

THE VISIT

Divorce Court blared mindlessly from the TV in the dim living room. Blotchy shag carpeting suggested the presence of a pet, currently chained to a tree in the grassless back yard. The old man snored above the babble of defendant, judge, and plaintiff, dreaming of a time when he was young and strong stood at the edge of a world blooming with expectation and opportunity. He dreamed of a woman with milk-white thighs and candy-red lips, his long dead loins stirring at the distant memory. The stale odor of ancient sweat hung in the air like a bad idea.

A prehistoric Campbell's Soup stain emblazoned the man's undershirt. His left foot sported a once white athletic sock, his right lay exposed, gnarled toes displaying coarse black hairs and yellowing nails. A bubble formed and contracted from his nose.

The knock on the man's door jarred him from his dreams of youthful vigor. Angry to be pried from that sweet fantasy, thick with the remnants of sleep, he mumbled, "Who's there?"

"Jesus," came the soft reply.

Struggling to free himself from the embrace of his faded green sofa and Swiss cheese afghan, the man made a painful effort to rise.

"Who?" he bellowed.

The Son of God, wrapped in shimmering white, His countenance displaying a calm beyond understanding, spoke once again.

"Jesus," The King of Kings replied.

Working himself into a sitting position, elbows on knees, hands pawing through greasy hair, the man coughed a phlegmy rattle.

"Whodja say? Speak up, I'm an old man. Caint hear good no more."

The Prince of Peace spoke for a third time, in a louder voice, as requested.

"Jesus Christ."

“Goddammit,” the man shot back, “don’t get all pissy. I tol ya I don’t hear good. Hold yur goddamn shirt on.”

Shuffling to the door, the man opened it and stared into the empty night.

Cursing his solitary existence, damning a life condemned to loneliness and despair, the man closed the door on the darkness outside. Narrowly avoiding a half eaten cheese sandwich on the floor, he shuffled back to the threadbare couch. Senseless litigation continued to blare from the box in the corner of the room. The dog wailed his melancholy irritation from the back yard.

The old man soon resumed his interrupted slumber.

Outside his front door, rain fell from a cloudless sky.