

## An Evening in Blue Diamond

I was booked by an artist friend of mine to do a poetry reading in a town called Blue Diamond outside of Las Vegas. I had only been there once before in passing, and the sight of it was grim. The reading would be held in a barn. And so I took my girl Sam, Santhymum, Jerry, and his friend Zak. Zak was a good guy. He looked like about 10 pounds of chewed bubble gum, with fine, pale skin, and long blonde hair that fell below his ears. He wore cowboy boots and hat; something about the hat costing \$200. One fingernail was long and yellow so he could pluck the strings while playing classical guitar. He talked against fags and niggers and atheists, which Sam was, so they began talking about The Big Bang, God, The Devil, Heaven and Hell, etc. And when they turned to me and asked, "what do you believe in Jack?" I said, "Rotting in the ground."

I suppose I am a humanist, if anything. Not a nihilist, for I fall in love too easily. Death does not scare me, life is what frightens me, for I am living it with great difficulty. Anyway, earlier that day Sam and I went to breakfast, after taking a shower together. She looked good, very good. Beautiful. Standing there, tattoo of a bluebird on her hip showing, indescribable. She kissed me on the only part of the cheek that wasn't covered by hair. Her beauty cancelled out my ugliness. She got out of the tub before I did, leaving me alone again. At breakfast I ordered the strawberry pancakes and coffee. She had the half sandwich with turkey and swiss, also a coffee and an ice water. Her sandwich was good. My pancakes were shit. Then we went to the bookstore and I ran into an old friend, and fellow hack. We spoke, quoting T.S. Eliot. I made myself sick. I bought two books, **Death on the Installment Plan** by Céline and **Life Studies** by Robert Lowell. Then we went back to my place to pick the poems that I would be reading that night. I picked mostly new ones, but she wanted to pick one, and the one that appeared out of the ungodly amount of pages was a poem I had written for her about our first kiss, called *A Halloween Poem*.

Shortly after that everyone arrived and we piled in the car, moving toward Blue Diamond. We found the barn easily enough, for the town was no longer than a strip of road. The was around 5 o'clock in the afternoon. The sun was just beginning to set behind a mountain, but that doesn't help you any. As we got closer to the barn which was really just a red airplane hanger, I could hear ambient sounds echoing from the small, cement doorway, where a little boy with one tooth came stumbling out. Walking in felt like entering an unlit bar, surrounded by feedback of guitars, and the loud closing of doors. There were pictures of cops fucking other cops painted on the walls. Dangling art pieces that looked so drap hanging there in the dim light. Reproduced. Things I had seen 100 times before and didn't like. We looked around, still not sure this was the right place, but then a Hippie eating pie approached me.

"Are you Jack Bollock?" he asked me.

"Yes, I am."

"Great. I look forward to hearing your poetry."

"Alright."

"Alright. Well, there are snacks over by the bar."

"Thank you."

There was a brief reunion between Sam and a few of the others that were there. I wouldn't be going on for a while, and none of the crowd had showed up yet, so I went to

the bar and had a drink. No bar tender. Help yourself, and I did. Bourbon and soda. Vodka and 7-up. Rum and coke. Water. Bottles and bottles of water, for I was sweating profusely. We decided to go outside and explore. To our left was a basketball court and the community's swimming pool, and a road to the convenience store and sheriff's office (one in the same). The child we had seen was running wild, throwing rocks, trying to pelt me with stones. He was unsuccessful. And when we walked passed him he said, "Hello stupid people." We found the elementary school for all of the 6 children in the town, and while Sam and Santhymuym played on the swing set, Jerry, Zak and I talked about the reading.

"None of these people are going to enjoy your work." Jerry said to me.

"I know."

"You're not their style."

"Am I anyone's style?"

"Why wouldn't they like the poems?" Zak asked.

"Because 80% of his poetry is about his balls." Jerry said.

Zak looked at me.

"It's true." I said, "And the rest are about love."

You need to be able to write 1 or 2 love poems to be a good writer. I've yet to be pleased with one of mine, but there have been attempts. The majority of my poems have been about Sam, whether she knows it or not. And even if she is not directly in them, she has inspired me to write them. She is the muse. I didn't believe in a muse until she came into my life.

We went back to the barn and sat down. Had more drinks. And then Wyatt, my friend who had gotten me into this mess to begin with, walks in holding a two-week-old kitten in his hands. To look at Wyatt was to have seen every stereotypical artist. Slouched stature, cowboy boots, ripped jeans, button-down shirt, hair combed over to one side, and the other side shaved to the scalp. He had been hooked on drugs, and had finally come off of them. Pills, booze, grass, opium, heroin, the whole bit. We sat and talked about the kittens, I see a girl maybe 15 or 16 with a big chest. I think about fucking her, but only for a moment. Then we went over to the basketball court and stood on the smoldering blacktop. Two little girls in bikinis played in the dirt, while two mean-looking sonsabitches stood laughing and watching us from underneath their porch, and the girls came running by me shouting, "Please don't touch me! Please don't touch me!" In this town we were as good as rapists- murders!

After the sun was completely down a few more people began arriving. I didn't want to be there any longer. I counted the people. 13. Enough to do a reading. Everyone piled into the barn. The Hippie who greeted me, Jake, introduced me as... "We have the true workings of a genius coming up." I thought that was funny, for he had never heard my work. I got up there and adjusted the microphone. I sat on the stool provided and began to read. At the end of each poem I would drop them on the floor, and small bursts of applause would bust out. I read my final poem titled *Goodnight*. and the last line went like this- "*I have found there are many things worth writing about, but there are very few people- she is the exception.*" and as I finished I glanced up at Sam, who was sitting in the front row.

We drove back into Vegas and got something to eat. I wasn't sure if the reading was satisfying or disappointing; the people seemed to like it. Some told me that if I got

up there and read 100 poems they would have listened to every word. Another told me how he completed his first novel in the 3rd grade. Another woman shrugged her shoulders at me, unimpressed, and everyone else seemed pleased. So the feeling was mixed. I was hungry and a little drunk. After the meal Jerry and Zak went their separate ways, while Sam, Santymum and myself drove back to my place. By the time we got in it was 2 or 3. We sat around having drinks. We did beer then moved on to a bottle of some strange Asian liquor that lit up bright green when placing it on a hard surface. It wasn't any good. Then came whiskey, brandy, rum... And we finished the night with a bottle of wine. We talked for many hours, until I got sick. I ran to the bathroom and had diarrhea. It was loud and mean, hurling fast! Sam wasn't feeling well either. She had long since gotten out of her own clothes and into some of mine, and she lay on the bathroom floor vomiting into the crapper bowl. I sat in the doorway bottomless and Santymum sat in the sink still drinking his wine. We put on a film, but then Sam and I retired to the bedroom. I was too drunk to fuck, and I honestly don't think she minded.