

Kitty Cat

by John Riley

On some days--say a day you've walked the two miles to work, and it's a sunny spring morning and there is still a touch of moisture in the air from two days of rain--your dazzle takes a break. Even word dancers need rest. I did pass a liquor store on my way to work, it's true, and a college, and the YMCA where I once went to pump weights. Now I've let myself go and there is little bounce in my walk. I'm a drudge. A man who in his heart knows he let so much rush past and despite everything now, even when walking on a sunny day, can be prone to self-pity. I had a girl with petite ankles, well-turned ankles if you remember the phrase. She was graceful as a kitty-cat, loved sex in the backseat of my '57 Chevy, and had a daddy who talked about Jesus--he pronounced it "Jaysus." Before I knew her I knew two brothers who had had rickets. One was named James, the other Jimmy, and their mother drank herself into a stupor everyday. The boys had been malnourished, so when we chose teams for football they were afraid to play. Rickets make the bones soft and easily breakable and the social worker had told them to be careful. They would walk along the sideline and smoke cigarettes and laugh at every tackle. Later when the drugs came along they both got strung out and died. Life is what you make it, they say, and my mistake has been not being feline enough. I couldn't slither or disappear at a second's notice. I've been more like a poodle that's survived polio. (Now that's funny.) The girl who walked like a kitty-cat told me that white cats often have bad eyesight. She liked for me to pull her hair. I married her, I did, we even had a wedding, but she left me six months later. Why am I telling you this stuff? A classy man would torch this paragraph, but I've never been burdened with class. I'm a spooker who is here to tell you that although it's a sunny and a beautiful day, and the Dalai Lama is wiser than me, at the end of the feast you're left with a mess.

