

DANCE SONGS

Clete and Juanita moved down Mission Ave, Clete behind the wheel, arguing about why the cat box never got changed.

"That stupid Ginger (Juanita's chihuahua) keeps eating all the cat turds, what the fuck do I need to change it for?" said Clete. He knew Juanita hated that, she and Ginger always played kissy-kiss.

"OH, THAT'S GROSS," said Juanita. "You're just a lazy slob is all. I can't get you to do anything around the house."

Clete was going to say something but Sam Cooke's Twistin' the Night Away came on the radio. Clete and Juanita were into dance songs. He slammed on the brakes. The four-door Ford Granada with the peeling vinyl roof skidded to a stop. Clete cranked up the radio and he and Juanita jumped out of the car and started twisting like their lives depended on it. They were a sight.

Their respective twist styles couldn't have been more different. Clete got into a tight boxer's crouch, low to the ground and intense, jaws clenched and the hair that normally covered his bald pate hanging down onto his left shoulder, his white, bird like legs sticking out from his plaid bermudas, the varicose veins and the twisting motion making them look like a couple of skinny barber poles.

Juanita, large and fleshy, was all loose joints and jiggling flab underneath her pink, flower print, vee neck moo-moo. She threw her head back and shook it, scraggly grey hair flying around in silver spikes, breasts undulating one way, buttocks the other. When she stopped dancing it would take twenty minutes for it to all stop moving.

Traffic was backing up, horns were honking, curses were shouted.

"GET THE FUCK OUT OF THE ROAD, YOU WORTHLESS OLD FARTS."

"YOUR MOTHER," said Juanita, making an obscene gesture.

The song ended, they got back in the car. Clete wiped his brow and flipped his hair back up on top of his head. Juanita fanned herself with her newspaper.

"I'm glad it wasn't the Mashed Potato," said Clete. The last time they danced to that, Clete's feet got moving

so fast they burnt through the bottom of his sneakers. He scorched his bare soles so badly he was laid up for six weeks. Juanita had to cater to his every whim while he sat on the sofa watching game shows and recuperating.

"So am I, Clete, so am I," she said.

They drove on down Mission Ave, trying to remember what they had been arguing about.

THE BASH

It's my kid's birthday and my family and the in-laws are all here.

"Shit," I say. I'm BBQing hamburger and hot dogs and the coals flared up and burned my wrist. I don't have one of those long BBQ spatulas, just a regular kitchen one. I roll the hot dogs and flip a couple of the burgers.

It's a real bash; my wife's grandmother is sitting on the sofa with her blue hair, smoking lots of cigarettes, my old man looks disgusted and tells me that I should clean the tracks of my sliding glass door, they're filthy, my mother-in-law is telling everyone what her psychic said (he said her grandchildren are geniuses), my wife's cousin, Amy, is running around in a pair of tight jeans and a low cut blouse attracting a lot of attention, her husband, Dale, is working on his ninth beer and telling everyone how great the L.A. Raiders are, my mother is talking real estate, my wife and sister are talking drapes, some old guy who I've never met before (I think he's with the in-laws) keeps telling me that he wants his hamburger medium rare ("it ruins them when you cook them all to shit."), my brother-in-law is talking insurance, the kids are screaming, yelling and fighting, and my father-in-law is running around with a movie camera, getting it all down for posterity.

"I hear you're shooting blanks now." It's Amy. She sits down in the lawn chair by the BBQ and leans forward a bit, so I can see her breasts. I turn some of the burgers and roll the hot dogs.

"Yeah, I finally had it done. Four kids is enough." Her nipples are brown.

"You know, it's too bad. I was considering having you father a child for me. Dale thinks he's sterile." She's