

LIES

by Dennis Hiatt

When I was nine years old, I fell through the rotting boards that covered my grandmother's cesspool and nearly drowned. Yesterday, I told a friend of mine (A lady poet), about that bright summer afternoon La Grande Oregon, when I stepped out of the shadows of an ancient lilac bush, onto the thick, green grass of grandmother's back lawn and found myself trying to breath a turd. My brother and I had been playing cowboys and Indians.

She asked. "Did that filthy baptism warped you?"

I sipped my espresso and thought about that for a time. "No," I said, "it had came too late in my childhood to do any real damage to my psyche. By that season in my child-life, I'd came to expect....unpleasantness."

"Mmmhmm." The poetess nodded and quoted Emerson. "Truth is beautiful, without a doubt; but so are lies."

Poet or no poet, my friend could really put a damper on a conversation. I mean who, under the age of eighty two, wanted to hear Emerson. I didn't but to be fair, the soft faced colored girl with long legs busing two tables over, looked faintly amused. I held my tiny espresso cup in a stylish fashion, I smiled, because I too, could quote. And I could quote Goethe. "The intelligent man finds almost everything ridiculous, the sensible man hardly anything."

"Mmmhmm," my friend murmured and the colored girl with the soft face and long, long legs, slowed her circular wipes of the bare wooden table. Her legs seemed to tense. My poet friend cooed as a wounded dove might. "..Though I am not naturally honest, I am so sometimes by chance.' Shakespeare."

I nodded, ever so casually, and watched the girl's slim brown legs relax as she moved to the table next to me and my rhyming friend. The girls hands, that had been quick and

smart in removing half eaten, mangled food and cigarette butt, now where slow, steady and methodical. There was a flesh colored Band-Aid on the first knuckle of her left hand. It looked as if she had not tanned that knuckle. Shakespeare was superior to Emerson, so I must hunt Goethe's master. "Wit is educated insolence." Aristotle, but I spoke not his name.

"It takes two to speak the truth---one to speak it and another to hear." My poet friend grinned, ever so slightly, as if I might not recognize Thoreau's moist foot print.

The colored girl's hands had slowed almost to a stop. I smiled in her most general direction and said. "Alfred North Whitehead, ..All truths are half-truths."

My poetess friend murmured. "Mmmhmm." And the colored girl with the soft face and long, long legs, wiped the table to a sparkle with slow, wide circles of her dirty white rag. Her hand and the table, where so close to the same color that they could have been sisters. I winked at my friend and said to the brown child. "Care to add to the conversation?"

The girl hosted her tray from the clean table and holding it in both strong, young hands, said. "Sounds like to me that you be still suck'n shit."

