

Ivy League Circa 1979 (I Am Dreaming)

I am dreaming. My new monomania, Kelli from acting class, Virginia slim, long tawny hair, edge-free face – basic nightmare – verbally assaults me in my car, in Brooklyn, my home. Our real-life conversation on the college green is light and guarded but in my dream she dryly attacks my character, delivering her words with stretched vowels and the hard “r” mastered at freshman orientation. As we sit in the driveway to my family’s house she casually mentions, as a clinical observation, my preoccupation with appearance. Lashing back I coldly ask why she and Hayden have broken off their involvement. I have no idea what Hayden is (other than, apparently, one of my fear objects), but it is the right response. My mother bids us farewell from the doorframe and tells us to have a good time as we pull out. She is smiling proudly.

I am dreaming. Julie, my last teen love, has returned, reversing her decision of nine months back to seek a new and freer path. Her eyes glow as they did in our glory days of deception. She approaches. We warmly embrace then knowingly smile. She has come back to me. Somewhere my mother smiles contentedly at what must be a happy moment for her son. I wake up not knowing or caring about Julie or what our fictional future may hold. She has undone her rejection. That is (more than) sufficient.

My dreams are black-and-white with mono soundtracks.

I am speaking to my best male friend, Robert, concerning my current involvement with Madeline. Robert knows me as well as anyone does except, perhaps, my mother. He is assuring me that I have nothing to lose since all I want from Madeline is sex but as I am not getting it I may as well move on to someone else.

I am speaking to my best female friend, Robin, concerning my current involvement with Madeline. Robin knows me as well as anyone does except, perhaps, my mother. She is assuring me that I seek a higher love and gentle intimacy from Madeline but I am not getting it and should meet other women.

I don't get it.

I am not dreaming. I enter the fraternity house party. It is in a smelly room with a sticky floor on which my sneakers suction each step. There are many attractive spaces outside but a neuro-magnetic whip has lashed hundreds of us to twitch, jam and thrust into this swampy rectangle. I am hemmed inside, aware of its unhealth, trying to look not obviously self-conscious. My only weapons, and I need some here, are my skin (smooth) and hair (rich). Here, where intellectual and political pretensions performed daily on campus are ripped away by the first beer and promptly replaced with base fears and instincts – here, where the illusion mocks itself – I project mine. Or, if I don't feel like eye smiling with abstract-chic subtext I return outside where paranoiac voids are self-created for not being near where the other people assume they want to be.

I am not dreaming. I am having dinner with Madeline. It is her birthday. We are attempting to define our relationship as we have been doing each night for the past three weeks. Madeline says that although she sleeps with various men of all races and creeds she does not

want to sleep with me. She claims that sex has become an addiction for her and like most addictions it is a vehicle through which she vents self-disgust. I am emotionally important to her and would become part of this association. Our relationship would disintegrate soon after any sexual contact. Plus, she says, I'm "not her type." I want to sleep with Madeline. Our relationship will not disintegrate soon after sexual contact. It will remain self-deprecating and uncomfortable.

When I am at my mother's home in Brooklyn I usually see Barbara. Barbara does not understand my motives. She does not understand, at least in the manner I intend, most of what I say or write but tells me in severe Brooklynese that what I write is brilliant and what I say is profound. She calls me her psychologist and father. I enjoy fucking Barbara as she sits in the sink in my mother's three-by-six downstairs "powder" room and I stand on the closed toilet seat and suspend myself over her by grabbing the opposite-facing towel racks. When we have stopped I stare, dripping, at the vanity mirror.

When I am away at school, I love to act. I have been acting in plays since the fifth grade. When I am acting a role in a play I receive a maximum amount of attention from a large number of people. They are listening very carefully to grasp the deeper significance of my words. I always have something witty or deep or touching to say. I always respond in an interesting way to every situation I face. And all these people are watching me to see what I do. Then they applaud.

It is like a dream.

My mother is happy.