

Kinda like Daryl and Carol down at the Silver Spoon. You see, Carol worked at the Silver Spoon as a waitress. Daryl and Carol worked together every day of the week from six o'clock to eleven o'clock every morning. They were both single people, not bad looking folks, and most in town thought that, being together so much, they would hook up.

Now to be honest, if I was a younger man, I would have given Carol a chase. She was a fine looking woman and did great justice to her waitress uniform. I always thought something was wrong with Daryl in that he showed

no interest in Carol, although I do believe every so often I'd catch Daryl checking her out when she was waiting on tables.

There was a time at the Silver Spoon when Daryl would run all kinds of specials on hamburgers and chicken filets and the such, foods that he normally never carried. You see, there was a fella in town named Bob Specks who drove a truck for a food warehouse. Bob and Daryl became close friends for a time. Not only that, Bob became quite close to Carol. Bob would even stay at Carol's house when he had any bit of time to spend in town.

Being that I'd visit the Silver Spoon when the mail was slow and the such, I did notice after Bob started seeing Carol that Daryl was doing a bit more than checking her out from time to time. Daryl seemed to change a bit, though I thought at first it was because if Carol married that he would have to find a new waitress. Then the two of them started something new around the Silver Spoon: They would flirt with each other. I thought Daryl would stop when Bob gave Carol a diamond ring, no doubt purchased from another truck driver, but Daryl seemed to flirt even more with Carol.

Bob was doing well for himself and had started taking cross-country trips, which kept him out of town for weeks at a time. It was always a big event when Bob came home, specials at the Silver Spoon, wedding meetings

at the church with Reverend Bishop and the such. Bob was always happy to be home and spoiled Carol as much as he could when he was here.

Well, one night I couldn't sleep much and decided to take a walk around town. I never did say anything to anyone about what I saw that night, I guess—with the exception of the Reverend Bishop, who also didn't say much about it after that night.

Bob Speck was a good hard working man who was very much in love. Now, Carol, she was ten years younger than Bob, but when they were together they looked like two peas in a pod. It is an amazing thing when a man is in love with a woman. You see, Carol had turned Big Bob into a Big Teddy Bear. Bob smoked a bit too much and could have taken off a few pounds, but with working so much and the truck stop food, it was a bit of a challenge for him.

Anywho, Bob drove his rig by me down Main Street and parked it in the open lot he rented. I smiled at him and waved as he walked by me with a big bunch of roses, heading to the house where Carol lived. It was then that I heard yelling from the house. I thought something had happened to Carol, so I ran down the street and, to my utter shock, Daryl climbed out of the bedroom window and ran down the street in his under shorts. You see Bob had come home a day early.

It is hard to say what kind of feeling a man gets when he sees another man cry, but when Bob sat on the steps to the house and wept, I didn't know what else to do but call Reverend Bishop from the payphone. The reverend arrived and put his arm around the big man and convinced him in a calm manner to go in the house so the whole town wouldn't know his business. Reverend Bishop walked on over to me and told me to keep my mouth shut, telling me to wait over by the corner in case something went wrong, which of course I did.

The Reverend came out of the house about an hour later and offered to drive me home. I was sitting in the car as the Reverend told me how important it was to this couple that I keep my mouth shut about Daryl jumping out the bedroom window. I said I would oblige him and asked if everything was ok with Bob.

The good reverend told me that Carol had explained how she had needs and, with Bob being gone for long periods of time, she had become weak and Daryl was just helping her out. The reverend said Carol hadn't know what to say when Bob asked about his own needs, but he was able to get them to hug and talk. Bob promised to find a job nearer to home.

I had always liked Bob. Even though I knew he was taking a few things from that company he worked for, he was a hard working man who

treated a woman fine. I shook my head and thought of my wife and how lucky I was that she had put up with my old ass for all those years. I miss her every minute of every day. Now, I am not an emotional man, but my heart hurt for Bob and I'd hoped the two of them could work things out.

Now you see, Daryl didn't know that I saw him jump out that window and I never did tell him that I had. The next morning, I went to the Silver Spoon and I noticed the 'help wanted' sign in the window and how down Daryl looked. It wasn't a week before Daryl hired a young mother to wait the tables and everything was back to normal at the Silver Spoon, with the exception of the lunch specials that is.

