

Je regrettais d'avoir dérobé son efface à Ange-Aimée, mais après tout ce n'était pas le crime du siècle. Je lançai l'efface dans le feu; c'était un bon lancer, au coeur d'une fenêtre éclatée.

Je ne jouerais peut-être pas le rôle de Marie cette fois, mais en tout cas je n'avais pas l'intention de jouer celui de Léa ni celui de Marthe non plus. Je me

disais que si j'attendais un peu je pourrais peut-être un jour interpréter le rôle de Marie-Madeleine.

Et puis ma mère n'allait pas mourir. Pas avec un feu comme celui-là, pas quand elle était si occupée, pas quand sa fille aînée en avait encore tellement à apprendre.

Je songeai avec un peu de nostalgie aux

orphelins sur le radeau, qui devenaient assez indépendants et assez forts pour faire leur chemin dans la vie. Alors je fis demi-tour et je rentrai à la maison en courant dans la neige et le vent, avec le feu derrière moi.

Three Women

By Miriam Waddington

1. The Writer

Wanting to write the stories of ordinary Canadians I discover there are no ordinary Canadians. Of course you can always pick out Canadians in foreign airports by the red and white Air Canada tickets they're holding in their hands, and you can sometimes recognize them in the railway stations of European cities by the little gold maple leaf pins they wear in their lapels; they are anxious not to be mistaken for Americans. For some reason they consider themselves purer or more honest; anyway, different.

I wake up at 3 A.M. wanting to write stories about representative Canadians. And I wonder who else wakes up at 3 A.M.? For starters let's say it's women unrequitedly in love with Marcel or Harold. Marcel and Harold are really the same person, it's just that one disguises himself as the other at certain times. One stays in Toronto while the other travels the planes between Halifax and Vancouver looking for victims. They are probably a little bit malicious — Marcel and Harold — for they know that by dividing themselves like this they will be sure not to miss any of the women who are going to fall unrequitedly in love with them. One other thing. Marcel and Harold need all this unrequited love. It gives them a sense of well-being. Unless other people around them are suffering they can't be sure that they are not. This way they feel alive, the other way they would feel like dead mushrooms on an Algonquin trail, or discarded beer cans on the top of Mount Royal, or maybe two dead fish littering the beach at Spanish Banks in Vancouver. They might even become surrealist fig-

ures in somebody's dream, these two phantomy fantasy lovers. But this way, with people waking up at 3 A.M. to love them unrequitedly, they can achieve existence. They can be real.

Everyone wants to be real. Even menopausal women. They wake up out of their sweats at 3 A.M. reminding themselves to complain to the doctor knowing full well that when they do the doctor will just purse his lips and say, "Why go against nature? You don't want to be a little old lady of sixty five still menstruating do you?"

Other people who wake up in the middle of the night are the spinsters from Toronto living their August vacations in cooperatively rented cottages on Georgian Bay. They wake up when they hear the mice scraping against the rafters under the roof. They suddenly feel scared and turn the lights on, take a drink of water from the glass on the night table beside the bed and remind themselves to wash out their white blouses and underwear in the morning. Then they swallow two aspirins and if they still can't get to sleep after all that, they fall into easy fantasies whose details are dim but whose personnel is drawn from among the mechanics at the Volvo garage where they get their 3000 mile check-ups.

I'm the one who wakes up to the whine and buzz of mosquitoes who somehow got through the screen. I wonder why I haven't got an ulcer or a weak heart or arthritis yet. I decide to open a coffee house on Grand Mannan and learn to play the guitar. I feel the empty space in my double bed and remember the nightmare of driving on expressways. Then I turn on the light and tell myself that tomorrow is

another day. I have things to do. The wind to listen to, the sun to sit in, a leaf to pick and representative Canadians to write the stories of before everything starts all over again and turns out who knows how?

2. The Camper: At the Edge of Point Pelee

I walk to the very edge of Point Pelee, out to where the landstrip is very narrow. The wind blows heavy and warm against my face stuffing my lungs with thick fluffs of air. There is no one around except a single fisherman wearing high boots and a misshapen battered hat. We nod to each other and I shout across the wind, "What are you catching?" And he yells back, "Sheepsheads!"

My eyes and mouth are filled with continual wind and my mind is still hung with green from the shadows of the forest where I walked earlier. Back of the green lie the intricacies and bow knots of the lianas that hang from the tall trees and there is the sound of birds like the shake of bells falling away somewhere.

I feel sleepy. I walk back to my car the only one in the wide empty parking lot. Empty because it is September or too blowy or else everyone who isn't back at school is home eating supper.

I drive back to the tenting area. Though it is still daylight I crawl into my pup tent. In my sleeping bag I fall quickly asleep to the voices of neighboring campers. They sing in my mind and I sleep a thick curtained sleep. All the while the wind keeps blowing up from the lake and I dream again of being lost, of not knowing my name. I dream that the wind is singing to words are strong. They come close. The

truth. The rest blows away.

3. Susie

Only once in all the months since I began to drop in to the Dairy Lunch on Spadina has Susie, the fat blonde waitress, the cossack, ever smiled at me.

It was a warm spring afternoon. The cafe, frequented by cloaks operators, bushellers, cutters and cap makers from the neighbouring factories was almost empty. Joe, the Slovak handyman, had piled the counter high with clean steaming cups dumped there to dry. Now he was clattering under the tables at the back with his broom. Under my feet I could feel the dirt. I didn't dare look because I was afraid of what I might see. There are no spittoons or ashtrays in the Dairy Lunch, and sometimes even the coffee has an intimate female taste as if Susie had done unspeakable things to it.

Big blonde Susie was humming. From

under her turned up nose came a tune. Her golden hoop ear-rings caught the sunshine and the yellow loops of her hair threw it back and her thick arms burst from her print dress in rosy and radiant splendor.

She almost seemed not to notice me as she drew my coffee from the huge nickel-plated tank, slopped some cream over the side and ladelled in the sugar from a large open salad bowl. For once she did not resent a woman invading her domain, did not look contemptuously at my sober tweeds. She cut my cheesecake calmly.

Then she began to talk to a man in a soft camel cloth coat.

"You been in town long?" she asked.

"Just come in," said the man. He was forty five, getting bald and had a bad complexion. He jingled keys, produced one on a tab such as are supplied by hotels. "See?"

"You sure travel in style," Susie's voice was soft. The rough tones were shaded

out. Her next comment was persuasive.

"Seen any good shows?"

"Oh, there ain't time any more. I gotta rush around breaking my head to get samples."

"There's been some good shows lately," Susie continued. "Seen Mona Lisa?" She didn't wait for an answer. She began to sing, looking at him.

"A kiss is just a kiss..."

He bit the end of his cigar, took a sip from his cup of coffee. He watched her hips keep sway with the music. When she finished the song he pointed to the shelf behind her.

"Cut me some coffee cake Susie."

As she cut the light cake with its jagged line of cinnamon the man in the camel cloth coat watched. His eyes appraised her thick waist, her fair strong arms, and he said without thinking,

"Susie, always the same old Susie."

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