Match Book Covers

by Dennis Hiatt

We all wish to partake in great events. We don't see ourselves as prime mover in matters that grade school children will be forced to memorize. We are not George Washington nor John Adams. We are not Paul Revere or Betsy Ross.

Or are we? A silversmith and a seamstress? Fate, like the lottery, might pluck us from our gas pump, with our dirty fingernails, and shove us, still combing our hair, into a fifth grade history book.

There comes a time when we know this will not happen. We will not win a lottery. No talent scout will will find us laughing in a dim bar and offer us a try out for a movie that will catapult us onto the covers of the tabloids.

When this knowledge come full grown and cold, we still grin as we pump your gas or smile when we total your bill and fantasize that the young blonde in the backless, black dress, will blow up at her boyfriend, who's too drunk to drive and ask us for a ride home. And maybe have sex with us, because she wants to hurt him and we will say simple but profound things, that we who work with our hands, see and think about.

Then the blonde woman, in our dreams, gets older and more world weary and we come to that point that even our most modest fantasies feel silly and sad. We look back over our life less, and more toward our Social Security pension. We play our lucky numbers every week in the lottery. We circle our favorite shows on TV and never miss them. We take up a real hobby. Collecting match book covers. And one cold rainy day, after we've just got paid and had a few beers at a downtown bar, who's match book cover we needed, we shuffle

Available online at *«http://fictionaut.com/stories/dennis-hiatt/match-book-covers»*
Copyright © 2009 Dennis Hiatt. All rights reserved.

down the street, our shoes wet and soaking through, hating the Christmas music, hoping we didn't miss our bus and will have to wait an hour and we hear a girl yell in her tender girl voice. "I want some money, does anybody want some pussy?"

We stop. She's not the young blonde in the black backless dress but she could be her younger sister on her way to cheerleader practice. We squeeze the new match books in our pocket and look at her as if that look must keep us warm for the hour we will wait in the rain for the next bus.

The girl is in the center of a circle of girls her age. She is jumping up and down, as impatient children will do. Her eyes bop over their heads and she looks around, youthful, expectant and hopeful. Yet she does not see us. We edge toward her. One of the girls sees us coming closer to their warm circle and squeals softly, "Templa! Here comes your chance to be a hooker.", and then groans a laugh. Templa steps out of the circle, bold, lovely and says with a fake hardness that doesn't quite cover her small, shaking white fists. "Want a date grandpa?"

We slap her hard and she falls back into her scattering friends. Someone screams for the police.

When we get to our apartment, we see the match books are ruined. We pop a beer and turn on the TV to watch the news and then The Wheel Of Fortune. We smile. We have a whole week end to ourselves and still have a lottery ticket.