



Doris Kocher

American Dreams - Lost and Found

A short short story

On the Road² to East of Eden³ I stopped in Winesburg, Ohio⁴ to see Jimmy Higgins⁵ and Elmer Gantry⁶ who run The Hotel New Hampshire⁷ in Tobacco Road⁸. When I arrived, Elmer, my very best friend, waved at me wildly and beamed. "Hi honey, Welcome to the Monkey House⁹! How's it going in The World According to Garp¹⁰?" he asked excitedly and looked like The Great Gatsby¹¹. "Well, pretty good! It's great to see you guys again. I'm so glad to be back in Our Gang¹²," I giggled and hugged them each before I took a seat by the window to have some coffee together.

"By the way, An American Girl¹³ stopped by and asked us whether you wanted to watch how To Kill a Mocking Bird¹⁴ under The Bell Jar¹⁵," Jimmy, The Virginian¹⁶, threw in. "I think it was Maggie: A Girl of the Streets¹⁷," Elmer added with a broad grin like The Naked and the Dead¹⁸. I was flabbergasted about this strange proposal. "Are you kidding? Well, thanks, I'm fine! No killing today!" I instantly replied without hesitation. Actually I was undeniably scared to see The Bleeding Heart¹⁹ and to experience the Sudden Death²⁰ of a bird.

After coffee I asked Them²¹ to Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone²². "Oh, it's Gone with the Wind²³ some time ago," Elmer explained, so I decided to walk to Main Street²⁴ where I caught the Last Exit to Brooklyn²⁵. I slowly

walked Down These Mean Streets²⁶, watched The Plum Pickers²⁷ and talked a bit to The Catcher in the Rye²⁸ who was hanging around at one of the street corners. "Are you Waiting for Lefty²⁹?" I asked. "No, actually I'm Looking for Mr. Green³⁰, the Petrified Man³¹," he replied and smiled before he continued, "Well, he probably got Lost in the Funhouse³² but I hope he will be back soon."

After The Long March³³ I was a bit tired when I finally reached Uncle Tom's Cabin³⁴ which was a House Made of Dawn³⁵. I knocked on the door, eventually stepped inside, I Lock My Door Upon Myself³⁶ and thought of The Pastures of Heaven³⁷. "No Death in the Afternoon³⁸!" I said to myself. "Definitely not today! That's as sure as Sophie's Choice³⁹." I lay down on the sofa, stretched out comfortably and then took a nap like Snow White⁴⁰. Unfortunately my uncle, The White Negro⁴¹, did not show up, therefore I left after I had finished The Big Sleep⁴² and quickly dropped a note on the table.

Later in the afternoon I went to Cannery Row⁴³ to meet Lolita⁴⁴, my friend with The Iron Heel⁴⁵ which she got from an operation after a heavy car accident. She was painting The Portrait of a Lady⁴⁶ with her new pastels and was therefore unusually quiet. Being There⁴⁷ was very relax-

ing for me but as I did not want to disturb or distract my Dream Girl⁴⁸ from her work, I took a short walk to The Bridge of San Luis Rey⁴⁹ where I had A View from the Bridge⁵⁰.

When I gazed at the beautiful Islands in the Stream⁵¹, I noticed The Color Purple⁵² right Where Blue Begins⁵³. There was The Open Boat⁵⁴ again close to the Moon Palace⁵⁵ which reminded me so much of An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge⁵⁶ three years ago. "Weird," I thought, "I Want to Know Why⁵⁷ this makes me think again of this long forgotten meeting. I mean, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?⁵⁸ There's no reason at all for such behavior. She's only The Last of the Menu Girls⁵⁹, and actually she's a Woman on the Edge of Time⁶⁰," I tried to calm myself down.

While I was in deepest thoughts, I suddenly heard a nearby whisper. "Beloved⁶¹! Look Homeward, Angel⁶²," someone said to me. I quickly turned around and noticed Neighbour Rosicky⁶³, The Ugly American⁶⁴, who used to work as The Deerslayer⁶⁵ at Slaughterhouse Five⁶⁶. He looked at me with The Bluest Eye⁶⁷ while he was chewing on The Grapes of Wrath⁶⁸. "Are you okay?" he asked. "Sure, Tender Is the Night⁶⁹," I replied with slight irritation. "Well, but The Sun Also Rises⁷⁰," he smiled knowingly.

The two of us sat down by the water and observed quietly Pocho⁷¹, The Man with the Golden Arm⁷², who was obviously trying to do some Trout Fishing in America⁷³ although it looked more like he was Teaching a Stone to Talk⁷⁴. After a while we started a slightly unusual conversation. "Look! There is The Maltese Falcon⁷⁵ again. Yesterday One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest⁷⁶ but I managed to chase it away," Rosicky told me with great excitement while he was looking at the sky. "Funny person," I thought and felt somehow uneasy for a moment. Then he showed me The Red Badge of Courage⁷⁷ on his collar which I was to admire.

