

Something Big

Half of us in Internal Audit at Enterprise
were working on something big. Accounting
just paid the bills, you understand.
Jones studied astrology with Madam Katrina.
Leilany tangoed. I'd have my novel someday,
an audit of the American Dream, and I wrote
my observations and conversations in a ledger
at my desk. Dorma's passion was greeting cards,
drawn and rhymed under her pseudonym *Dear Heart*.
One night, in the middle of Graphic Art 205,
Dorma was discovered by a boutique owner.
We began waiting for the day she would strike out
on her own. And waiting. Supporting her
as best we could, but talking among ourselves
about the downturn in public sentimentality,
the trouble it spelled for the greeting card industry.
Then, Karmody, the marathoner, got news
the deal with the boutique was off. We jumped
into action, baking casseroles and pies. Gracie made
Dorma a Mardi Gras King cake from her new line
of desserts. That was how sorry we were.

Gig ‘Em Ags

I walked into Duke Calabrese’s office to ask about a voucher sample. At first I didn’t see him. I only heard heavy breathing. Then I saw the back of his red head bobbing up and down behind his desk. “Forty-seven, forty-eight, forty-nine—” “What the hell, Duke?” I said. He said it was tradition at A&M for cadets to do push-ups after every Aggie touchdown. It was something he did now when he finished an audit segment under budget. Maybe *that* was it, I thought. *Pride. Spirit.* I hadn’t gone to a big state school, just a liberal arts college with a lousy basketball team. No cheerleaders. All *I* had were my grandpa’s Irish jokes, a recipe for half-baked Alaska, “Mighty Fortress” and a handful of other Protestant fight songs. That same week, I glued root beer candies to my calendar on the wall—a kind of advent tree—opening one each day to count down the audit. But what was the use? Where was the pageantry?

Second Act: A New Leaf

(Take One)

From her calls for action and vows to cut her losses, I gathered Renee was directing her next movie, casting me, her close friend, as the test audience for a plot twist that would resolve her contradictions and bring into focus enabling projections—zooming past what hadn't panned out, until her dialogue took on its signature surrealism. "To be quite honest," she would begin, and go on to lie fantastically about the discipline she had recovered, the riveting purpose with which she was rededicating her career, now that she no longer kept a ledger of mistakes, only outtakes.

(Take Two)

"That's the last time I drink upside-down margaritas in a dental chair," Renee said, proclaiming the weekend as part of a bygone era of command performances and desk-top romances that had flourished during her reign as *Fabulous Party Girl* at Enterprise. But the bright idealism of a Caesar salad at her desk with unsweetened tea and the latest quarterlies struck me as the ceremonial gesture of a Romantic Age already in its twilight. In the crunch of Romaine leaves you could hear the Neo-Booze period, marching toward Wednesday's happy hour at Waves.