

Three Poems · Sandra Nelson

STOVES

On TV there was a movie where this girl loved someone; you could tell because she looked out the window all the time at dead trees and it was raining. She had blond Marilyn Monroe hair and she lived in an apartment, alone. The movie was black-and-white and real old because it had boa constrictors that squirmed on her face and wiggled by her eye when she cried so that we all laughed: me, Gary and Pam. This lady's boyfriend was in the war my grandpa was in because they both had matching hats in their pictures. Some guy brought her a letter and when she read it, she cried more. Then she looked out the window at all the little cars like shoe boxes floating in a river and the sun was shining on them. She went in the kitchen, turned on the stove, and died. This was how we knew the stove could kill you.

WHEN SHE USED TO BE PRETTY

When she used to look pretty guys asked her out to the Starlight, 41 Twin, and Victory, the world's most beautiful drive-ins. They picked her up in primer grey cars to go tooling on the Ave before show-time.

In *Born Losers* these bikers smashed this guy's face on a VW windshield and you could see it like you were in the car. Man it was pizza time, crushed nuts, red-hot foot-longs and last-chance Dilly bars. Then she'd kiss the guy for awhile. Once a guy dropped his sour orange gum in her mouth. Another one made an anchovy burp right while he was frenching her. Sometimes she'd get one who grabbed at her tits, saying he couldn't help it, he's Italian or some shit like that. God, guys are such fucking pigs. Her mom told her to go out with all of them so she wouldn't miss it once she was married. "Miss what?" It seemed whenever she kinda liked one of them, her mom would say, "He's nice, but isn't he a bit greasy, or isn't his nose too big, think what your daughters will look like." "Right—my daughters."

She fell for Jim who worked at the Standard Station pumping and fixing. He drove a 30 dollar black Ford with no back window or nothing good except the radio. After work he wore a fluffy white mohair sweater and she'd kiss him for an hour or two in the Passion Pit under the Esterbrook Park bridge. She'd suck a Lucky while he ran the car to defog the windows. All his blue jeans had acid holes in the thighs and he smelled like motor oil and English Leather and he was nice.

WHAT A COMET IS

Dear Mom,

I'm writing to let you know I'm in California with the most wonderful Christians. We live together like brother and sister (no sex), and it's so beautiful—we share everything.

It was more than luck, "It was divine intervention" that caused Laura to total the Buick. There wasn't a thing left of it, but we were saved—see? While waiting at the Greyhound station, we were so depressed that we didn't guess it was all part of a heavenly plan, and that our worst day was in reality our best. Anyway, there they were—our true heavenly family. Don't worry, they aren't hippies or shaved-heads; they are nice clean conservative types. You'd approve.

Well, I have to go pray. You can't write me because I live in a forest, and we move all the time. Soon, when God thinks I'm ready, I'll work in L.A. selling flowers to help support the "good cause." I'll write again.

love Pam

All three say in unison, "OH MYGOD—MOON!"

The next day, Pam's mother and two sisters fill the '60 Comet for the trip of its life—California.

1. 4 plastic Guernsey jugs (extra water for the Comet).
2. 3 plaid suitcases (large—Mother) (medium—Sharon) (small—Sandy).
3. 1 large red Coleman cooler with cheese, fruit, bread and ice.
4. 1 cannonball-type green Coleman Thermos (no handle).
5. 1 Rand McNally Road Atlas (Milwaukee to L.A. 2,069 miles).
6. 3 blankets, 7 pillows (4 as fill to keep the springs out of the driver).