

(I don't know how the nights can be so long when life is so short)

by Jerry Ratch

But I think what I remember most was Lynda really letting me have it. "Right now I'm seeing this married farmer out in Western Illinois. I met him at this bar out there called the Peppermint Lounge. Boy, they sure know me out there! Funny how every town has one of those at the outskirts. Anyway, this guy has a 12 inch dick. I can barely get it all in me!"

I thought for a minute that I was going to throw up. It was Christmas vacation, 1963. I had just come back to Illinois from a semester out in California, at UCLA. I'd been saving myself for Lynda. I thought she was my one true love. (How ridiculous I felt!)

I remember staring at a cattail sticking up out of the frozen ditch water next to the road where we were parked, not very far from her grandparents' house. An old pair of underpants (probably mine from the summer before) were stuck on top of the cattail. It was waving in the winter wind blowing across the world.

"Please, Lynda, please," I begged. "Can we just do it one more time?"

She shook her head *No*, and got out of my car, and left me there with my clock running loudly on the dashboard of my hot-rod '55 Chevy.

And that was the night I was reborn.

(Just so you know. And maybe can forgive.)

I started up my car and slowly drove home in a daze. Automatically I went across the street and got my old pal Andy out of his house. He'd been asleep already. I waited for him to put his clothes on and dragged him back to my house, into the kitchen. I

don't know what hour it was, probably midnight. Under the bright kitchen light we finished off nearly a whole bottle of my father's chilled dark red Mogen David wine. My dad used to love to have a glass of that wine I remember, with a raw egg broken into it, so that you could see the yolk of the egg sliding down the inside of the glass of wine like the enormous yellow eyeball of some kind of slimy animal.

Andy and I were completely blitzed on that sweet dark wine, when my mother staggered into the kitchen in her sleeping gown, blinking under the bright overhead light.

"Jerry!" she scolded. "What are you two doing up at this hour? Get to bed, the both of you!"

"Go back to bed, Mom," I warned. "We're going to get drunk, right here." I stared up at her. "Otherwise we'll have to go out somewhere and get drunk. *Now go on back to bed!*" I was feeling a little on the mean side. I didn't care what I said, or to whom. She saw the resolve on my face.

"Jerry! What's wrong with you?"

"It's Lynda, Mom."

"Lynda?"

"Yeah," I said. "Lynda." That was all I said. There was something in the tone of my voice that made her turn around and go back to their bedroom.

"Oh," I heard her say. "Oh, dear." Then I heard her saying something to my father. "It's that Lynda girl."

"Lynda?" my father said. "Who's that?"

"Some girl!"

