

it wasn't my observation that made the day
but rather for the few hours we sat together
they treated me as their equal.

A SLIDE INTO THE PACIFIC

Helen Glide is handsome, stylish, and all woman.
she grew up tough in a Chicago ghetto,
fought off rapists, pimps, and muggers.
streetwise, she supported herself as a nude model
while mastering two degrees at Boulder, Colorado.
by 27, she had transformed herself into a
sophisticated Ph.D. from Chicago U., moved
west and 20 years later was living in a pleasant
condo with a Long Beach view. here was a real-life
Joan Crawford success story. "Not bad," Helen
thought as she sipped her nightly chablis,
a cork's pop above the Pacific's purr. "Not bad at all."

one night, a neighbor, southern born and southern
rich, made an offer Helen could not refuse:
\$150,000 cash on the wine bottle for an original
\$30,000 investment. Helen could T-bill herself
into security. but the bubble burster came when
la belle dame sans poesie explained the purchase:
"Ah'm olda now and simply cahn't travel as widely
as ah previously could. Of course, ah have to have
mah maid close by. I thought your apahtment
would be a neat and tidy spot for her."

the low register in which Helen tells this tale
proves that posing in the buff is a pedestal on
which to build immunity against a variety of chills.

HIT IN THE HEAD

in the men's room on upper campus
the newly installed, AIDS-inspired
condom machine had been wrenched open
its front panel flapping
like a prudish tongue.
the cupboard was bare.

what sexual Ahab frenzy had
stirred this King Kong passion?

did the hot, little number in Anthro I
whisper in his ear after a Dionysian

slide presentation on pagan rites:
"After class tonight, in your van,
but only if you have a you-know-what."

was the football squad's defensive team
invited to an impromptu first victory bash
after six losses into the new season?

was a diseased victim trying to deliver
a message, make contact, so to speak?

was this merely the mundane, imagineless
result of frat fellows on a scavenger search?

let us hope for some romance here.

perhaps our Hero inflated a few of the leftovers
to buoy him on his return across the Hellespont
after leaving lovely Leander thoroughly sated.

THE CAT ON KILIMANJARO

in Florence we lived in an apartment 120 steps high.
it was August so all portals stayed open.
from our rooftop sundeck we overlooked the entire city.
mosquitoes thrived in the rarefied atmosphere;
local birds perched neighborly on the sills.

it's nice to be that high anywhere,
but particularly in Italy.

one day we saw a cat roaming the rooftops:
no one knows what il gato was seeking at that altitude.

— Charles Stetler

Long Beach CA

SPILLING

she sits by the yellow roses
she sits by the yellow bananas
she sits leaning against the sunlit wall
her hair is pale yellow
it shines with electricity
her bracelet makes bright flashings
as she talks and gestures
her full cup with the spoon in it