
Plowland of Dreams

Glenn B. Wilson English 6

The same people were walking by. Patricia watched them from the cafe table, not remembering how many times she had seen them pass. The wind rose from down the street and brushed the checkered table cloth against her leg. She shifted her feet beneath the chair. She knew Without looking that the checks were red and white. They always had been.

She pulled the straw of her julep toward her mouth. The piano behind her, under the canopy, played the same tune. The notes drifted through the same air, across the patio and past her ears. She always heard them. She always listened to them as she looked across the table at Gregory as he spoke.

"So, Patricia," he said, as he always said, "you are to leave us."

She bent over to pull a fallen sock up her calf. Gregory kept speaking to where she had been.

"I envy you your adventures to come." He pulled a cigarette from his pocket and lit it.

Patricia sat back up and stuck her tongue at him and crossed her eyes.

"When I was fifteen," he continued, without noticing the face she made, "there were so many, many things I wanted to do and see."

"And so many things you have yet to do," Patricia added and looked away.

"And so many things I have yet to do," Gregory said. He put the cigarette to his mouth.

"Yes," Patricia said as she looked back and past his shoulder at the people passing in the street. "Some chapters from now, when I am older, you will want to take me home and make love to me."

She fished a piece of ice from her glass and threw it at the back of

an old man as he walked by. It bounced hard off his hat. He didn't notice. He never did.

"You are so young," Gregory said. He let smoke escape from his mouth. It rose, as usual, around his face and into the sky.

Patricia watched as it drifted higher into the blue sky held up by the uneven horizon of buildings. She didn't like that sky. It was always blue. She liked the changing sky she knew from the dream.

Once, in an earlier chapter, when she was five, she had gone to bed earlier than usual. She didn't remember why she went to bed early that night. Perhaps it wasn't written. All she remembered was waking up in the middle of a field that stretched in rows green and yellow forever under a wide and orange sky. There was no sun, but there was light. Bright orange light. The alternating green and yellow rows shone in that light. They were smooth and rounded and as long as she could see.

She sat there in her sleeping gown, in the middle of the field, scared at first to stand for fear of falling into that new sky. Finally, after staring into the orange for she didn't know how long, she stood. All around her she could see forever further across the green and yellow to the orange horizon. There was a slight wind. It felt good. She stood there and looked all around with her hair brushing at her neck. She liked it all. It was nothing like she had seen before. It made her feel more than her bed or home or any scene she had ever been in before made her feel. She wanted to stay. But the field and sky began to fade and soon were gone and that chapter was over.

She had gone to bed earlier than usual countless times before. But that was the first and only time she had that dream. She tried to go back immediately, but she couldn't find it. She couldn't find it anywhere. She could go to whatever scene she wanted, whenever she wanted; go in and out of them through the spaces between them, finding herself in the proper place and age and dress. But she couldn't find the dream. Not when she wanted. It would appear again, twice, but never when she was looking.

She thought about it as she watched the smoke from Gregory's cigarette disappear against the blue sky as Gregory spoke.

"There are so many things you will get to do," Gregory told her. "Yes, over and over," she thought. "All sorts of wonderful things. I will get to have you touch my knee in just a moment."

"All sorts of wonderful things," Gregory said as he put out his cigarette. He brushed his fingertips across her knee.

"Don't stare off into your drink," he said

She turned her face from the sky and faced him.

"There is nothing to fear in the world," he told her, looking into her

eyes. "The passage of time is beautiful."

"So you say," she said to him.

"It grows warm and then cold as it always does, having many seasons for you." His finger left her knee.

Patricia looked at him. He would touch her again on the knee. Twice. "A motif," she thought to herself. "Twice more. First, when I am twenty-eight.

I will be returning home, some chapters from now, for the first time since leaving at fifteen. I will be walking down this street. I will stop at the cafe and see Gregory sitting at this table. He will look the same. He always does. He never changes, no matter how old I become. He will look up and see me and wave hello, as he always does in the cafe scenes. I will go and sit with him.

'My dearest Patricia,' he will always say, 'how beautiful you have become.'

I will say whatever I wish to say, or do whatever I wish to do, as I always do. He will offer and order me a drink, and then many more drinks. I will drink however many I choose to drink, and he will chat with me. He will ask me of all the things I have experienced, of all the things I have grown to know.

'There are many pleasures to be found in life,' he will say after the eighth drink. And he will put his hand on my knee.

'Time is warming for you,' he will say as he begins to stroke the flesh on the inside of my knee.

I will be able to move my leg if I wish, and his hand will stay there, under the table, moving as if further up my thigh. He will order me one more drink and then ask if I wish to go with him to his room and drink his cognac.

'From the bottle, in front of the fire,' he will say.

I am supposed to say, flustered, no, I'm sorry, I have to go, no time, and then get up and leave. I will just get up and leave.

