





*Joe gets another used press.*



*He scrounges the old Davidsons from printers who can't use them any longer.*





Photo by Joe



# arrabelle

J: The funny part about it is the fuckin' termites come along an' eat the end of the pole all y'know, an' the whole fuckin' mess falls down.





## DYING

B: What'd the doctor say?

J: Well, you want it straight, pure, an' simple?

B: Yeh. That's how you asked him t' give it.

J: Yeh. At the very least I'm gonna lose my left lung. At the least.

B: When?

J: I'm gonna go in the hospital Monday. They're gonna do a biopsy. An' from the lab report go from there.

B: What is a biopsy?

J: Well, they run a tube thingie down my nose through the bronchial tube into the lung, get a piece of this thing, snip it off, pull it out, have it analyzed. If it's malignant then I got troubles. If it's not malignant then I lose a lung. It's a biggie. I didn't get a chance t' study the X-ray real good. He only let me look for just a little an' any damn fool could see that there's a gob of stuff there. Uh, it looked to me like it had radiating tendrils - like a jelly fish.

B: What did Betty say?

J: Well, you know Betty. She's, that's a strong lady. She's a Christian. Course she's a little forcefully cheerful. Reminds me of when I left for prison. In fact, it's the same damn feeling I get because I thought I was dead when I left for prison. The only thing that bothers me is that even if the damn thing is not malignant I'm not gonna be able to run presses again.

B: Why?

J: At least the Davidsons. Ain't no way I'll be able to bend an' clean an' change plates an' all that stuff.

B: I'll come out an' help ya.

J: I think maybe the thing that I probably regret is that I just got things squared away good, y'know? In the last year an' a half I've just about been able t' say t' myself, "Well, Ruther, you've got it made." I think I'm probably still in a state of shock, really. I expected him t' tell me, "OK, you got high blood pressure an' your heart's gonna go on the blink an' you're gonna tear your bronchial tubes out with this coughing an' stuff." I didn't expect him t' find something in that lung. Except that I knew the bleeding was from that lung. An' the funny thing is, he checked me out an' my blood pressure is great, reasonably great, 150 over 90 - a little high but not out of line too far. EKG is perfect, ticker is working great.

B: Did he say anything about those? (pointing to the cigarette pack Joe is opening)

J: I asked an' this kinda puts the icing on the cake. He told me, "Too late now. Smoke all you want."

B: You're kidding?

J: No, I asked. How 'bout that? So I'm doin' it an' I guess I will till I kick off. I'm not looking for sympathy...

B: I understand that.

J: ...all that shit. I ain't lookin' for nothin' really, but, I don't think I got much time left, Baby.

B: Did he give you any kind of time?

J: He can't until they find out if it's malignant or whatever. Now, if it's not malignant an' of course there's that 50-50 chance, then what they do is hack it open an' hack it out an' take the lung or most of it. But, if an' in case it gets far

enough to where they think they've got it all an' they put me on that fuckin' chemotherapy - you got to bring me pot. (laughs)

B: OK.

J: Nausea an' the sickness of it, I don't think I could take that. I don't mind my hair fallin' out, I ain't got much. My personal looks don't bother me a bit but I don't like being sick to my stomach. Agreed?

B: Yeh.

J: I'm real interested in how I'm gonna handle this. Betty's afraid that I will retreat an' sit off out here in the shop an' not talk to anybody an' brood. I don't think I'm gonna do that. I don't think I could brood about me dyin'. I could be doin' somethin'. But the problem there is that I think I oughta spend the time with Betty. Which means I can just about kiss all this press stuff goodbye.

B: Not the writing though.

J: No, I can do that. Maybe that's why I grabbed at that 'cause I realize I can do that. Am I irrational?

B: No.

J: Tell me.

B: Your writing - it's definitely something you can do. And it's there. And you don't have to print it up.

J: Yeh. I would want to insure that it got printed though.

That's no problem.

Helon Algren said, "Live fast, die young, a good lookin' corpse." I dunno. I always like the line. I don't know whether I adhere to it. I was just gettin' in gear. That's steps me, just got it squared away good an' put my head in the direction I wanted to

My sister Margie told me this one thing. Always analyzing what her feelings are. It's like she constantly has lots of problems. She talks but it's not so much that as analyzing of what's going on in her head. An' she said after she got a divorce - she through this real anger period where she was pissed at him. An' once that was out of her she wasn't locked into it. She would still anger now an' then but it was controlled

understand what you're saying.

You could do that - the anger an' emotion at first then just pick up.

There are three or four steps that most people when they realize they're gonna die go through. First of all there is resentment, why me? Why somebody else? Why me? An' I've skipped that one. The second is frustration. An' of course the third one is acceptance. Yeh, maybe I got a little bit of that but I skipped the business of resentment.

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