

PULSE CREATE

Economy of attention

By JEFFREY RAYMOND McCLAIN

There it goes my heart, beatin'
Again. I feel, Surprise, as my eyes shake sleep
from their grasp. me searchin' again,
for my connection to the living
Room. I hear rustlin' above the background
Noise, open my lead lids to the lamp
Light, and jonathan, sitting mouse-quiet
At the oak desk, In the corner
of the antique furnishings forest.
spins a cell phone on the stained
wood. The soft baritone of my voice doesn't distract.

My heart thumps. Thump. "you hear
That, boy?" Thump. "this could be the last beat."
Thump. the non-responsive spinner chuckles,
To himself, oblivious. "could be going at last,
the damn thing. Just give-" 'riiiiiing' the phone
chimes in merrily... "out." jonathan answers.
He gives it a sort of caress as he picks it up.

"mischievous it is, boy. Always hit and miss, hit-"
..Dong'. went the grandfather clock "-and miss."
..Dong'. it strikes again, I stop, pause
for it's- ..Dong'. -interruption. I breathe.
..dong'. I look at it. Bought it with Betsy
twenty ..Dong'. seven years ago.

'Dong...Dong...Dong' Eight o'clock. near Nighttime.
Useless thing, I think. Always harping up.

I breathe, again. jonathan gets up from my chair,
smiling, talking. Wanders past
the bookcase into the tile floor kitchen. I can't quite
Make out what he's sayin'
to the phone. "I lived once," I say,
"In florida, near an alligator sanctuary."
I hear jonathan, conversing in the kitchen,
put a burrito in the microwave. Turns
it on. I feel its heat through the wall. "why?
Why do they give a rip 'bout some old
Reptiles from the cretaceous period?"
I hear the micro whirrr. feel the waves
Cascadin' through my bones.

'beep...beep... beep' Done cooking.
Jonathan, havin' heard the sound
Many times before, responds mechanically.
'click-click'. its door opens. He shuts it.

I adjust my collar, sweating. It's hot.
"they would eat ya', ya' know, given
half a chance. Eat ya' like you, eatin'
that there burrito." I wipe a bead
of saltiness from my brow.

jonathan, through the doorway glances
over at me. Puts the phone down,
takes a bite. Looks. I pause...
"anyhow, one day one of 'dem bastards wander
away from his sanctuary. Wander, wouldn't ya' know,
right into ma damn swimmin' pool. Happy
as a clam, he was. I went out to him,
he at first didn't pay me no mind. so I look
him right in the eye, real stern. He smiled back then,
right at me wit' dem 'gator teeth of his.
I didn't have the heart to move him
nowhere else. He look so content.
So he stayed. Starved to death, he did."

jonathan takes another bite, swallows.
Givin' me that blank look I swear he patented
When he turned sixteen or so.

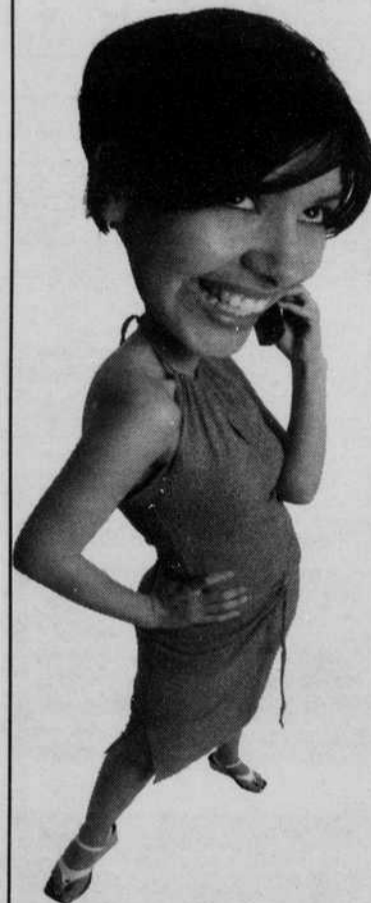
"I know, boy, what your thinkin', but-" 'riiiiiing...'
"-shit, if it weren't-" 'riiiiiing...'-for you visitin' me
and these-" 'riiiiiing...'-damn walls bouncin'
my-" 'riiiiiing...'-own voice back
at me..." 'riiiiiing...'-I'd be alone."

'riiiiiing... riiriiing... riiriiing...' jonathan's eyes
stay steady on me. Beans crawlin' slowly
down his chin. The phone stops,
goes silent, unanswered.

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X	X	X	X	X	X	X
X	X	X	X	X	X	X
X	X	X	X	X	X	X
X	X	X	X	X	X	X
X	X	X	X	X	X	X
X	X	X	X	X	X	X

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