

Two Brief Stories

Downy Polk

Monday Morning

It all seemed so wrong. The narrow little streets, each grassy front lawn with a history of gardeners behind it. The middle aged Persian moms long past their prime but pushing their heyday as far as it could go- still struggling to look young. The men they were with- husbands, boyfriends, son's best friend. And what for? Did those men want to share in the dream of manicured lawns and kids all grown up? Did they really want their own little corner of the narrow grid? The highest corner room in the complex, with a balcony over Prospect avenue? A view of the ABC Studios? Spotting Patrick Dempsey everyday round noon? Was that it? Was that life?

Why not a bullet in his head, in a war torn area, he thought. But that was young foolishness talking, because his father had seen it and his father's father had done it. But he still couldn't seem to get it out of his head. Love wasn't worth a damn unless life was on the line, he thought. Otherwise it lacked all passion. And here on Myra avenue, life just seemed stagnant. Stunning middle aged house wives walking their purebred dogs. The husband up to who knows what.

If there was a daughter in one of those houses, a daughter who was longing to get away from all these purebred dogs and experience something real, he'd find her and take her away by God. Rescue her from all this middle class hell. They'd live on full burn till they ran out of oil.

"Then what?" said the voice in his head. Oh no! He'd spoken too soon. It was that contrary voice in his head. The one he couldn't stand.

"How do you keep her entertained?" Said the voice. "She's not a *puppy*, you can't just take her on *walks*."

The voice was right. She was a human being and God knows human beings need something tangible. And what was truth? What was the really real anyway? He didn't know! He thought she'd help him find out. Thought she'd give him a piece of the puzzle. But that was young foolishness talking. Dreams were starting to die quicker then the stubble grew on his chin.

There's got to be something more than this, though, he thought. Right? I mean- this isn't living! His heart shouted! This isn't living! And he saw the cross light turn green and his mind quieted. He obeyed and crossed empty Prospect avenue; walked up the driveway into ABC Studios to start another day of work.

Money

She was a beautiful girl and she was frugal. Her Dad, her only parent, may have been known as one of the cooler parents at her high school, but when it came to financial support, there was nothing he could do. He'd received no help from his parents as a young man, so he wasn't prepared to give any. She was on her own.

But Daddy's Little Girl had picked up a thing or two from Daddy. She was resourceful, working two jobs and doing copyright certification on the side. What was money anyway? It wasn't the root of all evil, he had taught her, but a freedom enabler. Powerful.

"For those less enthusiastic about such luxuries," Daddy says, sucking the beer foam off his mustache, "money made, doing something you love, is the seasonal sign of a budding career, and a flourishing future. You know, *when you wish upon star your dreams come true*." In his lawn

chair he looks especially over weight and smells like PBR and sunblock. Boy, does she love her Daddy.

Money though. Fucking A, right? Rent was always murder, cause she lived alone, and past roommates had the strange affliction of calling her a head strong bitch.

“What are you doing out here in LA?” Patrick asked her. She'd never had time for boys, but this one seemed sweet.

“I'm a writer.” she says.

“No wonder-” the dawn of a classic Patrick joke, “You looked like you were *brooding*.” he shouts over the club music. Not a moment later he erupts into boisterous laughter at his own joke. Yup, that's Patrick. She smiles awkwardly. “Her Patrick?”

She and Patrick became friends, then more than friends. Then working all day stopped feeling so crazy. No more constant coffee.

“Read me one of your stories” he would say. It became more natural, she would look forward to it. To Patrick. No more Daddy, no more being a writer. It was Patrick now; no more clawing away, no more jobs, packing mud in the bank. No all-nighters, alarm clocks, 5:00 am's, beautiful ghost, head strong bitch. No more money. The root of all evil.

“Do you think that's a happy ending to the story?” he asked her.