

Rope & Bone

by Ginnah Howard

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Sunday and Saturday.
That and This.

He said, "It was our finest hour."
She wept.

Speaking in tongues
untranslatable,
they move in experimental spacesuits,
uneasy in the other's gravity.
(To say nothing of the difficulty of dancing.)

He can do anything:
come down the steepest place
from the top,
pull an engine,
take her there;
but he has a hard time balancing
with one hand on his jugular
and the other over his balls
while walking on diverging wires.

She's an X-cheerleader
with the possibilities of becoming
a Harpy
or Ma Joad
depending...

Scenario:

They meet on the Midway.
His arms leave her breathless.
He hits the ball to the top,
rings the bell,
and gives her the Kewpie Doll.

She's got nice tits
which she gives to him
along with "the best years of her life."

They marry:

She will wear lace and carry a bouquet of forgetmenots; he
will wear black. They will have a brief honeymoon, move
to the edge, and then she will stand at the sink washing diapers,
waiting for him to come home and saying to herself, "Is this it?"
He will work at a job he does not like and be afraid he has missed
the last train to the Elysian Fields, but maybe not if he hurries.
Then he won't be able to get the car started and it'll All be her
fault.

Alternate Endings:

She smokes, becomes thin, and drinks from a bitter cup,
pouring the dregs out day after day to someone similar.

He drinks and takes his comforts where he can.

Or/And

She gathers the children together,
(whom the sins of both shall be visited upon later)
throws the stained mattress

up over the old Pontiac,
and heads out for godknowswhere.

Or

They realize they're in the same tempest, grab a piece of debris,
hang on, spell each other, miraculously survive, are eternally
grateful, and mutually generous.

Alternate Trips:

They marry in the Amherst Chapel,
build a ranch in Delmar,
take the kids to the orthodontist,
have sex every other Saturday,
make a will,
and wait.

