Dear Joner

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Abstract

THE JAILER., a short stocky man with dark accusing eyes, did not bother to unlock the cell door. Instead, he stuck his thick hand through the bars of the cell..
Dear Joner

by Carol Shubert

English, Sr.

The jailer, a short stocky man with dark accusing eyes, did not bother to unlock the cell door. Instead, he stuck his thick hand through the bars of the cell.

"Here's the paper and pencil you wanted, Springer," he barked at the young man lying on the bunk.

A dark curly head jerked up first and then two long, denimed legs swung over the side of the mattress. His eyes flashed at the man outside his cell and the muscles in the back of his neck tensed as he finally got up. Muttering a curse under his breath, he walked toward the uniformed man waiting outside the cell. The prisoner thrust his hand out and snatched the pad and pencil without speaking.

Simon waited until the jailer's footsteps could no longer be heard echoing down the long corridor. Then he ran his red fingers through his thick uncombed hair and sat down on the bunk. He chewed on the eraser of the pencil for several minutes before he finally began to write.

Dear Joner

God Joner how are ya? I ain't much for letter writin but I gotta write ya. I mean you know me like no body else.
I mean it was you and me who done everything together. Our first cigarette. Our first drunk. All them times when a guy needs his best friend. You was there. After them times you are different and you need your best friend to be different with ya. You was even with me when Mom told me about Sandy getting killed. God you just understood. Remember how we went outside under the willa tree? And our next door naber lady was singing along with the song on the radio "rain rain let it fall. I don't need no one at all" Then I started to cry. It wasn't even for Sandy or for Mom. It was the goddam song. And you tryed to act like you didn't see me cry. But you really did and I hauled off and really hit ya. But you was always thinking of me. Even then. I remember how you pulled out that old crumpled pack of camels from the waistband of your shorts. You always hid em there from your old lady. Christ that was the best cigarette I ever tasted. Even yet.

But Sandy dying wasn't the worst thing that happened to me that year. I mean Sandy was my brother and stuff but he never let me be his friend. Christ no. The worst thing was when your old lady up and moved. Right out of town. And we had all them neat things planned for when we was gonna be seniors. God, that last nite I don't even know what we did. I just remember you saying Jesus Simon we sure had a helluva lot of good times didn't we?

You was all ready gone when Sarah come along. You don't even know about Sarah. She sat next to me in the 7th period study hall. Jesus Christ I thot she was the greatest thing on legs. Joner I wanted to ask her out so damn bad but I was scared ya know. Then one day ya know what. I started thinking about you. What the hell would Joner think if he knew I was actin this way over a damned girl. That done it. I asked her out and she said yes Joner.

We went to the drive in that nite. Joner I didn't even try to make her or nothing. You know me and you know that was a first. I only kissed her just once when I took her home. Did everything real proper like ya know. I was real careful to be proper like. I was glad you wasn't there then. But I really liked her lots. More than them other broads in our class. But you wasn't there then. But they were the same broads as when you were there yet. Mostly. And then I took her out maybe oh half a dozen more times. God I really liked
the broad. All the time I kep wonderin what Joner would think. But you didn't know because you had all ready moved with your old lady then.

Then once I asked her to go to a horror movie at the drive in. But she couldn't go. She wouldn't tell me why. That really pissed me off. So I decides what the hell I'll go anyways. And I asked Mary Marsh. You member her cause she was here before you had to move yet. We went but it was a crummy movie. It was really bad Joner. You woulda hated it. I know you woulda. Cause we always like the same things. So I was after Mary. Then at the innermision I went to buy some junk. But I took a piss in the john first. All the guys were in ther ya know. Talkin about there dates. Joner you know what. I was sort of chucklin to myself. Just listening and combing my hair. And some guy starts telling about how he really struck it rich with Sarah. She was all over him and he was tellin how she liked to go out with a real man once. Joner first I thot it was a different Sarah but it wasn't. Cause I listened some more. Joner it was my Sarah. You never knewed her but it was the rite one all right.

I almost got sick Joner. I really thot she was special ya know. And I treated her all proper like and everything. I went home and I layed down under the big old willa tree. Where we always used to sit and talk. Joner what happened? I didn't even try to lay her or nothing. And I just kept lay­ing there and thinkin about you. Cause you woulda under­stood. But you wasn't there then.

