

Where you're going?" my wife
Screamed in my ear. Other fans
Looked away; my little girl
Stared at us as always.
"I'll tell you where I'm going,"
I said and began to jog
With the grace of twenty years back.
"Don't leave me," she gasped, flopping
Beside me. We reached the exit
Tunnel. "I left you a long time
Ago," I said, accelerating
On the turn to the parking lot.
My daughter ran easily
Between us, breathing in through the nose,
Out through the mouth. "A little more
Arm action, baby," I said,
"There, that's it." "You're running
To her, aren't you?" my wife
Asked, panting. "She's a long
Way off," I said, getting
My second wind, but there
She was, her red hair
Exploding in the April air
Like the last-lap gun.
I sprinted the last hundred yards,
Chest filled with arc lights
And fell across the finish line.

-- Patrick Worth Gray

Bellevue NE

MICRO CHIPS

i

In the park, I sat next a girl who was reading Marcel Proust. She frowned a lot and turned the pages with a snap. Now and then, I tossed nuts to a squirrel. A guy came along. He looked Indian.

"Watch," he said.

The girl slammed her book shut. The guy started concentrating. He screwed up his face and clenched his fists. Slowly, he rose off the ground. He went up a foot, shaking, then managed another couple of inches before coming down with a big puff of breath. He was smiling.

"Hey," I said.

The girl moved to a new bench. She sat down, tucked her skirt under and opened Marcel Proust. The guy walked away. He went over to the lake and looked down at the water for a long time.

ii

I had an opportunity at a cocktail party. A lovely girl talked to me. I smirked. I disagreed. I criticized her. She kept trying. I yawned and scratched my crotch. She walked away.

Everyone got on me. I had missed an opportunity, they said. A big one. The girl was rich, very rich; smart, very smart. Her father owned half a city. I thought about it and felt bad.

That summer, at a wedding, I met another girl. She was richer than the first and better looking. She was awfully smart. I danced with her. I said witty things and told her how smart she was. We ran away and got married.

Since then, none of my friends talk to me.

iii

I was up at six-thirty. I ran for the train, and spent forty-five minutes reading the reports I would have to argue with Ed Sheen about.

Lunch was two-thirty. My client had two martinis and talked about golf. I hated golf.

I felt tense, so I went to my club, did forty laps and calisthenics. I liked the new receptionist. She said a late dinner would be fine. I walked home.

I jogged up the three flights to my apartment. I coughed. I rattled my keys. Finally, I heard Sinbad growl and jump off the couch. I opened the door.

He was all over me. I lost my balance and fell against the wall. Sinbad took up his position. I got hold of his collar and he led me to my chair. He was very patient with my tiny steps. I sat down heavily.

"Oh Sinbad, what would I do without you?" I croaked.

He looked up and wagged his tail.

iv

I told Ben about Emma. She loved me. For years, she gave me money, lots of it. I took it, met someone else and left her. I was a bastard, I said. Ben nodded.

Later, I told him the story again. He frowned and bit his pencil. I was a bastard. Yeah, Ben said.

Everytime I saw Ben, I stopped him and told him about Emma. He kept nodding, muttering something. Once or twice, he saw me coming and ducked away.

Friday night, I found him sipping a drink at Mort's. I sat down and told him my story. I was only half way when he jumped up, shoved me against the bar and grabbed my throat. It was bad. People tried, but they couldn't pull him off. When they got one hand away, the other came back.

"Let him alone!" I yelled, between grabs. "He understands! He understands!"

-- John Lowry

Brooklyn NY

GOOD

It was good, really good,
better than having your toes licked
by a quiet dog with red hair,
better than letting the air out of the tires
of a Jaguar parked across two spaces,
better than being broke
and laughing in the salesman's face,
better than folding cash
after winning three straight races,
better than endless credit
at the local liquor store
or the best whore house,
better than lighting fires
in a rich man's warehouse,
better than looking a cop in the eye
and calling him a liar,
better than getting calls you don't want
and hanging up the phone,
better than meat close to the bone,
or knowing the best is yet to come.
It was good, really good.

-- Michael Glover Leigh

Long Beach CA