Time passed by and Rosicky told me everything about the Unholy Loves⁷⁸ of his Sister Carrie⁷⁹ who used to be called Miss Lonelyhearts⁸⁰. I at last asked him about The Confessions of Nat Turner⁸¹ who had been Rosicky's neighbor for many years but I did not get an answer from him. It was as strange as The Mysteries of Pittsburgh⁸² that Nat Turner, The Man Who Studied Yoga⁸³, had disappeared some time ago like an Invisible Man⁸⁴ and was never seen again. "It really seems like he is The Man Who Lived Underground⁸⁵," I remarked and tried to make a joke but Rosicky only looked at me without saying a single word. After a while he sighed, "Well, A Good Man Is Hard to Find⁸⁶. As a matter of fact The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter⁸⁷." He paused and then quickly continued as if he wanted to distract me, "Come on, let's visit The Old Man and the Sea⁸⁸. We should help him Setting Free the Bears⁸⁹." I was more than confused about his remarks and not quite sure about his further plans but as we were starting to freeze up to The Skin of Our Teeth⁹⁰ like in a real Blackberry Winter⁹¹, we finally decided to leave and took A Streetcar Named Desire⁹² to Manhattan Transfer⁹³.

We got off at The Bingo Palace⁹⁴ where we first intended to have a late Breakfast at Tiffany's⁹⁵ but as they only served A White Heron⁹⁶ on toast, which we both found rather odd, we immediately decided to have a Naked Lunch⁹⁷ instead. This was definitely The Real Thing⁹⁸. "Would you like to listen to The Grass Harp⁹⁹ for a while?" the waitress asked politely. "Not really, thanks! I prefer Jazz¹⁰⁰, Ragtime¹⁰¹ or Sonny's Blues¹⁰²," I answered short and sweet. "Sure of You¹⁰³?" she continued. I nodded, "Thank You, M'am¹⁰⁴!" Then we left and took The Elevator¹⁰⁵ to the entrance hall.

"Do you see the Cat on a Hot Tin Roof¹⁰⁶?" my unusual companion wanted to know all of a sudden and pointed at the building next to the Heartbreak Hotel¹⁰⁷. "Yes, of course," I mumbled rather bored. "Shall we Set this House

on Fire¹⁰⁸?" he unexpectedly continued with a slight grin. "What? Are you crazy?" I shouted excitedly. "Do you really want to cause the Death of a Salesman¹⁰⁹, of All the King's Men¹¹⁰ and of many other innocent people?" I furiously yelled at The Crucible¹¹¹ because I could already imagine the Barn Burning¹¹². "Well, it's because of The Hungry Ghosts¹¹³ who live there," he replied nervously. "They've taken away All My Sons¹¹⁴," he went on and stared at the building with dull eyes. "So what?" I asked bewildered and In Cold Blood¹¹⁵. "Twenty Years at Hull-House¹¹⁶ are enough for me. It's worse than the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn¹¹⁷ and Moby Dick¹¹⁸," Rosicky continued with a strange expres-

sion on his face while obviously searching for something in his pocket. He eventually handed me The Scarlet Letter¹¹⁹, stepped back and suddenly began to cry like The Lost Boy¹²⁰ of the True West¹²¹. "What's the matter with you?" I asked concerned but Rosicky only shrugged his shoulders. "This must be The Awakening¹²²," I said to myself and tried to console The Outsider¹²³ with a Lullaby¹²⁴. "Come on, buddy, don't feel so miserable. Why don't you say A Farewell to Arms¹²⁵?" I added with a fairly low voice. Then all of a sudden and for me completely unexpected The Man Who Was Almost a Man¹²⁶ stopped sobbing, slowly turned around and disappeared silently From Here to Eternity¹²⁷.

