Last Year at Betty and Bob's: An Adventure

Sher Doruff

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White on White

Why the fuck I ever picked the white moniker I’ll never understand. Seemed bright and pure back then. Like light. Like the most brilliant neutral pigment when squeezed out of a Windsor and Newton tube. Remembering the smell of oils alone brings back another era. Like Rauschenberg’s still wet white paintings that once hung as set design in the Black Mountain College cafeteria while Olson recited on a ladder and Cage fiddled with a radio and Merce danced on the tables. I was there sitting in a corner next to Annie wishing us girls would dare to take the lead more. What was up with that wishing business? Wimps we were then. God, imagine a bobby-soxed wannabe artist in 501 denims. You know you had to sit in a hot bath in those days to get the shape to mold to your body. Nothin’ like the pricey jeans these days with more holes than fabric. Naïve, full of hope was I. Loved the veggies we grew in the garden. And famous white, male artists aside, the relational subject/object discussion passed from philosophers to poets like Olson in the first half of 20C is now de rigueur theory as far as I can tell. It all feels redundant to me but then I’m a closet elitist. They tell me I spill my true allegiances when I’ve had a couple.

I know the others think I’m a nostalgic, marginally conservative fool at this point. I think they feel sorry for me
that I’ve got to promenade as White Betty. Having to take responsibility for every Caucasian obscenity ever is too much for one cracker to bear. At least my chosen attire is millennial pinkish, like white cotton washed with a red towel. In fact, that’s the truth of it. My favorite white sweats got mixed up in a color load and I’ve been off-white ever since. Dirty white. I tried to do a switcheroo like Betty Bob and corner the Betty White trope while she burned popular. That didn’t work out for obvious reasons. I always tell the girls they don’t have a sense of humor but that’s not really accurate. Most do though a couple are goddamned strident. Can’t blame ’em though. Times are tough again. We waltzed through a couple decades where hope was still on the table. Seems to me it got chewed up, puked out. I try not to rely too much on my memories of different times and stay present to the present you know what I mean but it’s fuckshit difficult. Don’t get me started on what is was like to be a lezzie in the 60s when a girl like me didn’t even know the name of the “condition.” Thumbing through encyclopedias in the public library was no help at all lemme tell you in trying to figure out why my body was acting peculiarly at pajama parties.

But I want to say a little something about loss. Steer clear of politics and stick with life journey themes. Put delicate questions out there like whether or not we see white light or dark light as we depart? There’s so much written about the last exhale but me, I wonder about that last blink, the color behind the eyelids? The Ganzfeld effect.

Only Betty Bob and I remember Blue at this point. Red is such a shero by now I doubt there’s much truth left to her narrative. But that’s OK. She’s writ Shibuya Square large and deserves the attention. Losing Infra hurt bad. Their fall, like we used to say, as we always used animals for every cruel analogy, was “the straw that broke the camel’s back.” If a Betty tries to tell you they’ve moved on don’t
believe ’em. We’re all pretty desperate, finding religion in our own ways to compensate for ... to compensate for ... what exactly? Now that I say it I don’t godforsaken know what I mean. Substitution? Is that it? Replacing a vibrant material presence with a vibrant immaterial presence? I know I’m saying this wrong and Orange and Vermillion would be up my shorts about it. But for fuck’s sake, we’re all witches after all, working on different recipes towards a whole gamut of middles and ends. Some want peace, others revenge, some take it on the cheek others throw bricks and hot bottles. You know, just before Red fell she was contemplating getting a gun. She kept telling these stories about her brother Bobby’s BB rifle. Privately she told me, coz she thought I’d understand given my diversified life experience and all that she was fed up waiting for something good to happen, for the tide to turn. She was ready, almost ready, to fight bloody. Ready, reddy, to “eat the truck and driver and his gloves.” I had no fuckin’ clue what that meant but I certainly understood her enraged desperation. Never got the chance to really talk with her about tactics. It all ended in a blip and a tick. During Infra’s wake with that lament blasting, I understood. I think. Maybe. Finally made a connection to colonial cannibalization the younger ones talk about now, remembered something about the Brazilian surrealist, what was his name? Oswaldo, no, uhm, something like that. We grappled with that manifesto at Black Mountain.

But here we go. I try to stay on topic and spill my guts over Red and Infra and as always I tend to bend the end.

I think I’ve lost the ability to grieve.