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THREE: A SEQUENCE

I.

In his head she kept saying No No, but in fact she did not resist. His arm was around her shoulders, against the stiff dress; in the front seat Jack and Betty slowly slumped out of sight, their furtive whispers becoming deep breathing and small cries; beyond the windshield all Portland glowed in the night. The car, Jack's father's, smelled richly of wax and new upholstery. The girl smelled of starch, perfume, the hamburger's onions. Her skirt flared over the several crinoline slips, and under there was where he would put his hand if he could--but no, he knew that they would sit like this for hours, regardless of what happened in the front seat, regardless of the pain that grew along his leg, because he did not know how to touch her, how to kiss her. He sat with an arm around her, staring straight out the windshield and waited for Portland to fall into the river, so they would have something to talk about.

II.

He stood in the storefront cum bedroom, back to the wall, expecting any moment to feel the flash of a knife, while the fat woman kept asking to bless his money. He had often seen the gypsy girl when he drove the truck through this industrial area, and tonight, as he cruised past in his car she had been standing on the corner. She was the most beautiful girl he had ever seen, he thought: clear, dark skin with reddish cheeks, and her lips and eyes had a sensuous, reckless quality. Although she was probably younger than he was, her low blouse, which exposed the upper halves of her perfect breasts, made her look older and somewhat sleezy--but no less beautiful. He never knew how he stopped or got the courage to enter the building. The windows of the old store front were covered with thick curtains; there was some miscellaneous furniture, and three large beds, with children playing on one. A fat woman sat on a chair just inside the doorway. "Bless your money," she said. "The girls will dance for you." He was laughing as he got out his billfold, but two overlapping visions ricocheted through his head: in one he was screwing the beautiful gypsy girl, her mother, and the slim younger sister who came from behind the curtain--screwing them en mass while the kids watched--

--and in the other he was being knifed by the girl's brothers who must be around. "Two dollar," the mother said; he showed her that he only had a five spot, figuring that got him off the hook, and he was already moving toward the door when the mother said that the sister would get the bill changed at a bar down the street. Immediately he had regrets, and cursed himself for giving up his money, but while he waited he stared at the beautiful sister-- --she was the dancing gypsy Esmeralda, the gypsy in Dracula movies, and he wanted her badly. He had kissed the fiver goodbye when the sister suddenly returned, gave him three ones and two to her mother. The woman rose from her chair, an expanse of brilliant but dirty yellow and purple silk; she folded the two bills and rubbed them against the crotch of her skirt, laughing, blessing the money. She slipped the bills into her vast bosom, and began clapping her hands in a fast rhythm. The two sisters began to dance, feet moving gracefully, skirts swirling to expose dark thighs; their young hips moved, breasts bounced. He sat on the bed, and as the tempo of the dance increased he felt his chances were getting better; how many times had he heard the saying that gypsies only screwed with other gypsies. The dancers swirled faster, then came down hard on their heels as the mother's palm echoed a final sharp crack. She turned to him, smiling, "You like the dance? You want more?" she asked. "You want more?"

III.

He waited in the bushes for what seemed hours. He figured that either the cops would get him, or Mary Sue's old man would take a shot at him, and he was crazy for waiting. Then the door of the old trailer house opened, and he saw Mary Sue's cousin, Pat, come down the cement block steps tucking in her blouse. As she came near he reached out for her arm, and said that Jimmy was parked around the corner; after she had gone he still waited, expecting someone to come from the house. He sure didn't want to be caught in the trailer, with its small door. All day the four of them had been at the beach, swimming, drinking beer, and to be so close to Mary Sue for so long, to watch her big breasts and hips in that skimpy suit had nearly driven him crazy. All day he had tried to get her away from Jimmy and her cousin Pat, but she had said to wait-- --wait until tonight. Now a crazy desperation moved him from the shadows up the steps and into the trailer, but he was not so desperate that he forgot to

push the door shut tightly. By the distant glow of a street light through the leaves he could see the narrow bed against the far end, the overhead bulb which he partially unscrewed. Quickly he shucked off his clothes, folded them neatly into a package that could easily be grabbed and run with, and put it under the bed. Mary Sue was a mound beneath blankets and he slipped in beside her as she whispered Hi. Although he was quietly laughing his arms and legs were shaking badly. Their bodies touched, and he realized that she was naked; his heart hammered once in erratic rhythm, and he threw back the covers to see in the dim light her full breasts, belly. "We got to wait," she said, slowly pulling the blanket to her chin. "Until the house lights go off. And if anyone comes in here you got to look like Pat. I'll say you're asleep." Oh jeezus, he thought, torn between desire and fear, seeing himself caught naked in this gawdamn narrow housetrailer with only one small door and no windows big enough to jump through. His hand slid across her body, held the strong hard loveliness of her breast, and if that wasn't enough to convince him she reached under her pillow and handed him a rubber. "Stole it from my father," she said. He gripped it tightly and waited, knowing after all these years he could wait a little longer; knowing finally that the long wait had led to this ancient trailer house, this narrow bed, the warm soft heavy body which lay beside him, the shadow patterns of leaves on the walls.

Albert Drake