'I will see you again, and we will talk more,' he will say as I walk from the table and the cafe and down the street. After two blocks I will turn and step into an alley and, while I'm supposed to breathe deeply and let my flesh cool, wait until the scene is over."

For more times than she could remember she turned into that alley and waited for the scene to end. Over and over, the same alley and wait. But one time she walked and turned into that alley and found the field and sky.

In the middle of the field she sat again, beneath the orange sky. She stood and stared up into the sky. She turned in place and looked to where the rows always met the horizon. She looked down to the ground under her feet. She saw her shoes, her skirt. She was twenty-eight. She felt twenty-eight. She looked about, startled.

She was five before. She should have returned to being five, and her sleeping gown.

And she noticed the rows were different. They weren't green and yellow. They were blue and pink. Things were not the same as they were before.

"It's not a scene. Not a dream in a scene," she told herself. "It's a dream. The same dream, but not the same. Again."

She began to run across the rows, smiling, and spinning, her hair spinning behind her through the slight wind. And she felt again she wanted to stay as the blue and pink forever rows faded again from view.

Gregory spoke. "Where you will go from here. What many things you will see and do." He lit another cigarette.

Patricia picked up the julep and poured a little of it over the tip of the cigarette, putting it out. Gregory put it to his mouth, inhaled, exhaled, then turned it sideways and studied it

"There are many things which tell us of time," he told her. He put his finger to the cigarette and traced down its length. "See how it burns slowly, steadily from start to finish. It will be over soon." He put it to his lips again and looked at her. "But many things happen, even in this cigarette before it is long and grey and ready to drop.

Patricia picked up her glass again and poured the rest of it onto the ground.

"Ah, you're finished," Gregory said. "Would you like another?"

"Why, of course," she said toward him, and smiled.

"Are you sure? You can have another if you wish." He put the unlit cigarette out in the tray. "How I'd love to see you again, years from now. We could discuss the joys of time, see how you've gotten along."

"You will," she told him. "Not years, but many chapters from now, toward the end, when I am sixty-seven I will be here again. And you, the same as you always will be, will sit there and offer and buy me a drink, as you always do. A brandy. For the mature, you will say. And you will say,

'The years. The years. What wonderful things. They take us on, carry us, show us places and people and things. They care for us along the way, then slowly, softly put us down.'

I may make faces at you, or tell you bawdy jokes as you, with your as always serious voice and face, reach beneath the table and put your hand on my leg and feel the loose flesh I wear in that scene.

'The cold is not bad,' you will say as you rub my thigh. "Do not fear. You must like all the seasons. The early times warmed you, and now the chill cools you slowly back down from the warmth.'

I will probably, as I usually do, drink the brandy as you pat the soft

and sagging flesh as if to comfort me. The brandy is always good.

You will smoke your cigarettes. I may take one from you and smoke it myself. It is fun to watch you smoke your empty fingers. I have become quite a smoker, if you'd like to know.

And when you move your hand from my thigh, if I have left my thigh there, I will stand and leave, as I do then. I will walk with my aged body of then to the park some blocks away, and will sit with it on the same bench there and sit. And while I am supposed to sit there and feel old and mortal, scared and sad, I will watch the park and hope to see the field and sky as I once did there."

Her old body, as usual, was heavy as she sat there watching the park and trees and waiting, when the park and trees faded and the field and sky were there.

She sat there in the middle of the field again, under the orange sky. She stood. She looked down at herself, at her legs and hands. She was sixty-seven. It was a dream again, again. And the rows were different again. They seemed new, as if freshly turned. And they were red and violet. She scanned the field. They were red and violet forever to the horizon and the sky

She began walking. The slight wind brushed at her grey hair. She walked toward the horizon, toward the orange which receded forever around her. She wanted to keep walking. She wanted to stay and walk forever, but she knew she couldn't. She knew the dream would not last, as it never had lasted before.

She stopped and looked around again, at the red and violet rows. Green and yellow, blue and pink, now red and violet.

She looked again into the sky, the orange forever sky, and she felt old, and she whispered, "blue." And the sky was blue. And fading.

Gregory put out his last cigarette of that scene. Patricia felt her sock drop around her ankle again, but did not bother with it. She would be going soon.

Gregory was speaking, as Gregory always did and will do, but she wasn't listening. She was thinking of the dream. She wanted to go.

Gregory finally said, "Well, you must go." He looked into her eyes and smiled. "I will see you again."

She stood and looked back at him. "Yes," she said.

She walked from the table, out of the cafe, and to the corner where the scene ended. She stood there and hoped the dream to roll up instead of the bus. She stood there and waited, but nothing changed.

Down the street she saw the bus.

She turned around to look to Gregory. She saw him sitting there, at the same table. He was lighting a cigarette. He looked up and saw

her and waved hello.

As she was walking toward him she looked along the street to the uneven horizon of buildings there and the crowds passing under the blue sky. The same people were walking by.

