

Wilderness House Literary Review 19/2

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The Birds and The Bees: A Coal Fields Memoir

Every year there was a band festival in one of the larger cities of West Virginia where all the high school bands gathered and competed. This usually took place in either Charleston or Huntington and lasted an entire weekend. The bands traveled by bus and stayed in a local hotel for a night or two and then returned home in time for school on Monday. The year I got my introduction to the birds and the bees the festival was held in Huntington. The band traveled there early Saturday morning and performed that day and returned home the next day. During the trip my mother, the band's conductor, was completely occupied. Being too young, there was no place for me so mom hired Betty, one of her high school students to take care of me. This involved a little cooking and that was about it. Betty was the sister of a boy that I had played with on a few occasions. She was sixteen years old with short red hair and freckles. Betty came from a mining family that lived a few miles down the road. She was fit and seemed industrious although I could tell that she hadn't had much experience at that sort of thing. In the coal fields no one did that kind of work so the lack of experience was not unusual. Similarly, I was not used to having someone who was paid to look after me. I was barely eleven and not since I was much younger had anyone been assigned to do that.

Betty was friendly and easy to get along with and seemed comfortable around our little house so I accepted her well enough. She didn't try to mother me and maybe that was why I thought that I could do things that I wouldn't do if my mother was there. She seemed more like my friend. The weather was warm and there was no need for stoking the coal burning stove so all there really was to do was the cooking and the dishes. With a little prying right off I found out that she didn't have a boyfriend. And I also found out that she was not against the idea.

We had dinner and Betty washed the dishes before deciding to take a bath. That's when Roger, an older brother of one of my classmates who lived at the end of the access road out back, stopped by. Roger was about the same age as Betty. I figured that he must have heard that Betty was there because he had never visited before. The three of us spoke for a while until Betty went into the bathroom to take her bath. Still a little confused about Roger's sudden appearance, I asked him point blank,

"What are you doing here? Did you come to see Betty?"

Roger looked away and seemed to search for an answer.

"No I just came by to get some sheet music from your mother,"

"Aw, come on, Roger, tell the truth. You came to see Betty didn't you?"

"Really I came for some sheet music." Roger insisted.

I was getting excited. Maybe I could make a match of the two while my mother was away.

"Betty doesn't have a boyfriend," I said. "Do you have a girlfriend?"

"I don't have a steady girlfriend," Roger replied. "Did Betty say she doesn't have a boyfriend?"

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I noticed that Roger looked a little interested and yelled toward the bathroom door, "Hey Betty, guess what, Roger doesn't have a girlfriend. Isn't that nice?"

Betty sang back in a lilting tone.

"I don't know. Does Roger think it is nice?"

I looked at Roger and laughed.

"Do you?"

Roger sat there stone faced saying nothing as I joked with him trying to get him to say something. Seeming to finally gather his thoughts he looked at me blankly.

"I don't know. Depends."

"On what," I laughed. "What does it depend on?"

Roger thought for a moment and just as seriously as before said, "It depends on Betty."

"It all depends on you, Betty," I yelled. "Come on Roger, let's go into the kitchen where we can better hear what she's saying."

I led the way into the kitchen which the bathroom was off of. Only a door was separating Betty from us now. Roger and I could hear Betty humming in that lilting voice as we stood there at the kitchen table. Suddenly the bathroom door jerked halfway open and there with only a towel around her hair stood Betty. Her body was perfectly formed with firm breast and a large red triangular bush at the junction of long shapely legs. Poised with one knee cocked ever so slightly over the other she smiled and said, "Ya Hoo" before quickly closing the door.

She was the first naked woman I had ever seen. Becoming more excited I started moving back and forth from the table to the kitchen wall as I laughed and looked at Roger.

"Did you see that? What are we going to do?"

Roger appeared dumbfounded. Since I saw no direction coming from Roger I decided to take charge.

"Let's get her, Roger. We have to get her."

I knew enough about sex to know that it involved the male and female genitals coming together but the details and mechanics of the coming together, I was completely ignorant of. However I didn't care. I thought that I knew enough. Roger still had not moved when the bathroom door opened and Betty stepped out barefoot, wearing a fluffy blue robe and the same towel on her head. She stood framed in the bathroom door and broadly smiled at me and Roger.

"Let's get her, let's really get her," I said.

I ran to her side and grabbed her arm. She just looked at me, still smiling.

"Come here and help me Roger," I said. "Come here! We're going to

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get you Betty. Come on Roger, get her other arm and let's take her into the bedroom."

Betty smelled sweet and clean and became almost demure as Roger stepped over and took her other arm while I, pushing and pulling, steered us all through the bedroom door to the bed. Any resistance by Betty was without words or conviction. I pushed her back onto the bed and stood back looking at her lying there on the bed with her feet still on the floor. Her eyes were closed and she didn't move or make a sound as I picked her legs up and placed them on the bed so that she was fully stretched out. Then I removed her robe and the towel as Roger watched in the semi-darkness. I removed my pants and underwear to discover that I was fully ready. I was not very big and what I was ready for I was not certain of but I intended to find out as I mounted the much longer Betty. As I furiously stabbed my erection into Betty's red bush she suddenly opened her eyes and spoke for the first time since leaving the bathroom.

"Easy there superman, you're going to break that rod of steel if you don't slow down. You better take a break."

That made me hump that much faster until I began to get winded and tired. Finally I admitted to myself that I didn't know how to do it and got off Betty. While trying to catch my breath and feeling a little defeated I again started trying to get Roger involved. Surely he knew how to do it.

"Come on Roger, you do it," I implored.

Roger was sitting on the edge of the bed silent as ever but by then he had Betty's head on his thigh and was stroking her hair. However, I decided to hurry things up. Roger offered no resistance as I unbuckled his belt and urged him to get on with it. I reached into his pants and withdrew his penis, letting it lie there. Again I urged him to perform but soon realized that nothing was going to get accomplished that night. Roger seemed so gentle and quiet with Betty, just sitting there stroking her hair with his thing lying out. I couldn't make any sense of the whole episode and decided that maybe some things just were. However I knew that I must learn some more about how to do it before I tried to do that again. Shortly thereafter Roger gathered himself up and went home. I knew that they never did do it because I had watched until Rodger left. Betty remained in bed till the next morning and I fell asleep reading on the couch. No one ever mentioned the events of that evening and I knew no one ever would. For a while though it sure was exciting.