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Poems

Once upon a time, in our very own time, there was a young man who stood upon the threshold of his life as an adult. His parents had loved and praised him, so that his heart lay open to love; his teachers had instructed him in the needs of society and the joys of achievement, so that he expected much of himself; and his beloved had chosen him above all others, till death did them part, so that his daily life was full of happiness and pride. Strong in his youth, trusting his strength, he chose to enter a demanding and useful profession, one of the great tasks of the world, a task which would call forth his utmost abilities and ambitions.

His guidance counselor said it was an interesting choice, of course, but since his type of person was especially good with children, and primary teachers were so in demand, and nurses also, and by the way how fast could he type? And his beloved said to him, don't make any plans for next year, I have to see about my job first, then if it looks like we need the money you can always line up a typing job in L.A. And his parents said to him, Sharing of goals and working together are the important things in life, the sacrifices you make now will deepen the love you share. And his old teachers said to him, How is your beloved's work coming? You must be very proud of such a promising beloved. And you want to work also, how fast can you type? And his mother said to him, in private, I know you had high hopes for yourself, but don't worry, soon there will be children, you have to think of important things first, children change your entire life, you learn to live for their sakes, not just yourself.

And the young man was doubtful whether this advice was in his best interests, but their love and experience caused him to doubt himself, and besides the employers he talked to were sure that his type of person tended to quit and wasn't worth training, but he did have a delightful smile and how fast could he type? And his pastor, who had studied psychology and sociology, with a minor in ethical systems, explained that there was nothing really wrong in the young man's dilemma, just the natural insecurity of transitional roles, but his type of person had a special aptitude for loving others and for simply being, finding fulfillment in that fashion, by a natural, and, as it were, sacred instinct.

So, in the end, being good hearted and wishing to think that their advice was good, the young man accepted a job in typing and tried to develop himself in his spare time after his work and the cooking (for which his type of person had a special aptitude) and washing the dishes (with which his beloved occasionally helped, as a favor, after a long demanding day on the job). When his beloved's promotion and transfer came through, they went shopping together for a new garment for him, and celebrated all evening, with friends, and everyone said how charming he was in his new garment, and how proud he must be of his beloved, and how lucky he was to have such an important and loving beloved, and afterwards, in private, his beloved was indeed very loving.

In L.A. he found another job quite easily, for he was used to being delightful and he could type well enough. After dinner and dishes he developed his interest in cooking (he had a way with spaghetti), and wondered if children would make a difference, or would a night course in drama make a difference, or a subscription to Life, or would a sex manual deepen the relationship he already shared with his beloved, or would a more youthful cut to his garments give him a new image and a new

outlook on life this spring.

When the children came it was a daughter at first, but he didn't mind, really, because she was such a good baby, not demanding like some, a real charmer, girls are that way. He developed his feeling for children, just as everyone said he would, so much so that they had to remind him to appreciate how hard his beloved was working, evenings and weekends at times, to take care of them all. Then, feeling that he needed to broaden the interests he already had, and to share his days with adults, he found a part-time job with an interesting institution, typing of course, and everyone said How is your beloved's work coming along? and How is your child coming along? and How do you find time for it all? And he got used to answering these questions in a fashion that was charming. And the next of the children was a son, and he and his beloved were relieved, not to have to try again. Everyone praised his son, such a tough little kid you could hardly keep up with him, into everything right from the beginning, boys are that way, a real fighter, he'll go far in this world. For a while he made plans for his son, and dreamed of a place in the world, but everyone kept asking What does your beloved do? and What do your children do? and How do you find time for it all? and he wondered why children, even a boy of his own, had not made such a difference, and whether after the children were grown he should develop himself, and how.

ROBIN KAPLAN

BIG CHEESE AND SMALL BEER

I

Some incidents from the LIFE of Miss Harriet Monroe will provide a good example of how editrices grow : Young Harriet began small, by her own brave admission; was a "silly little crybaby" at the Centennial Exhibition to which her father took her without her mother's permission. After Harriet survived The Great Chicago Fire Robert Louis Stevenson inflamed her young desire.

Meanwhile, she ate her hearty breakfasts enjoyed her delightful lunches thoroughly enjoyed her delightful, hearty dinner. But, yearning through it all for a life that would be higher, Harriet aspired to retire desire, or, as she herself wrote without a trace of resentment, "unused faculties become gradually less insistent deprived of life's supreme fulfillment." The full grown Miss Monroe was straight and strong, sensitive, soft, dark, and somehow also round. She published Yeats, Stephens, Eliot, — Joyce Kilmer's Trees. (and after that had to listen to Ezra Pound) I won't mention any others; the list is long, all the rest were just about best. Thus progressed the blessed virgin editrix.

II

He likes to use the nicknames of his betters in late night conversations with his peers who observe that his wisdom about letters expands with the consumption of numbers of beers.

He feels so uncomfortable praising those peers! A small college has purchased his letters: Someday we will find out, in an absence of beers, Exactly what he thought of his betters.

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A SIMPLE EASTER TRIP

Walking on the cold blocks of lakefront stone behind Grant Park I know this busy place is my city always but now not home

when I come. No loss of love or fall from grace with loved ones brings my faroff feeling on, no lack of welcome, nor any sense of waste

puts distance here. Today I am far from. I am here for a week wanting to go south to trees and hills, back to quietly drawn

remains of waves. A beach taste in my mouth bring to mind a beach I napped on all at ease, my body like slow water the beach both

held and let go. There will be flowers on trees down there next week. Spring will be double spring sweet whole months rather than a few pale days

carefully spent. New names for new budding things new home people things wait. Goodbye you hard place I fly now down the warm draft on my new wings.

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By Noel Callow, now Mrs. Noel Kirby-Smith, writing instructor at NCSA.

I HAVE BUSINESS AT THE CONRAD HILTON

I have business at the Conrad Hilton two days after the what-do-you-call-it, the day after the convention ended, the morning after everyone moves themselves out. the hotel guests are ready to go home.

Usually the lobby aisle smells fresh: fresh air, fresh whisky, fresh flowers, roast beef. Now vomit and gas hang heavy and sharp, the red flowered rug shows spots of fresh blood.

It is noon but almost no one talks yet; a few people make quiet arrangements. I notice these liberal delegates wear sunglasses and nod with deep concern.

The rejected candidate continues to flirt with leftover gangs across the street. The evening papers will call it a speech. Shall I go home and write a sad poem or meet my friends at the Palmer House bar?

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CHEERS

Here's to the frenzied archer, for the breasts that fed his young desire the muses kissed when his sad mother did them newborn nurse before she bore her changeling nebulous diurnal sign of God's amused distress.

Here's to the centaur self; vane southerly his arrow keenly warped swerves oriental. Nor rider nor ridden this two bodied one shuts his own barn door against the thief. His empty quiver a teleidoscope

this visionary has no single hope.

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I AM SHOWN THE SIMPLEST CONSTELLATION

Cassiopeia's ordinary chair was not an easy one for me to find. That queen would queenly fidget to recline had she been waiting to seat herself there.

It appears to night as a collapsing line, some flimsy splintering stage furniture useful forever once more to allure us to this splendid nightly pantomime.

Sitting down here I am comfortable, sure that every good thing will last a long time. My occasionally literal mind is satisfied to see what was obscure

telescoped. This evening is the best time. I rest on a rug on this old not-star, praise Cassiopeia's top-heavy chair, your fine eyepiece, each invisible line.

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