

THE UNIVERSITY

There is a night spot in Georgetown called ~~Cambridge~~ ^{Oxford}. The population of the city, however, has renamed it The University. It is a place where one certainly gets a lot of learning, therefore the nickname is quite appropriate.

The garden of the ~~President's~~ home is right next door to the Cambridge. There is no doubt that, on quieter evenings the President and his wife feel like leaving their mansion and walking across the lawn ~~into~~ the noisy, musical nights of the University. It ~~sounds~~ ^{is} always lively at the Cambridge. I can imagine the neighbours being envious once in a while.

~~On one of these lively nights~~ ^{A few nights ago} John Stein and I were at the Cambridge. All of a sudden he let go of the lovely tall mulatto girl he was dancing with and came to me saying: "I've got to leave this place or I'll scream! I'm too far away from everything I've ever wanted."

My little Chinese partner was as soft as a kitten. Porcelain-like, she smelled of violets, felt like velvet, and talked in a purring, throaty way. In English, of course. ~~But nothing like you'd expect of~~ ^{Not at all like} an oriental. I mean, none of that high pitched sound.

John sensed what was going on my mind and said: "Stay if you like, but I must go or bust."

"Let's change partners," I suggested, "This may be what you're driving at."

As soon as I had let go of Susie he grabbed me by the wrist and shouted: "I'm nowhere. I've come thousands of miles to find out I'm still nowhere. Where do I go from here? Where did I start?"

"Johnnie, baby," I said, half jokingly, but knowing him so well, half pointedly, "you were born thirty years ago in a town called Chester. Your father was a grocer and your mother has never been anything but your mother. That's where you started."

"Don't you dare insinuate anything about my mother..."

John's sentence hung suspended, for he collapsed on the dancing floor. I panicked, and ~~I suppose I also made a scene~~ ^{Definitely lost my cool.}

~~Panicstricken, I made a scene~~

It so happened ^{are} that they ~~xxxx~~ used to scenes such as this at the Cambridge. Sailors, pimps, addicts, prostitutes; this ~~was~~ ^{is} the world ^{at} ~~of the Cambridge~~ ^{Oxford}.

John and I had been colleagues for three years. We knew the ropes, we thought. Tonight John had been a victim, I was sure.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16

Peace and love was all John and I had always wanted. Basically we were following the teachings learned at Sunday School. Only the ministers would never agree on the way we found to go about it. Yet, we always remembered Jesus and his kindness to the prostitute...

"I'm too far away from everything I ever wanted," was about the last thing John said before he passed out. Those words hit me hard. He and I were together. We were doing all the things we said we would do together. We had pissed on the Straight of Magellan. Shit on Titi-caca, for we knew what caca ~~xxxx~~ meant in Spanish. Now we were in Guyana, trying to see the birth of a nation, the beginning of a new Republic. And he passed out, leaving me cold.

"Everlasting life." But that ~~applies~~ ^{applies} only to your spiritual life. How well I remember Jimmy Craig and the day he was baptized. He was only eleven and as soon as he left the Church, while crossing the street he was ~~instantly~~ killed by a car. I often thought of that. Had he been a Presbyterian, he wouldn't be crossing ~~that~~ ^{that} that street, that day. But he chose to be a Baptist. Yet, Jimmy was a child, a holy child. If there is an everlasting life, he must be having it, But I saw him dead. Stripped of everything, just after he had been dunked into water, to symbolize to the congregation that he had ~~just been~~ died for the world and "born for Jesus". Sometimes I wondered if everyone who became a Baptist - and was really pure - would have such a fate. At any rate, I was glad I was a Methodist, had been baptized by my parents, and whatever had happened to John was anything but a sudden conversion. After all, there ~~was~~ ^{was} no baptistry at the University.

It may seem like all this took an hour. The whole ~~thing~~ ^{was} was over in a minute, though. In one minute flat John was up on his feet. These thoughts had all flashed through my mind, ~~at~~ the moment I screamed. He was all right. A sudden faintness took hold of him, as he exhaled the last puff of pot.

As he came to, John said: "I was so afraid. I felt I was far from everything, and remembered Job 29:18 - 'I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sand! How could I die in my nest, being so far away? And, why should I multiply my days, if I was dying?'"

"Barato seu." This was an expression we learned in Brazil. I never quite got the meaning, but it meant something one did because he felt like it when he ~~was~~ was on a trip.

We both laughed together. The mulatto girl tried to make him comfortable, and Susie, purring even ~~more~~ more softly now, asked us to leave the University and go to her apartment.

"Doris is o.k." Susie said, "we can all go."

"69 Queen's Lane" Susie said to the driver. And she was serious. We laughed, of course. But that was her address. Then, she coolly said: "I make it a point to have interesting addresses. They always add a little something to my personality."

69 Queen's Lane ~~was~~ was a frame house with four apartments. At least, that's what I gathered from the names under the doorbell: 12: Mr and Mrs. Singh, 14: Mr. and Mrs. Ramsod; 22: Mr. and Mrs. S. Neville; 24: Miss Fung and Miss Field.

"Who is Miss Field?" I asked Susie.

"Doris," she said.

And there we were at apartment 24, 69 Queen's Park Road.

John and I had another laugh together. In Brazil, again, we had learned that 24 was a number that stood for the English word "queer".

We laughed at how clever these girls could ~~get~~ be, and appreciated Jesus even more for being good to Prostitutes.

"Did he learn all He knew from them?" John asked.

I never answered him. I only laughed.

But I still wonder.

Continues