

Driving Over Front Lawns With You

by Jerry Ratch

I remember we were just out riding around and drinking this one night (Andy, me, Shel, probably you and another girl) when I purposely drove up on someone's big expensive front lawn, then back down into the street, and just kept driving without saying a word. Everyone in the car gave a great shout.

Do you remember me doing that?

And I remember that summer lighting a fire in my parent's fireplace in the living room and burning Lynda's "love letters," if you could call them that.

I reread each one and fed them to the flames. I didn't want to go through again that kind of pain and treachery, and figured I would just end it right then and there. It was all so false to me. I had been deceived from the very beginning, about her being a virgin, I mean. I myself was already well beyond that original virginity of the soul, and wanted to empty myself of the pain. But, of course, that never happens easily, does it? Instead I went on to become a writer, a desperado, of sorts. Something wild in nature. Reborn, in other words.

Then too every once in awhile that summer I would drive back down to Urbana to see JAM. A guy named Newton was my arch rival for her (not the apple tree Newton, more like Fig Newton) and mainly I would go back down there to make sure he was keeping his mitts off her. And that was when I came home with the brandy snifter with our initials JAR and JAM etched onto the sides. Newton was very sneaky, sniffing after her like a little poodle in heat, every time I turned my back. It was nothing personal, not serious or anything. It was more territorial, I guess.

Andy and I would just get in my car and drive all the way down there more or less on a whim. We would start drinking halfway

down because those long and narrow highways going through one small town after the next, (all of them had population signs that read exactly 1100! What are the chances of that?) well, they were just so boring, and before you knew it we would stop for a six-pack, then another, then another. And by the time we got down there I was so blitzed that I remember once I dove through the opened window to her basement apartment right into her bed.

She had snow white skin and the reddest hair — everywhere! And I remember she had this thick, creamy southern accent, even though she came from a town not more than 60 miles from Urbana. But that apparently was exactly where the dividing line for Southern accents ran. Danville, I think it was. Something like that. I think they had an Air Force base there where her dad worked.

