

Masthead Logo

The Iowa Review

Volume 18
Issue 3 *Fall*

Article 11

1988

True Story

Patrick O'Leary

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview>

Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

O'Leary, Patrick. "True Story." *The Iowa Review* 18.3 (1988): 63-64. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.3665>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Review by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact lib-ir@uiowa.edu.

TRUE STORY

Me & Jim & Jeannie are eating meatloaf stoned
when this black dude in a shiny green suit
slides into our booth. Right next to Jeannie.
Says Hey Kids Wanna make some money?
Pulls out this fat green wad & we laugh
till he reaches for his armpit like he's gotta
itch & says Wanna see my gun? So we laugh harder
& he starts in about his Princess, his wife,
his white lady, he loves white ladies.
The truth is she's a saint.
The most beautiful lady in the world.
O.K. So now we know he's drunk, right?
But the sad part is he don't know where she is.
She won't tell him. She don't know
how much he loves her. Nobody knows
how much he loves that girl. You wanna know
how much he loves her? There was this man.
He was putting the make on his princess
& you know what he did? He bit-off-his-nose.
His eyelids roll up & these two bloodshot
bull'seyes sorta quiver & about then
I notice Jeannie's keys on the table
right next to his long pink & brown fingers:
a golden horseshoe key ring with two red
jewels at the tips—you couldn't miss'em.
So I get sly, see, I think this dude's
distracting us so he can snatch Jeannie's keys.
So I pretend to listen to his murder record,
but slowly, oh so slowly, I edge my hand
over the formica. I'm nodding, he's bragging,
& my fingers are crawling slowmotion
toward the keys & just-like-that
they're in my fist. I reel'em in slow &
slip'em in my pocket. Boom, we're up,
we're outside, we're into the snow

coming down yellow under the streetlamp,
the sighs curling up over our heads.
I feel real cocky & show Jeannie my catch.
Her forehead crinkles & out of the pocket
of her silver furcoat she pulls a golden
horseshoe key ring with two red jewels
at the tips—you could miss'em.
We stop & stand there in the snow, too afraid
to turn around, listening for the gunshot.
Slowly, oh so slowly, I follow our snowprints
back, clutching the keys in my wet hand.
I open the door. He's at the counter, his back
to me. I say Hey Man, you forgot your keys.
He turns. He smiles—a big white smile.
He takes the keys. He says Hey. Thanks.
He shakes my hand. You Kids are allright.
When I get back they wait for me to
say something. I can't. So Jim says,
I see you still got your nose.

THE ASTRONAUT

You'd think a hero could complete a sentence.
Not this one. I couldn't coax a decent take
out of him. He'd stutter & stare down the mike
like the barrel of a gun. Finally, I told the engineer
to give us an hour & we walked to this Mexican place
where this round brown woman was hosing down
the walk under a tattered green canopy. Inside
we turned down two chairs & she kept an eye
on us through the kitchen slit. She must have
recognized him: butch, caved-in eyes, white shirt,
plastic penholder with 2 bics. He needed to talk.
I needed him calmed down. I listened.