

The Clown and Ross Perot

Jason Parry

I'm good at drawing heads. The day I learned about my head-related destiny Ratner smiled her smeared red lipstick very nicely, tousled my hair and said, "I'm sorry for you."

"Why?" I said.

"You're a miserable child and you'll never be happy," she said, loud enough for the rest of fifth grade to hear.

I nodded. It was a lie, of course, that I wouldn't be happy. But since she was an adult and always said it *and it hurt*, I could count on that statement as an accurate prediction of the future. Before that I'd been drawing a clown with balloons and flowers and the severed head of Ross Perot. That *was* a lot for a clown to hold but drawing helped me not have to listen to her. Not listening to her made me happy. But I had listened to her and *heard* her and believed her. Sometimes lies were more dependable than the truth.

"I can make him hold less. He doesn't need flowers *and* balloons," I said.

"Just come with me," she said. We walked the handicap-blue walls to the usual room. "So if you'll just come over here, Jason, just sit right here. The counselor will be out to see you in a moment." She left.

At breakfast Dad had said "Nobody gets paid extra for staying alive." I guess Ross had just said that the night before in an interview on seniority-based raises for teachers. I looked at my Ross head. Sure his tongue was hanging out of his mouth and his neck was a stump squirting blood and the clown was holding balloons *and* the severed head in one hand. I wasn't too good at drawing bodies then but I paid attention to detail. I figured I wanted to draw Ross cause Dad said stuff Ross said. And Ross said stuff about getting old people out of classrooms. Ratner's head was all dried clay and wrinkled t-shirts. But I wasn't good at bodies. I was good at heads like I said and if I wasn't going to draw a body, gravity was still in effect. Dad was a physicist. Always with the physics.

Well, it'd be rude to set a man's head on the ground all limp and to the side and I couldn't have it float there Chesire cat-like. No, that would've been rude and I wasn't rude to what I liked and I liked what I was told I liked by Dad. So I liked Ross. And if a head doesn't have a body it has arteries and a spine and fluids, lots of fluids that keep the brain from slushing around and I couldn't just put a cork in Ross's neck to keep the fluids in. Necks don't work that way. So the head was getting drawn off the ground while Ratner

talked back in math but the scene had the correct anatomy and was pretty grim. I wasn't a miserable child yet so I thought—what makes me smile? Mom had just hired a clown over for Jenn's birthday and that made her happy and when she was happy I was happy 'cause I love my sister. It didn't seem right to have Ross's head tucked under the clown's arm like a football 'cause I didn't like football at the time or supported like on a tray cause Ross wasn't at Denny's! he was in a sunny field with those cloud-trees. Ross had a thick head of hair for an old guy. He licked his lips a lot when he talked.

So I drew the hair held by the clown and Ross's tongue out of his mouth, added in a smile to the sun but it could have been happier. Dad gave mom flowers a few days before and flowers made Mom smile. So I put roses in the clown's left hand since dad gave mom roses with his left hand and always slid his other hand around her waist when he went in for a kiss. But then I remembered the weight of my head on my hand while Ratner was talking. My head was heavy. Ross's head would be heavy. I didn't want the clown's arm to get tired because he'd be holding the head for a while standing still like he was. The clown from my sister's birthday had balloons that floated. Not like the ones that didn't float when I'd blow them up. So the clown had his special clown balloons in his right hand and that's when Ratner came up and brought me to the counselor.

A few minutes later the counselor told me he wasn't equipped to handle a child with my needs. He referred me to a specialist who could help and I was on my way to destiny.