

Carpe Diem

by Philip F. Clark

It happens like this: it's a normal day.
You take the train. You see the same people
most days: the Mexican woman,
perhaps a mother, tired from work
she has done all night, who
only wants to go home; the student,
frazzled and rushed, cramming
for a morning's class exam,
furiously taking notes;
the handsome businessman,
dressed in pinstripes once again,
combing his fingers through his hair,
off to the big deal; the redhead with the
faded t-shirt that says, "Carpe Diem."
Ah yes, the pleasure of the moment,
without concern for the future.
And as you try to read, he appears.
No, not in front of you, but somewhere
just behind your eyes. You hear the sound
at the end of an argument, just before
the kiss; you see a shirt fall to the ground
in late summer; you watch him read
as his mouth moves quietly with each page;
you feel his hand in the cold hold yours back,
which he seldom did.
The train lurches and the conductor
chides the next stop. You come back
to the crowd pressing in. There is a scent
you remember, his hair after sex.
His body in full sun. People murmur,
laugh, curse the sick passenger;

eyes averted or intent. The Mexican
woman has a rosary out; the student
gives up. What was it you thought to seize?
He stands there still, just behind you,
and you think of the days still ahead.
You stop reading and watch him
fix dinner extravagantly; hear him
attest that his life was a hard one,
but that he came through it.
But so did you.
"Don't stand in the door!" Who listens?
And then at some point, he fades.
You have missed your stop,
but are finished with filling graves.

