Bohemienne

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Abstract

Sure, I can leave here any time I want to. I’m not tied down. The rent’s paid. I don’t *have* to stay here, if that’s what you mean...
SURE, I can leave here any time I want to. I'm not tied down. The rent's paid. I don't have to stay here, if that's what you mean. It's not like it was anything psychological, for pete's sake. I can turn right around and walk up those stairs any time I feel like it.

Right now I don't feel like it.

So let's just drop it, ok?

What are you staring at? Sure, it's a cellar! Why shouldn't it be a cellar? At ninety-five a month I'm lucky to get it. If Alice hadn't pulled strings with her uncle I'd have had to move into one of those bohemian places where—Oh, oh, oh. I get it, now it's coming through. You think it's a funny sort of place to be, a cellar. Don't you?

What do you mean, that's not the way you meant it? I know how you meant it, Charlie!

Well, get this. I like those grimy bohemian window panes. I like pipes crawling all over the ceiling. I like cobwebs in the corners. I like dirty cement floors and bare lightbulbs and facilities right out in the stark naked open, do you understand? I like it.

Cigarette ashes all over the floor make me feel secure,
Charlie, secure. Bugs in the rickety damn cot, they don't cut me any, fella! Smoke in the air all the time? Man, my lungs don't function until I get ninety proof smog down here.

Charlie, what are you looking for? Hasheesh, for Christ's sake? Sure, Mac, sure! I sweep all the goddam marijuana butts over in that corner, Charlie boy, and the pack rats come in at night and trade diamonds for them. How do you think I pay for this pad, dad, how?

And every Saturday, Friday and Thursday all the homeless alley cats come meowing down here and spend the night on all-night jazz and illicit sex, too. Well, that's what you came here to hear, isn't it? What do you mean, come on, Maggie, cut it out? That's just it in a nutshell, isn't it, Charlie boy?

Boy, oh, boy! You come in fresh out of Sandusky with apple pie on your shirt, your head full of old Kerouac novels, and you think—you think—Oh, God, what you think!

Look, dear boy, let me reassure you before I really pop my cork! See that? Up there, the way you came in! Oak. Solid oh-ay-kay, oak. Three goddam Yale locks and a chain. Bars on all the windows, all two of them. Clean curtains to hide the bars on all the windows. Van Gogh on the goddam wall. Cheese in the goddam Kelvinator. Water in the miserable tap. Ribbon in the goddam Smith-Corona. And paper! Reams of it! Whole goddam reams! Calluses on my—look at this!—goddam fingertips. Goddam in the goddam goddam!

And you think all I've got to do is debauch myself!

Look, ash trays. All over the place! Big ones, medium-size ones, little bitty ones. With ashes in them. I use ash trays, Charlie, I really do. The landlady frowns on ashes in the carpets. She really does.

And, Charlie, dear old blockhead, look. A murphy bed. Now how about that? Narrow! One lousy Danish sofa, two ultra-modern basket chairs, round, with patched seats. A coffee table, for Christ's sake! Matisse on the other wall—there, Charlie, that's a Matisse—and Franzwazee Saggin' on the goshawful bookshelf! And, Charlie, dearest, look up. See? No pipes. They call that a suspended ceiling, Charlie. And look here, in the 1959 Pleistocene refrig, Charlie. Crammed to the teeth with healthy, wholesome, Miss Pritch...
Home Economics food! And coffee in the damn percolator. And orange juice every goddam morning for the rest of my life!

And, dear sweet Boeotian mine, light. All over the place. Light. No naked lightbulbs hanging off the ceiling. Lamps. Hundreds of goddam lamps. With blue and blond lampshades. All chasing out the goddam unhealthy dim.

And, if you've got the delusional fog out of your baby-blue eyes by now, you may just notice, on your way out, that cellar apartments in lower west Manhattan do sometimes have adequate lavatories.

Now will you please just pack up your infantile accusations and go home to Mama? Please?
I have work to do.
No.
Wait! I'm sorry, really.
Cup of coffee? Thanks, Charlie. Old blockhead.

Freedom Bound

by June Wehrman

Jean concentrated on the irregular wooden railroad planks. Sometimes she could take in two in a long stride, sometimes three. It made her mind whirl after a while to watch those planks fly under her feet. She counted how many planks there were between telephone poles, how many telephone poles until the top of the next hill, how many hills since the last pond. It helped to pass the time and it helped to keep her mind occupied so she wouldn't get mad again. She got mad everytime she thought about it so she tried not to think about it. Every so often she knelt down beside the track and put her ear on a steel rail to listen for the train. She knew it wouldn't be too much longer. Considering how often they passed through Rapid City, it couldn't be too much longer.

"Darn you, Tim. Why did you have to come along. What