Revelations

Sandra Rizzo

St. John Fisher College

Follow this and additional works at: https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle

Part of the Creative Writing Commons

How has open access to Fisher Digital Publications benefited you?

Recommended Citation


Available at: https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle/vol1975/iss1/6

This document is posted at https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle/vol1975/iss1/6 and is brought to you for free and open access by Fisher Digital Publications at St. John Fisher College. For more information, please contact fisherpub@sjfc.edu.
Revelations

Abstract
In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"The trolley runs past the white stucco buildings, past the beautiful tailored gardens, into the heartbeat of the city. Parades march through the street trailing hundreds of black bouncing bodies. There is dancing in Bourbon Street on Mardi Gras."

Cover Page Footnote
Appeared in the issue: 1975.

This prose is available in The Angle: https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle/vol1975/iss1/6
The trolley runs past the white stucco buildings, past the beautiful tailored gardens, into the heartbeat of the city. Parades march through the street trailing hundreds of black bouncing bodies. There is dancing in Bourbon Street on Mardi Gras.

The trolley spits her out onto the pavement. She is thin, blondish. She blends. People push their way to the liquor stands set up on the sidewalks. Her body shakes, a deep pit of anticipation. Trash lies in the gutter, people lie in the gutter. Up the street a group is singing, “We all live in a yellow submarine,” Jessica stands watching. Thousands of miles away people go to buy wine. She thinks of the eight dollars she made selling her watch, feeling her change. The old man watches, tugs at her arm.

“Missy, you have some for me?”

He tugs harder, pulling her into the alley. Jessica beats his blue arms. He is gone. She remembers his breath, stale and wet, the shoes he was wearing. They curled at the toes and were cracked in the middle. Her mother had made her wear saddle shoes with good arch supports till she was thirteen. Thousands of miles away, deep valley mountains close in. The dead fish river leads to other dried rivers. Here the wide naked sea is.

Jessica drinks the red wine. Why is it she’s come? She touches her foot. It has fallen asleep. She stumps nineteen years up and down. The magnetic crowd draws her into the tide.

“He, baby, can you spare a sip of the wine?” Standing with big hands, he is demanding. “You alone?”

It must be her smile, warm wicked hook. She tosses him the bottle, shaking her head, lifting her small slender hands. “I don’t know.”

The man is after her, guessing. She turns, picks up a cup from the ground. “Help the needy. Help the poor.” Blessed are the thirsty, for they shall be satisfied.

Jessica blinks her eyes rapidly. The street is 1920, a night of neon signs. A row of strip joints posts its wares on the walls of the street. She crouches under the moneytaker, afraid to go in. His pants are smelly. He gets in her way. She glimpses the legs of a dancer. People are screaming. Money strikes the legs. The face and breasts bend to pick up the money. She is grotesquely twisted, still trying to dance. Hands reach out to her, to grab her.

“Get the hell outta here before you find yourself flat on your ass!”

Frightened, Jessica runs. Runs from the lent-out look of the face, her ho-hum routine that fills empty bellies. Empty. The street is for beggars. Jessica stops for the asking, snatches the bottle from the charitable man. It is wild beast night as the full moon shines. The little Creole man serves Southern fried chicken from his cave in the street. Jessica reaches into her pocket trying to dig beyond the lint in her nails. The fat man with thick juicy cheeks emerges, plate piled high. She feels light with a deep breath of the street stench. She floats past the fat man screaming in slow motion, snatches the food, disappears into side-street shadows. Backwards his face is contorted. His tongue hangs out. Jessica laughs, gobbles the meat.

The alley is muffled by extended brick. Jessica is a hole in a hole, making the noise of the street sound false. The cold has been
waiting in this casket hallway. It drives her out. The light breaks open upon her again, Two handsome cowboys, real Texan drawls. She wants to flow over. She winks. "Howdy partner."
The heroes of the last frontier. They follow her down the street. "What you-all doing, honey, sweet girl like you?"
Cowboys, shoot to the point, to the head. "How's 'bout a walk to the levee?"
You-all, you-all. Jessica expands, warms.
"Oh, to the levee," she sings.
Rocks piled up along a fake beach front. Jessica hears water lick the shore. Bodies lie together partly hidden by abandoned railroad shacks. The chill off the water is serious.
"Listen, sweetheart, what you all lookin foh? A pickup?"
"Maybe." Laughs. "Maybe not."
Not yet. The cowboys cannot understand. Jessica waits for the old West to vanish. She squats in the moonlight, watching the urine flow black down the rock, sees the blue-white glow of her skin. The whole world is her outhouse. Such a long way from home, squatting in the refuse of a bygone time, New Orleans should be warmer than this. She wishes she had worn a heavier jacket.
Far away Jessica hears another parade coming. She hurries to meet the noise, to beat the chill. A man has bought his lady an ostrich feather from the balloon man as the last float goes by. High in the light, iron railings block plush apartments. Smug faces hold martinis, women in Paris dresses.
"Say hello to the nice ladies, Jessica."
A man and woman lean over, toss confetti. Toss money. Crumbs to the peasants. Jessica picks up the chicken bone plates, empty cans, empty bottles.
"Hey, lady!"
Bones fly. The street is in melody. Jessica hears the screams of a woman, the sprinkle of glass. There is blood. The man is yelling for the police. The horses are charging down the narrow street. People flatten to the walls. Jessica's eyes stream, Hands wave. She watches a horse's eyes roll white. The man on top is sawing its head back and forth, Jessica waits for it to fall off. Water runs down the horse's nose. She wants to reach out and wipe the mucus away. The crowd weaves her into a rough woolen back. She slides through the mass in her rain-soaked shoes.
Jessica stands under a roof by the street. Around her, people drink, laugh, brush by her face. She can no longer see. She hears, but has stopped watching. Her lips tremble without any sense. She tries to melt into the wall, into the scenery. Out of his liquid earth eyes, the rich brown man reaches into her need. She is a ballerina from New York City traveling between engagements. Her voice goes higher, higher, crashing down on her head. She feels his arms around her shoulders. The sweat smell of his flesh is sweet. Away from the light, into the motion of the trolley, Jessica hums. He is still. She does not think where they are going. She has no history, no recollection. Just the hand against bone and the strobe of the streetlight overhead. He is moving her down the stairs into the earth.
"Hush, little baby, don't say a word."
He presses her down against the floor and strips off the outer layer of cold. His skin is so smooth, no hair. He slides down her body and breathes her life. The light explodes, deep dark rinsing past. This is hers. This she does not give up at the end of celebration.
Jessica wakes, looks to see the body stretched out across the blanket. She wants to rub her feet against his legs, hoping to wake in him the powers of the night. It isn't strange anymore, this stranger from the world, though the grey morning light casts shadows over his face. She doesn't recognize him, but the heat rises out of her body into the drizzle that is day. Jessica walks out to the dawn.