

Robert Penn Warren and Orange County Blue

by Brian Michael Barbeito

We were old.

Wind came in with small threats and played games with drapes. A print of orchids and some other green affair that looked to me like kiwis. Sadie was arranging some items on a desk and I noticed there was a cricket on the window. I was thinking of Jung's scarab beetle.

Penny for your thoughts, Sadie said.

I wasn't thinking of anything.

Did you ever imagine we would meet like this? With take-out coffee in Orange County?

No, I replied, I didn't, and what's more, I had archived us to an anachronistic appendix of the cosmos that nobody reads.

Too funny. Do you like Orange County?

Yup. Orange County, I like the drapes.

Sadie finished adjusting whatever she had been adjusting on the desk and sat down. Outside part of the sky that covered the distance had turned dark blue and was possibly pregnant with rain. I put my feet up on a third chair that sat between us. There was always something between us. Two things actually. One a connection and the second the thing blocking the connection.

Speaking of reading, said Sadie, Why did you bring that book back? Did you read it?

I don't need it. Didn't read it. Had it for twenty years and took good care of it. A couple times I opened it and read the cursive notes at the tops of the pages. All the way from The Baylor School Tennessee to me and now back to you. *Amat victoria curam*.

Don't forget it, she said.

Nah. I hardly forget anything. You know that.

But still, Sadie replied pensively, that's a curious way to handle a book.

I am a curious cat. And books are books. They should have human rights. And nobody should write in cursive in them, but it was you...

Yeppers. Hey. It's the book that was never read.

Ya. It is that.

Then I looked back out the window and the cricket was gone. Nobody had mentioned a cricket or a song or anything connective. The dark blue part of the sky had become even darker. Sadie and I had taken different paths and there was not a lot to say by the wind in the drapes Orange County way as far height air turned shades.

Soon Sadie packed up the book and at the door turned with a question. One more question Hayden.

Shoot. Anything.

Did you keep a copy of the book you wrote about me?

Yeppers, I said, imitating her talk. It'll be the second book that is never read.

Then Sadie grinned and left and I thought of how old we were and I also pondered on all the funny things people sometimes do when they are so young. There went the muse again, down hallways in Orange County so many years later and maybe, I thought, the wind played with orchid prints and odd kiwis in all rooms everywhere and in some way all the time and for everyone all over the great grand hyperbolic earth.

