

Evening Stroll

The gate to the apartment complex in the Grove slams shut. I sure wouldn't want to live in the adjoining unit, having my walls rattled each time someone comes or goes. Ask Jim where he disappears to each evening. Wandering off for hours as the nation fills it's head with Leno and Letterman's quibble and, for lack of another word, bits. Quibble and bits, hmm, I don't have to tell you what that sounds like. How can he expect to hear the voices in his head over the din? How can his own thoughts surface in the jumbled mess resting atop his shoulders? A late evening stroll to clear the palate. Counting steps like sheep until he wakes from the tedious dream in which the black cat plays a rat in the race. Rising from his cat cradle each morning to don his rat suit and run for the cheese with the rest of them. The cheese, the prize, well at least it pays the rent. The open night air brings a sweep of thoughts and emotions thundering down upon him and suddenly he steps outside his mundane body leaving his blinders behind. He has entered the realm of background and passes before others unnoticed. The blend of beauty, loneliness, and freedom is intoxicating. He is one with the shadows, naked and vulnerable to the world. He finds a park bench by the water and takes a seat. The lights of ocean bound vessels slide back and forth. And the gumbo limbo creaks as it sways back and forth in the cool breeze. It's a typical November night in Coconut Grove, but Jim has somehow found an island in the soiled palace we call home. A window through which one can gaze outside as a child might at winters first snow on a cold Sunday morning. As he takes it all in, he unravels the leather cord bounding his journal, and removes the pencil from his pocket. The lead tip sits poised over the blank page as he ponders over what to write about this evening. Sometimes his words sing of wines cascading over life's rocky cliffs and rolling into the sea of pain and pleasure. Other times the declaration of sorrow can be heard echoing back and forth inside the lonely tears painted by his passages. But tonight, tonight he bears his soul and begins with a whisper escalating to a scream, a scream of agony, love, hate, and passion all in one. Agony for when he calls and there is

silence. Love and hate eternally linked like the moon and the tides. And passion, flesh on flesh as each one's lips brush against the other, as he strokes her cheek and loses himself in her eyes, her voice, her touch. Her touch, how he longs for her touch. He sits awhile longer, staring at what he's written, rips the page out and folds it into the shape of a tiny boat, he sets it afloat. The walk home is bittersweet as he once again enters the common world. But Jim will sleep well tonight as the memory of his vision lingers in his head. And of course, because the sound of the gate slamming can't reach his bed.

A.G.