

"pour another drink."

I poured two others. she needed hers because she lived with me. I needed mine because I worked as a stockroom boy for the May Co.

"you stopped for a quickie!"

"no, I watched this fight."

she drank her second drink right off. she was trying to decide whether I had had a quickie or whether I had watched a fight.

"pour us another drink. is that the only bottle you've got?"

I winked at her and pulled another bottle from the sack. we seldom ate. we drank and we drank and I worked as a stockroom boy for the May Co. she had a pair of the most beautiful legs I had ever seen.

as I poured the third drink she got up, kicked off her slippers and put her high heels on.

"we need some god damned ice," she said and I watched her as she walked toward the kitchen. then she vanished in there and I thought about the fight again.

INDEPENDENCE DAY

it was the 4th of July and I was living with this Alvarado Street whore, I was on my last unemployment check and we had a room on the first floor of a Beacon Street hotel next to a housing development and it was 11 a.m. and I was puking, trying to get a can of ale down, the whore in bed next to me in her torn slip mumbling about her children in Atlanta

then sleeping snoring
her belly like a watermelon
fattened with green beer and red
wine,
she was the best I could do,
on and off with her
for two years ...
then two kids came up and
threw a firecracker
"FLANNNNGGGG!"
against the screen of our
window.
"ooh shit," said the whore.
I got up out of bed
in my torn shorts: "Hey, you
fuckers! don't do that again!"
they laughed and ran off.
"I miss my children," said the
whore, "I wonder if I'll ever
see Ronnie and Lila again?"
"will you stop that shit?"
I asked. "I heard that shit
all last night long!"
the whore began crying.
I went to the bathroom and
puked again,
cracked a new can of ale and
sat next to the whore
in my bed.
"don't mourn, Lilly," I said,
"you give a great blowjob and
that counts for something."
"FLANNNNGGGG!"
it was another firecracker.
"ooh shit," said the whore.
I leaped up and ran to the
window.
I was 25 years old and a mean
s.o.b.
I had nothing to lose and was
willing to
lay it down anywhere.
"I told you fuckers now!
that's all! now off with you!
that's the end of it!
the next time will be the
last time!"
they just stood there and
laughed at me, two little kids
maybe ten or eleven years old,
they laughed at me,
me who duked it out
once or twice a week

with the most violent characters
in the neighborhood,
maybe not always winning
but hardly ever shamed.
one of the kids lit another cracker
and tossed it,
"FLANNNNNGGGG!"
that was it.
I opened the screen and leaped
into the yard,
the kids backed off.
"go get your father," I said,
"and I'll kick his ass good!"
they stood looking at me.
"fucking drunk," said the
tallest kid and he pulled out
a switchblade, hit the button,
the knife flicked out and he
jammed it into a tree, then
pulled it out.
I moved toward him and
he stood there
making movements with the
blade.
I closed in on him,
he flicked out, ran a gash
along my right arm
above the wrist
and then I had the knife
twisted it away from him
and kicked him in the ass.
"now get your father,"
I said.
they both left
and I stood there waiting
in my torn shorts ...
a minute, two minutes,
three minutes,
then I got afraid the heat
might arrive
so I went back and
crawled into the window,
got back on the bed
and played with the knife,
flicking the blade
in and out.
I took a hit of the ale
and didn't puke.
I felt masterful -- nobody
could have handled it better --
I was one 25 year old
mean rattlesnake bastard,
it didn't pay to fuck with
me.

"ooh, you're bleeding,"
noticed the whore,
"I'm having my period,"
I told her.

"I always thought you were
a queer," she said,
I never knew queers had
periods.

it was a beautiful knife,
I sat there flicking it in
and out.
I opened a new ale,
I never like holidays.
this one was no
exception.

"I miss my kids,"
said the whore,
"you don't know how much
I miss my kids ..."
her watermelon gut
moved up and down
under her torn and dirty
slip.

I had about a half of a can
of ale left
and as I moved it toward her
head
I noticed the cut on my
arm
and then I got the can
up there
and I poured it
from the top of her
head
and it ran
down over her hair
and down her face
and into her nostrils
and lips
and she sat up
suddenly:
"why, you cheap queer
bastard!"

"baby," I smiled at her,
"go easy, I am one tough
son of a bitch"