

Hardaway's Poems Piss Off DC Bigwig

by Mathew Paust

Mundaigh held up a spiral notebook. "We damned near got into a fistfight over this before I even knew what he wanted to see me about. I had it in my briefcase. He demanded to see everything I had in there." Mundaigh waited a beat for his guests to express interest in the notebook, and when they didn't he slapped it back onto the desk. "It's a collection of poems. Gary Hardaway. He really lays it on the line. Gladstone called him a 'goddam nihilist'--his words. I begged to differ. Told him Hardaway's poems speak no ideology. They're strictly realistic. Strictly. Most of his stuff is dark as the void we're all facing whether we admit it or not, but he sprinkles in just enough humor to keep you from curling up on the floor sucking your thumb. I told Gladstone the poems expressed the outlook of an unequivocal entropist. I knew he didn't know what I meant, which is probly another reason he hates me. Called me a self-righteous piss ant. Said Hardaway was one, too, and that he probly smirks just like me. He picked the book up, sneering at it. Called it trash, and said its presence in his office 'sullied the room'--his words again. I took hold of it and jerked it away—I think the plastic binding scratched his hand--and started to put it back in my briefcase. He got up, this gorilla, and started coming around the desk, stomping his feet. Shook the floor like an elephant. His face got dark red, nearly purple. I was afraid he might have a stroke. No, cancel that. I wasn't afraid. I didn't care what happened to him, and I'm not usually like that. I was ready to punch the fat bastard in his fat face. His balloon nose, actually.

"One of his assistants came out of nowhere and took my arm and led me to another room to wait while 'the Senator takes care something that just came up,' but I knew it was so they could calm him down. I felt like laughing in his face. When I went back in after

fifteen or twenty minutes he was completely different, like he wanted to be my buddy. Gave me a glass of whiskey and a Cuban cigar. 'Call me Bart,' he kept saying. Barking, is how it sounded. Spooky."

[link to full chapter in Author's Note]