Bob went and got himself a job with a local truck service, he was home every night with Carol but had to work overtime and weekends to make the same money as his other job. Time passed on, but Bob and Carol never did get married. It seems Bob began to chain smoke after that night and didn't take good care of himself anymore. It wasn't six months after that night when Bob had a heart attack while making his deliveries. Town folk thought he had passed on from this life 'cause he had let himself go. I knew the truth. I saw him on the steps that night. My friend, Bob had passed away because his broken heart never healed.

Which of course brings me back to Daryl. I never thought badly of Daryl for what he did. If I was a younger man, I sure would have had a hard time resisting the charms and looks of Carol. Well, the town folk thought Daryl was a wonderful man with how he looked after Carol when Bob died. The two had even started to going to church together. Of course, Reverend Bishop would always look at me when they came in and shake his head.

One thing led to another and now Daryl and Carol are married and have two little boys at home. Over at the Silver Spoon there isn't a waitress anymore. Seems Carol told Daryl he didn't need one. I didn't have to wonder why she thought the Silver Spoon didn't need a waitress.

When I remember that night, I think of Bob on the steps and it sends me on a walk to the cemetery to visit my wife. I miss her so. I stop by put a flower on Bob's grave. You see, Bob didn't have any family and I do believe I am the only one that visits him now. I have always known the most difficult part of the body to fix is a broken heart.

Take care now and maybe sometime we can chat again. You know, I do love this town.

Clara

I have been alone now for almost a decade. It is a difficult thing for a man to be alone so long, but I never did get over my Clara. Most people today would not understand what Clara and I had, what with the divorce rate so high and just about everybody fooling around.

I first met Clara when I was in the fifth grade at Mount Carmel Elementary School. She was one grade ahead of me and she had to be the most beautiful girl I had ever laid eyes on. I was walking down the hall in school one day and she was coming towards me. I stopped and my mouth dropped open. She strolled by and winked at me. I almost fell out right there.

Clara was smart as a whip, and pretty. She had a confidence that attracted me to her the very first time I saw her. I would stop and talk to her now and then, always became tongue tied and she would giggle at me.

It took me to the end of eighth grade to ask her on a date, and that was only because the freshmen dance was coming up and I would have died if she went with some other fella. Clara taught me to dance that night and I felt feelings I had never felt before when we slow danced in the church hall. Of course, the town ladies who were there made sure none of us got too close. They always said getting too close would lead to other things.

Well, after that dance Clara and I went steady right through high school. When I graduated a year after she did, we married and I got a job with the United States Post Office. Clara was gifted with a paintbrush and painted all kinds of things around town. Folks liked her paintings so much that they paid her for them. The income from the USPS and the paintings allowed us to live a good life. We never wanted for much but, then again, we were simple folk and didn't need much.

Clara and I never did have children, though it sure wasn't for the lack of trying. Five years into our marriage, Doctor Jenkins sent Clara to the city for tests. He called us in when they came back and I had never seen Clara so sad. The doctor said Clara would never be able to bear children.

The morning after we visited Doc Jenkins, we sat at the table in the dining room and had a talk. My sweet Clara offered to divorce me because she had failed me in not having a baby. Clara knew I had always wanted a big family to have outings and holidays with. She felt like she let me down.

Well, I couldn't have her thinking that way. I had been in love with Clara since that first time I saw her in the hallway back at school. I reached out to her and she came and sat on my lap. I held her there for what seemed like hours not saying a word. I told my Clara then that just maybe we weren't suppose to have kids and told her I loved her as the day is long and would

never leave her. Sitting there on my lap she hugged on me like she had never done before and I just fell more in love with her. Our commitment to each other is hard to explain, but I do know one thing that most folks wouldn't understand today: We never tired of each other as friends or lovers.

Now, I'm not saying the newness never wore off but, for some reason, we were always able to get it back. I guess that is what happens when you know you are supposed to be with someone. Loyalty is a fine quality that stimulates the soul I think.

Now, because of the paintings and the USPS, we were able to take road trips once every year. We went to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania to see where the sons and daughters of America fought and died over state rights and slavery. Niagara Falls was an amazing thing to see, and we drove over to Canada just to say we traveled outside the country once.

