

And Then Help Arrived from an Unexpected Source / James Mechem and Mardy Murphy

"Careful, dyke," he said.

"Huh? What'd you say?"

"Sit down and have a drink."

"Just what do you think I am anyway?"

"So sorry. I didn't see those knockers. Heh heh. Little joke. So don't get sore. I was just spouting off."

"I'll take the drink. But save your sweet talk for somebody else."

"Hey! You got the best set of jugs I ever seen."

"Don't cream your jeans, crappy guy."

"Who was you waiting for, your boyfriend?"

"Yeah, my boyfriend. Jesus! Here he is. Please, don't do anything!"

"Come on, Butch. I'm late."

"She don't act too glad to see you."

"Didn't you hear me, Butch?"

"Why don't you leave her alone?"

"Stay out of this, friend. This is between her and me."

"She don't want to go with you."

"Is that right? Is that right?"

At this point, the man hit the woman in the face. Her drinking companion of the moment got to his feet. Something came over him that he was unable to resist. And he hit the woman in the face. The other man smiled, and put his arm through his. They walked out together.

The woman got up then and left the bar unnoticed. She stumbled back to her apartment and lay on her bed until daylight. She wondered if they would go out tonight but she didn't care. She didn't feel like going anywhere for a long time. But that was impossible. Unless she got out now. Right now. She got out of bed. She stepped outdoors. That was behind her. She walked to the bus station. The person before her in line bought a ticket to Birmingham. She seemed nice. Small tits. So she bought a ticket to Birmingham and sat in the aisle seat.

Opposite.

I hope the pace is picking up. I hope it's going faster and faster—a race to the end. A dead race to the end in the first flush of battle, the trumpets blaring. Now we're going strong, all of us, joining in the fray, sparking it hot. Uncaring, unmolesting, only through the jonquil-filled

caverns underwater. The cavern of the mind, bleak, desolate, hollow and ringing. Isolate the hope and hope it holds. One of these days I'll get serious and I'll put some study in. I won't be worth a shit until I do this . . . (from Della)

Jonquils for Narcissus / Ursule Molinaro

His problem is: How to make a living without wasting his life. Without the Monday-through-Friday deathwish routine reducing his life expectancy to 48 hours a week. If that much. Much of Sunday is wasted by the thought of Monday . . .

Why can't he be like other people? Who are earning their living. Handicapped . . . in wheelchairs, they're earning their living. He's seen them on the posters in the bus. Who does he think he is!

I'm a poet . . . My tolerance threshold is lower than that of other people . . .

But your arrogance threshold is spectacular. Nobody likes to touch drudgery. Roachy wallpaper flowers . . .

Which the poet counts while he lies talking to himself about his problem, in the one-room apartment of the thin girl. On the ½-mattress space she offered him, as a trade-in for his serpent belt. From London.

Which the last owner bestowed upon him in lieu of other payment. Out-right money would have shattered the owner's desirability mirror. Besides being more expensive. "I know you've always admired this belt of mine . . ."

When the poet stopped being a pet. & took cocktail time out to write a poem. About: The Ghosts of Leaves on Winter Trees.

When he found himself dismissed when he ignored the jingling cocktail glass that had been inserted between his face & his writing pad. When he found himself eased out the front door, with his bag & his writing pad. With just enough change to sit in a nocturnal cafeteria that looks like a second-hand operating room over a cup of coffee that tastes like liquid cardboard into which he milks a miniature cardboard udder & he thinks he should maybe try looking for a job that leaves him free to do his writing on the side.

& he becomes a hip mailman. & he walks early-winter-morning streets. With federalist hair hanging to his grey mailman shoulders, from under his grey mailman cap.