Notes

- 1 Studs Terkel (1980)
- 2 Jack Kerouac (1957)
- 3 John Steinbeck (1952)
- 4 Sherwood Anderson (1919)
- 5 Upton Sinclair (1919)
- 6 Sinclair Lewis (1927)
- 7 John Irving (1981)
- 8 Erskine Caldwell (1932)
- 9 Kurt Vonnegut (1968)
- 10 John Irving (1978)
- 11 F. Scott Fitzgerald (1925)
- 12 Philip Roth (1971)
- 13 Patricia Dizenzo (1971)
- 14 Harper Lee (1960)
- 15 Sylvia Plath (1963)
- 16 Owen Wister (1902)
- 17 Stephen Crane (1882)
- 18 Norman Mailer (1948)
- 19 Marilyn French (1980)
- 20 Rita Mae Brown (1983)
- 21 Joyce Carol Oates (1969)
- 22 James Baldwin (1968)
- 23 Margaret Mitchell (1936)
- 24 Sinclair Lewis (1920)
- 25 Hubert Selby (1964)
- 26 Piri Thomas (1967)
- 27 Raymond Barrio (1969)
- 28 J.D. Salinger (1951)
- 29 Clifford Odets (1935)
- 30 Saul Bellow (1968)
- 31 Eudora Welty (1941)
- 32 John Barth (1968)

- 33 William Styron (1952)
- 34 Harriet Beecher Stowe (1852)
- 35 N. Scott Momaday (1968)
- 36 Joyce Carol Oates (1990)
- 37 John Steinbeck (1932)
- 38 Ernest Hemingway (1932)
- 39 William Styron (1979)
- 40 Donald Barthelme (1967)
- 41 Norman Mailer (1957)
- 42 Raymond Chandler (1939)
- 43 John Steinbeck (1939)
- 44 Vladimir Nabokov (1955)
- 45 Jack London (1908)
- 46 Henry James (1881)
- 47 Jerzy Kosinski (1970)
- 48 Elmer L. Rice (1946)
- 49 Thornton Wilder (1927)
- 50 Arthur Miller (1955)
- 51 Ernest Hemingway (1970)
- 52 Alice Walker (1982)
- 53 Janice Deaner (1993)
- 54 Stephen Crane (1897, 1898)
- 55 Paul Auster (1989)
- 56 Ambrose Bierce (1891)
- 57 Sherwood Anderson (1921)
- 58 Edward Albee (1962)
- 59 Denise Chávez (1986)
- 60 Marge Piercy (1976)
- 61 Toni Morrison (1987)
- 62 Thomas Wolfe (1929)
- 63 Willa Cather (1930)
- 64 William J. Lederer & Eugene Burdick (1958)

- 65 James F. Cooper (1841)
- 66 Kurt Vonnegut (1968)
- 67 Toni Morrison (1970)
- 68 John Steinbeck (1939)
- 69 F. Scott Fitzgerald (1933)
- 70 Ernest Hemingway (1926)
- 71 José Antonio Villarreal (1959)
- 72 Nelson Algren (1949)
- 73 Richard Brautigan (1967)
- 74 Annie Dillard (1982)
- 75 Dashiell Hammett (1930)
- 76 Ken Kesey (1962)
- 77 Stephen Crane (1895)
- 78 Joyce Carol Oates (1979)
- 79 Theodore Dreiser (1900)
- 80 Nathaneal West (1933)
- 81 William Styron (1966)
- 82 Michael Chabon (1988)
- 83 Norman Mailer (1956)
- 84 Ralph Ellison (1952)
- 85 Richard Wright (1978)
- 86 Flannery O'Connor (1955)
- 87 Carson McCullers (1940)
- 88 Ernest Hemingway (1952)
- 89 John Irving (1968)
- 90 Thornton Wilder (1942)
- 91 Robert Penn Warren (1946)
- 92 Tennessee Williams (1947)
- 93 John Dos Passos (1925)
- 94 Louise Erdrich (1994)
- 95 Truman Capote (1958)
- 96 Sarah Orne Jewett (1886)
- 97 William S. Burroughs (1959)

- 98 Henry James (1893)
- 99 Truman Capote (1951)
- 100 Toni Morrison (1992)
- 101 Edgar L. Doctorow (1975)
- 102 James Baldwin (1965)
- 103 Armistead Maupin (1989)
- 104 Langston Hughes (1958)
- 105 Robert Coover (1969)
- 106 Tennessee Williams (1955)
- 107 Anne Rivers Siddons (1976)
- 108 William Styron (1960)
- 109 Arthur Miller (1949)
- 110 Robert Penn Warren (1946)
- 111 Arthur Miller (1953)
- 112 William Faulkner (1954)
- 113 Joyce Carol Oates (1974)
- 114 Arthur Miller (1947)
- 115 Truman Capote (1965)
- 116 Jane Addams (1910)
- 117 Mark Twain (1885)
- 118 Herman Melville (1851)
- 119 Nathaniel Hawthorne (1850)
- 120 Thomas Wolfe (1937)
- 121 Sam Shepard (1981)
- 122 Kate Chopin (1899)
- 123 Richard Wright (1953)
- 124 Leslie Marmon Silko (1981)
- 125 Ernest Hemingway (1929)
- 126 Richard Wright (1939, 1961)
- 127 James Jones (1951)