

Over the Rainbow Blues

by James Lloyd Davis

"Whiskey's gone."

Beth held the blank, brown bottle up to the light, stared closely, comically, with one eye at a small remnant trembling in the bottom. She said, "Waste not want not," put the bottle to her lips, and tipped it up.

Andrea laughed, said, "What's our alternative?"

"I have some god-awful rum ... beer in the fridge."

"We sneer at beer, my dear ... give us shelter in the loving arms of rum."

"Coke?"

"I suppose."

"You never told me ... what was he like? What's it like?"

"Wasn't that bad. I actually liked him... a lot."

Beth shook her head. "Why, then, are you here? With me?"

"Beth, what it finally comes down to is ... he scares me."

"Oh, pooh. You? You dated that damned gangster. Now, he was scary."

"It's subtle. Mark is subtle." Andrea smiled. "Different. Entirely different. Jimmy was a teddy bear and he loved his wife. Gangsters are little boys with their women. Now... Mark? He's solitary. Solitary men are dangerous."

"He's so old. I couldn't ..."

"Bullshit, Beth. I know all about whats-'is-name. The Cong...ress...man."

"Not the same thing. I never had sex with him, you know? All that I ever was... was window dressing. The Congressman likes young boys. And girl, you must never... ever..."

"Oh, Beth, that's rich. And now I own you." Andrea laughed, threw her head back on the couch, lifted her feet, reclined there. "I got *all* your secrets now."

"Mark... he wrote you a play?"

"Opens next week. I will be famous."

"Must be a little awkward. I mean, he's made you... and you left him."

"More than that, my dear. Awkward is just the starting line."

"Why did you leave him?"

"Beth. That's not really what I wanted to talk about. In fact, I thought we were going to drink ourselves silly."

"Okay ... whatever. Rum and coke oblivion ... comin' up."

Later, curled up in the dark on Beth's couch, Andrea tried, but could only remember how it ended, and more clearly than ever before, when that ending began.

"Write me a play?" She'd asked him.

"What?" Half question, half-surprised laugh.

"Write me a play." She'd sat on his lap, played kitten, kissed his ear.

"I never wrote a play." He was nearly dismissive.

"Doesn't matter, you do wonderful dialogue."

He'd smiled. "What kind of play?"

She'd laughed, lifted one leg, shrugged her shoulders up and forward in a way that she knew accentuated her cleavage, and lapsed into a faux-Brit accent. "I don't know, re-ally. Something that will make me sound ab-so-lute-ly brilliant... something that will match my shoes."

He'd laughed then.

She'd always loved that she could make him laugh. He seldom laughed.

Suddenly, a year later, in the darkness of a hungry room, on another coast entirely, on a comfortable couch in Greenwich Village, she was angry, though with whom, she wasn't sure.

Maybe at him. Maybe not.

"Fuck you." She whispered. "Chimney-tops and hot buttered popcorn from here on out. I got what I came for."

