Last Year at Betty and Bob's: An Adventure

Sher Doruff

Published by Punctum Books

Doruff, Sher.
Last Year at Betty and Bob's: An Adventure.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/84175

For content related to this chapter
https://muse.jhu.edu/related_content?type=book&id=2921800
Cyan Betty drew the short stick for the task of sorting and packing the stuff IRB left in their studio cubicle. No Betty volunteered for this emotionally charged job so it fell to lots. All agreed that the result was cosmically appropriate. CB was RB’s spectral shadow and by extension, IRB’s sleuthy ghost.

Found amongst a variety of artifacts, toiletries and clippings were:

- three moldy tangerines and a half-eaten box of sesame crackers
- Red Betty’s rat mask
- a college photo of Black B with unknown chums
- a wrinkled map of Andalusia
- twenty-five handmade marbles from a BAP boutique
- a box of color gel cutouts in an array of shapes and sizes plus a swatchbook, a color temperature calculator and a note from Bob that read “For your vicarious pleasure.”

On their bookshelves CB found among others:

- a first edition of Gertrude Stein’s Blood on the Dining Room Floor
- a paperback of Benjamin’s The Storyteller
— three hardbound university textbooks on Sensation and Perception, Photography by Infrared: Its Principles and Applications and Practical Gamma-ray Spectroscopy
— James Merrill’s Changing Light at Sandover
— Maggie Nelson’s Argonauts
— Red Betty’s signed copy of Angela Davis’s Blue Legacies and Black Feminism
— a dog-eared copy of Queen Bess, Daredevil Aviator

In IRB’s vinyl collection, CB found the ancient Hot Rats LP and made a connection she couldn’t explain. Her mind maps often resembled unfurled twine so this wasn’t unusual. She knew enough to know that IRB loved Zappa and the early Mothers though she personally couldn’t understand what prompted such delight in a Gen Z. Then she saw the little rat stamp on the bottom right side of the cover and realized it had been a gift from Red to Infra-red. Scanning the circular yellow label she was struck not only by its color but by the title of the third cut on Side One, “Son of Mr. Green Genes.” It impressed her for its eerie resonance to The Bettys’ current dilemma, abbreviated to a singsong “No Greens. Strange genes.”

She dropped the needle on the platter and let the tune scratch it way to its upbeat conclusion. Searching for more information on a band she knew nothing about CB found the lyrics to the original “Mr. Green Genes” on the Uncle Meat album. In this dirgey ballad were clues that had not yet found a mystery to cleave to. Kinda brilliant she thought.

※

Eat your greens
Don’t forget your beans & celery
Don’t forget to bring
ZappaZ

Your fake I.D.
Eat a bunch of these
MAGNIFICENT
With sauerkraut
MMMMMMMMMMMM
Sauerkraut
Eat a grape, a fig
A crumpet too …
You’ll pump ‘em right through
Doo-wee-ooo

Eat your shoes
Don’t forget the strings
And sox
Even eat the box
You bought ‘em in
You can eat the truck
That brought ‘em in
Garbage truck
MMMMMMMMMMMMMouldy
Garbage truck
Eat the truck & driver
And his gloves
NUTRITIOUSNESS
DELICIOUSNESS
WORTHLESSNESS

Thanks to CB’s discovery, “Mr. Green Genes” and “Son of …” made aural appearances at IRB’s life celebration in the BAP atrium. Bettys with witchy tendencies hoped that acknowledging the relational forces between dead reds and unborn greens might set the conditions for alchemical success. It was considered a bizarre proposition, a dangerous symbiosis. They realized their concerns were
dining on a conceptual tectonic plate. Necessity was now urgency. Or, urgencies were now necessary. They hadn’t yet figured out the proper semantic order. They did conclude they needed to straightaway sharpen their improvisatory skills.