Everyman's Armful

by Con Chapman

(Stevie Smith's Quip About Shakespeare's Cressida)

She was, they said, everyman's armful;
Bedding down with her was most likely harmful.
Sample her pleasures at your ease—
You'll end up with a social disease.

My dad took the trouble to warn me away from her;
His words failed—I conceived no disdain for her.
In fact, they attracted me all the more;
If she was open, I was ready to score.
Her name was casual and brief—just “Marty.”
He said she'd hosted mattress parties
She'd been around the track more than once
If you'd missed her laps you were marked for a dunce.

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Younger than me, and taller too,
Not a girl, but a woman, who knew what to do.
What pleasure she gave ruined her reputation
And that was the source of her fascination.
In the end, the boys chucked her for virginal girls;
They'd known her and fucked her and each had their whirl.
But she walked the street of that small town
With her head held high, and her eyes not cast down.

“I don't know why you think I should be shamed
Or why my acts should tarnish my name;
I think I got the better of the deal
Let me explain the way I feel.
“I did what I set out to do-
To live a life alive and free;
And I have had each one of you
While you have had but one of me.”