

Worse than he expected, certainly not the eunuchs and mild wethers that he hoped for. And where is The Jake Barnes Dormitory?

He sees them do it to her even as they stand by the car. Worse, he sees her ask for it, coaxing with her expensive teeth. Why can't he

Lock those vivid hips in her room?
Follow her everywhere, revolvers drawn?
Punch a few of those furry bastards in the chops?

So he does what he can -- lips to chaste brow, hand to bare arm saying,

Goodby, now. Be good.

Ever Since He Retired

Charley has paid a lot of attention to the four apartments he does not manage.

If there's one leaf on the little sidewalk he puts on his jacket, gets the broom out of the utility shed, stands over the offender for a full five seconds and then gets down to business.

Last week when he asked me for the seventh or eighth time to guess how old he was, he also wanted to know how my clothespin, the one that holds the out-going mail, was holding up.

"Okay, I guess."

"I've been thinking about those big manila envelopes you put out there."

Next day, of course, there was a new one so when I came home on Friday and he was sitting by his front door in his aluminum chair, I thanked him.

"Got the lawn all dolled up for the weekend," he said.

"Maybe the vacant lot from across the way will drop over and take ours out on the town. We might have a big hole right here until after the bars close."

Charley liked that, so we worked it into our 5:30 routine for a week or so.

Tonight though he said hello and right away asked me how old I thought he was.

"You're 73, Charley."

"74," he said. "Today's my birthday."

Priorities

I prefer to meet young ladies by telephone
to declare my love by wire
to touch them through their winter clothes.

I have binoculars for the lady up the street
an inverted water glass for the widow next door
and just before bed

the stethoscope for the stammer of my insulated heart.

"What I Need Is A Strange Piece Of Ass,"

said the man next to me, so I showed
him the one in my briefcase.

Nearly rectangular and greyish-green,
I was sure he'd never had anything
stranger.

Was I suprised when he didn't want
anything to do with it.

At 3:00 P.M.

down by the river in Alton,
Illinois, there was a woman
standing in the window of her
upstairs room in the Ritz Hotel.

She was so tall that I couldn't
see her face,

just a blue nightgown that filled up
the window.