

FEATURE PAGE

HORATIO

— JACKIE WEBSTER

He sat in a corner of the Bus Depot and waited. The Bus was late and the seats were hard and now and then he sighed. But on the whole he was patient. Horatio was an Artsman and three years of sharing the campus with the Foresters and Engineers had taught him patience. It was warm in the Depot and he was drowsy, but he did not fall asleep. He opened his pale blue eyes very wide and let his glasses slip down just a bit on his nose where they pinched. It worked. He kept awake. Time passed and the bus came.

It thundered to a halt amidst a swirl of dust and an eager crowd rushed from the Depot and the battle was on. Horatio did well. He kept his glasses on his nose, his jelly beans in his hand and captured a seat. Mission accomplished, he relaxed; the driver relaxed, closed the door and started the engine. But before he managed to pull away from the curb, the ticket agent came running from the office and agent and driver held a conference outside the bus. Then the driver re-entered and enquired if Miss Sylvia Throckmorton Henderson was a passenger. There was no reply. Apparently Miss Sylvia travelled by train. The agent seemed satisfied, and the driver started the engine again, and they were on their way — back to Fredericton, with the Foggy City far behind and exams just thirteen weeks away. Horatio sighed.

After a time Horatio took stick of his fellow passengers. There were a few men, a few women, the inevitable crying baby, and across from him, another student with a crew and a pipe and beside him a very attractive girl. The girl was reading and Horatio had ample opportunity to observe her charms unnoticed. This he did and was pleased with what he saw. Her hair was long and black — Horatio preferred to call it "raven". She wore no make-up except lipstick, and her eyes, when occasionally she glanced from her book, were dark and haunting. Perhaps she was not beautiful, but to Horatio who had had little experience either first or second hand with girls, she spelled glamour.

Horatio settled back in his seat and thought about her. She had an air of mystery, he decided. Perhaps she had some hidden vice which accounted for her haunting eyes. To Horatio who had no vices at all, this made her infinitely more desirable. Perhaps she was a spy — a Soviet Spy forced to betray her country against her wishes. Or perhaps she was the girl the police were looking for in connection with an International Dope Ring. Horatio had read about it, and Raven Hair might be the one. If so, perhaps it was his duty to hand her over to the RCMP (or better still the City police) when they arrived in Fredericton. Chills ran up Horatio's spine at the thought of those dark eyes fixed on him reproachfully. Horatio sighed again and suddenly became aware of a strange quiet about him, above the noise of the bus. Then he realized to his horror that he had been daydreaming aloud. He slunk down into his seat with but one comforting thought — thank heaven he was an Artsman. Had he been a Forester, his embarrassment might have been shared by everyone on the bus.

He sat huddled in the corner of his seat to avoid the stares of his fellow passengers and gradually settled back to normal. And at that point Raven Hair upset the apple cart by moving into the seat beside him. Horatio was so moved with embarrassment that he chose to ignore her. He clutched his jelly beans and stared out the window. Then Raven Hair spoke. Her voice was beautiful. "You and I", she said, "are getting off at the next stop".

Horatio continued to ignore her and kept his eyes fixed on the heart of the Geary woods. He found no joy at the prospect of being alone, even with Raven Hair, in the heart of the Geary woods. And obviously she was pulling his leg, taunting him about his day dreaming. But something else became obvious, however, when she jabbed him non too gently in the ribs with an unmistakable object. He changed his mind about the Geary woods quickly and pulled the cord. Raven Hair smiled at him chummily and followed him from the bus out onto the gravelled road. The bus disappeared around a bend and Horatio's heart sank as he realized he had left his jelly beans behind him on the seat. But he had little time to worry about that with Raven Hair smiling at him hauntingly and lightly holding an automatic in her beautifully manicured hands. Neither spoke, but to Horatio's credit, he tried. He kept trying with no success and then out of nowhere, it



ROCKSLIDE

*Under the blinding blue-white sky
He came quietly, searching
The cracks of each cliff
Round a deathless valley
For star-like flowers
His purpose was strong
And his lean hand sure steady
When he reached out to gather
The star-fatal flowers.
But a rock gave way—
His cleated boot faltered an instant
And clung to the slivering cliff,
Then dropped
Down the slope
Towards the snarling white snow
Of the rock-tortured stream
Where the flowers were crushed by his fall.*

Margret H. Cunningham

Queens May Object We Don't

If you think some of the poetry in the Journal and the Commentator is out of this world you've never seen a rag from UNE called Fiddlehead, or the UBC's Thunderbird (known also as the fuddlehead and the Dusder bird). A fiddlehead in case you don't know is a young fern frond which goes very well in salads, or even fried, and is one Maritime delicacy (like cod's tongue) which is little known in these parts. The thunderbird is a beast with a very ugly mug which usually rates as top man on West Coast totem poles, but nobody thought of eating one as far as I know. Both of these rags print reams of poetry, which has to be read to be believed. Pipe this (from the Fiddlehead):
"The bird jumped at bubbles
And bit a rainbow."

That's it. All of it. They ain't no more. How does that get writtin? Does the poet (ess) write a bit and then whittle it down to size, or does the editor edit and edit until there is only a stub left? Or maybe he says, "This poem stinks, but get that bit about the birds and the rainbow; that's worth printing". That's how the journal-opete rates anyway.
Poetic Pills—Queens Journal.

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