

Why Don't You Just Take Off Your Top

by Jerry Ratch

You were there at the beginning almost, when I wanted to write about the dead spider I smashed on my bedroom wall, comparing it to the blue/grey smoke of the blown-off fireworks drifting overhead.

"And now the dead spider hangs on the underside of the book," I said.

"And now the dead spider drifts slightly overhead in what's left of the blue and the lightning."

"And now the dead spider is running the world."

You were there at the start of everything. Though you weren't there at the start of the treachery that was Lynda, when I came home from school at downstate Urbana the previous summer, when she said she was pregnant and we made an appointment to go see this doctor who doled out pills to get rid of this kind of thing, in his hot little upstairs hole-in-the-wall office in Chicago.

And it was a guy named John G who worked at my dad's gas station who knew this shady doctor, because he had used these pills before. John G who was married young and already had at least four children, and who knows how many more by women other than his wife.

And when we climbed into the back seat of his car to drive to the doctor's office, John G turned around from the driver's seat and put his hand right on Lynda's bare leg before starting up the engine, and said, "Why don't you just take off your top and show us your tits first?"

Because truthfully, Lynda's breasts were large, and no one could honestly miss them, unless they were willing to lie, or were blind. John G who apparently saw something about Lynda that I didn't. Because he was easily more aware of the world than me.

Myself being only six months out of the cocoon of my own virginity. My childhood, basically. And on the verge of the rebirth of my soul that had been deadened by life in the sheltered suburban wilderness of my youth. That would all change by Christmas vacation, in the next six months.