Clara came back and painted the falls. That painting is still hanging over the sofa in our living room. I smile every time I pass by it.

Clara and I were not big drinkers, though we took a nip now and then. But both of us did smoke tobacco and Clara got the cancer. Doc McFarland said it was moving so fast they couldn't stop it and my Clara passed away soon after they told her she had it. I never did quit. Guess, in my own way, I'm still trying to meet Clara on the other side, but I just keep going.

Hey now, I don't want you to feel sorry for me. I have lived a full life and expect to be around for quite a long time to come.

I do take the Widow Jones out now and then. Ever since I was out at Ms. Lilly's double wide and found out my plumbing does in fact work I have been taking Mandy Jones out a might bit more. Mandy and I sure like to spend time together, but I have a feeling Mandy goes home and thinks of her husband the same way I think of Clara when I get home. I still feel like I'm cheating on Clara if I do something with Mandy.

Last time Mandy and I went out, we walked in the park and held hands. A young couple walked by and smiled at us. I don't think Clara would mind if I got the courage up to kiss Mandy. I don't think Mandy would mind much either.

Well, its time for the afternoon briefing at the Silver Spoon. I guess we'll be talking again, if you haven't got bored with me yet, I hope.

Leaving Town

It's been awhile since I spoke with you last. Time seems to pass very quickly now. Yeah, I know I haven't been down at the Silver Spoon much lately and I take the afternoons off at the post office now. I have been spending quite a bit of time with Mandy.

Now, Mandy and I are becoming the talk of the town and even the good Reverend Bishop has become involved. He stopped by the post office and was counseling me some about keeping up the good name of Mandy Jones. Some folks said I was spending the night at her house.

Now, it seems to me that it isn't anyone's business—including the Reverend Bishop's—what Mandy and I do. I am a bit offended that these folks think Mandy and I are fooling around like teenagers. Things have been going well for us—so well that I have cut down on my time at the post office and, as I said before, I haven't been at the Silver Spoon much either.

Mandy and I took a trip to Florida a couple of times. We liked it there very much. Watching the sun set over the Gulf makes your heart grow warm. We figure if we sold our homes here that we could live very well there on the Gulf coast, away from our memories in Mount Carmel. It does give us something to think about from time to time.

Now, what I didn't tell you before is that Mandy is a bit younger than I am. I know I told you she was a widow and all, and you may have assumed she was old like me, but she isn't. I am thirteen years older than Mandy, which would make her fifty-seven years old.

I could see the folks engaging in gossip if we were both much younger but, as long as I can make her boat float, what difference does it make at my age? We make each other very happy and even her two grown sons are happy about us. They like how I treat Mandy and, of course, I treat her like a lady.

Except for the trips Clara and I took and the recent travels to Florida, I have never left Mount Carmel. I've devoted most of my life to public service at the USPS and it may be time for me to retire. You see, frankly, Mandy has captured this old man's heart and I enjoy her so. We talked about marriage and doing the right thing but, if we married, Mandy's retirement would be cut so it would be better on the pocketbook if we just lived together. Fact is, we couldn't do that here in Mount Carmel. They would be calling me an old sinner and praying for me every Wednesday and Sunday over at the church.

I know you have enjoyed talking with me and I will miss you. I think next month, Mandy and me will head down to Clearwater Beach during the off-season and rent a home for a few months and see how we do. If everything goes well, Mandy and I might just move down there. I never thought I would

leave Mount Carmel. I do love this town so. The USPS might close down the post office after I leave and folks will have to go over to Jefferson to pick up their mail.

I am happier now than I have been since before Clara got sick. Thinking things over, I may have waited a bit too long to ask Mandy out. She has taken the sadness out of my life. Mandy thinks I should sit down and write a book about Mount Carmel with all my knowledge of the town history. I think once we get to Florida and take walks on the beach, the last thing on my mind will be Mount Carmel.

You take care now, and thanks for lending me your ear. It was nice of you to spend time with me.

Acknowledgements

The Tale of Virgil Oakes published in the March 2004 edition of The Dead Mule.

TALES FROM MOUNT CARMEL: Edited by SR Moser

about the author

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