

Raymond Deej

I've Been Sulking over Dennis and His Gold

Thereafter and for a few weeks I did porn, which is a condition born of space and a brief window of time.

Consider a barbeque. You share vodka and scampi with a pucker-lipped yapper, Dennis, who happens to say words in the best ways possible. He sees you. He reads you. Your trash skin and sinking sockets. He's like a medium. He says life is long and terrible and this catches you square. Truth. And so follows a handshake, even a big hug, then a once-lurking black van and but 40 minutes to a place and a mattress aside an equally terrified, rip-torn soul.

He calls "*Action!*"

And you do it. Oh hell, you just do it. *But she does it too!* The event registers as a joint struggle—a welcome shock. You cling to her. It's the both of you and none other. No recourse. No eject. Dennis won't shut the camera 'til it's done. Suddenly you grow together because you have to. You are become a formidable, heat-seeking duo.

And Dennis is thrilled.

"You jagoffs sold it! *Heeeyyyyy* we're cookin' with GAS now!"

Then you clothe with your backs turned and exit out separate doors, never to meet again. Except for once in the produce section at Don's. You catch sight at distance and stare.

It's exhilarating, uncanny. Then she looks away and asks a nervous boy a fake question about the origins of jicama. He stammers. He is poorly trained and incoherent. But she waits. She lets him struggle until you turn and walk away. Then she's out the door in seconds. It's sad.

Nevertheless a job inevitably presents itself, as jobs are said to do for the whites. Money returns and rent and utilities go down easy once more. In fact the pay is even better than it ought to be because there's a desk and a phone and this is America. Meanwhile time and the daily erode even recent memory, and once again you come to believe in your worth. You see value there. You sit at the desk with the phone and regard yourself, calling no one.

This has been my case, to date, gainfully, and for the foreseeable future. I eat well. I've grown an elitist paunch. I shave and

manicure and covet television and things go mostly to plan. Last week a robot vacuum came to my door. Straight away I set it to work and sat in a chair where I grew frustrated with its performance and how little it learned. Toward this vacuum I thought insane, wicked, criminal thoughts. Soon I slept and dreamed of a stoic chimp who made snide remarks while my back was turned. I awoke to find the vacuum had died somewhere. I stood and searched my numbers and phoned Dennis.

“Dennis. Can you use me?”

I explained my life since then. My situation and schedule. He was mid-scene.

“Lord! *Oh God no!*” he said. “Right now? I’m spinning gold over here!”

“Gold?”

“Yes gold! And are you gold, Sal? Be honest with yourself. Are you still *gold* in this moment?”

Then he hung up. I set the phone and got down on my hands and knees and fished the vacuum from beneath the sectional. It was a terrible blow.