

Easy Rider

by Jack Swenson

i

Florence said her husband Donald had brought one of his girlfriends over to the house. She was a little blonde woman with thick glasses that made her look goggle eyed, like a bug of some kind. I thought about having a cigarette, but I put the thought aside. "I'd never sleep with someone just to get ahead," she said. I didn't answer because I was busy teasing the nipple of one of her breasts with my tongue.

ii

We wander down the hill, my wife and I and a gaggle of lost souls. My wife has the night sweats. She still smokes, so when she gets up in the morning she coughs and coughs. I ask her what she wants for Christmas. "What am I going to do," she wails? When we get home, a youngster in a frilly dress is sawing away on a violin in the middle of the lawn. I can hear a baby crying in the background. In the evening we sip wine and watch TV while the cats, purring like Harleys, drape themselves on the arms and backs of overstuffed chairs and couches.

iii

I had a headache, and my wife was reading me the riot act. I told her I had broken something, and I was afraid I wasn't going to get well. The psychologist said my worries were all in my head. When I died, she said, she was going to have me cremated and put my ashes in the cats' litter boxes. She stood there with her back to me and her dress around her ankles. She did, indeed, have a nice behind.

iv

She was a redhead with bedroom eyes. Something bothered me about the woman, and I couldn't put my finger on what it was. We had several drinks at dinner, and when we got back to her house, we were in a party mood. We sat on the sofa and jabbered away for an hour, and I forgot all about confessing my sins. I told her that the

war between my wife and me was undeclared, and that there had been no peace talks, no negotiations. Later, I asked her if she had my number, and she said yes, but she would probably call me anyway.

