



Joe Betts glanced at the tachometer mounted on his raked and "leaded-in" '57 Chevrolet, dressed his blond ducktail haircut with a deft swipe and nodded to me.

"Let's head to Rockaway. There's a dance at the Rockaway Natatorium tonight."

That year was the summer of 1959, maybe '60. Joe's Chev was the slickest, quickest, bitchinest short my buddies and I had ever seen. It glistened in the sun like the spangliest August day, a gleaming alabaster pavement thrasher, raked in the front end and stripped of all superfluous exterior chrome. Churning in front of us was a 1959 Corvette engine, snorting and chuffing, its Iskendarian camshaft, ported and relieved motor, and six two-barrel carburetors quivering that Chevy chassis so that it lunged and pawed the ground like a Brahma bull as Joe edged the clutch.

Joe and I were nauseatingly adolescent and searching for the heart of Saturday night. Like the Chev, we were tricked out, garbed in customized period gear: Tanker jackets, pointed black brogue shoes with huge metal taps, pegged Levis, white socks, I had paged down my perpetually frowzy hair with some unspeakable green, viscous goop (a precursor of Dippity Doo) to achieve the proper "in" style. When this slimy product seized up, it could lay down a porcupine's quills. My head looked like a lump of bull kelp and smelled like a urinal cookie.

We caromed down the curves of the coast highway and entered the sleepy village of Rockaway. Joe idled three blocks south of the natatorium, stepped outside the car, and unplugged the full-length Lakes Plugs exhaust pipes. Thunder filled the street. Joe climbed back in, stopped the accelerator, banded second gear, and screamed his burning rear tires until they both burst simultaneously, smack in front of the natatorium. An admiring throng of teenagers swarmed from the dance hall awe struck. We coolly exited the vehicle like Shoguns from the palanquin to greet the assembled. Inside the car, KISN Radio played rockabilly Eddie Cochran's song:

"Sometimes I wonder
What I'm a gonna do.
'Cause there ain't no cure
For the Summertime Blues..."

Occasionally, I reflect on those years, not as better or worse times, but perhaps simpler. The world I inhabited was naive and I an ingenue. Now, in the late '90's, I really get the summertime blues.

Last week I drove my automobile through the tourist clamor of weekend, mainstreet Cannon Beach. The grate, crash, and abrasion of people undid me completely. Through my windshield I beheld a stunning prefigurement of the modern Apocalypse as rendered by, say, Hieronymous Bosch. Human waves sluiced down the streets, chewing and jabbering, while vehicles lunged at their ranks. Alarms and sirens cut the air. The belly of our little town was swollen with the bloat of suburbia.

I felt like the Indian warrior, Arjuna, who appears in the great Hindu book, the Mahabharata. Attended on the field of battle by Krishna, an avatar of the god Vishnu, Arjuna begs Krishna to give him just a brief glimpse of the universe in its totality. Krishna consents. The vision Arjuna sees wrenches and pummels his sensibilities. He is terrified and devastated. I felt that way Saturday. I saw too much. I saw a time when we would be like blades of grass troampled by buffalo. Summertime blues for the '90's and beyond. Clutch what remains to your breasts, readers at the Edge, 'cause the urban steamrollers grind fine, and they're rumbling this way.



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Poetry

Bonita Rhinehart

iced august

it was a cold summer.
we kept blankets on the bed.
the wind blew the trees,
the curtains,
the water,
our hair.
we sat on the front porch
and watched the storms
at false dawn
and twilight.
there was an ice storm
in august. we learned to swim in the
rain,
and say, "look--there is the sun!",
before it was eaten by clouds.



silver net

you called at five a.m. and said,
"it's raining."
i did not need to ask, "so?,"
but leapt unhesitating from my bed,
threw on warm clothing,
brushed my teeth, washed my face,
and pulled the last tangle
out of my hair
just as you drove up
drinking 7-11 orange juice.
like nuns taking communion,
we drove to the ocean,
stepped out to the edge of the tide
and watched the sun throw
a silver net
through the storm's steel gray.

There's no money in poetry, but then
there's no poetry in money either.
Robert Graves

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