Then Monday come and I got kicked outa school for 3 days. Joner when Sarah come into 7th period study hall and sat down I screamed at her. Right in study hall and stuff. I told her she didn't mean shit to me Joner. I yelled at her and told her I didn't even try to lay her but I shoulda. I shoulda and then I shoulda dropped her on her high and mighty ass. I wanted to hit her to. Rite in the mouth and stuff. But I couldn't because old lady Boxwell was on me with all fours. You remember old lady Boxwell cause she was there yet before you hada move and stuff. Anyways, Sarah she never done a thing. She never said nothin. She just sat there and stared out the window and that reafly pissed me off.

Then I hada go home. Joner I missed you again then. There are just some of them times when a guy needs his best
friend. But of course you wasn’t there. But Mom was. She was crying and tellin me that she wished Sandy or my Dad was there. She used to lean on him lots during times like these. My old man I mean. She cried a helluva long time. My Mom did. She always cries. I remember she was always reading Oliver Twist and crying about it. Just like it was the goddamned first time and stuff. But you know how my Mom is Joner. You know how she cried when Sandy died and stuff. But I could understand that. More than crying over a damn book or over me gettin sent home from school when I was always trying to be so proper with Sarah and everything.

Then I went to the army. You don’t know that. Basic training was a real bitch Joner. You woulda never made it Joner cause we couldn’t smoke. Not even camels. Then I met Horace. That was in AIT I met him. He bunked rite above me. But I washed he was you Joner. He was always scared. You wouldna been scared cause I wasn’t and you and me we always done things the same. But I could tell Horace was always scared. I tried to tell him there wasn’t nothin to be scared about ya know. Not yet. Cause we didn’t even know where we was gonna be sent yet. He sorta losened up then. He told me stuff about him. Like he enlisted rite after he graduated from colledge. That was one thing about Horace. You could tell he was college stuff rite off the bat. He was preety sharp. He could talk about them old english authors like they was his personal freinds. Old lady Boxwell woulda liked Horace cause she knowed about them people like that to. I used to listen to Horace talk about all them characters but I never much liked it. You knowed I never much liked english Joner. But I listened cause when he talked about that stuff he wasn’t scared anymore.

Anyways, me and Horace we got to be pals. Not as good as you and me Joner. Not pals like us but we was pals just the same. On our leaves we useda go to town and get drunk. Christ Joner he was the funnyest guy in the whole world to get drunk. His lips would always move up and down but nothin would come out. It was the funnyest dam thing I ever saw. You woulda thot it was god damned funny to Joner. Horace and me we useda have pretty good times in the army and stuff. Really. We did. But I always kept wonderin what you was doin Joner. When I was in the army watching Horace’s funny lips and stuff.
Then our orders come. Horace was goin to Korea. Me and Horace went out and we got drunk one last time. But Joner it wasn’t like then other times. It wasn’t even funny. Horace talked normal and everything. God dam Horace made me mad. We didn’t even have a good time like we useda when we got drunk. That’s why I wished you was in the army with me Joner. I knewed we woulda had a good time just like we always done when we got drunk. And then that same nite Horace asked me to look up his girl in Ohio if I got out before he did. Joner he wanted me to tell her that he loved her. I never thot to much of love. You knowed I never did Joner. I mean it was okay for Romeo and them kind of guys but I didn’t see much in it otherwise. But Horace you know he was my pal and stuff so I promised. I woulda promised you to Joner. But I knewed you never would ask me to promise anything like that. About love and stuff. But I promised Horace.

I got out before Horace to. Everybody did. Horace got shot thru the skull by a sniper bullit. It really made me sick Joner. I mean I just thot about all that knowledge about them english authors. And how it was smeared over some Korean dirt somewheres. But I kept my promise. Joner you know I never break a promise. I never broke none of them promises that you and me made. First I went home and stuff. When I got out I mean. Mom was glad to see me and she was havin them coffe clubs she was always having. Then I went to look for Horaces girl. After I was home about a week I did.

Her name was Agatha. Helluva name isn’t it Joner. But by god she was Horaces girl. And ya know she was all rite. She was tiny and sorta sick lookin but she was all rite. She didn’t look like anybody you know Joner, cept maybe Jan Crosby. You member her don’t ya Joner? But she really didn’t look like her. Anyways when I told her what Horace said she told me to leave. I did to. I knewed she must be feelin bad and stuff so I just left. But I kept my promise.

But I stayed in town tho. Just to make sure she would be all rite. Horace didn’t make me promise that but I done it anyways. Cause me and Horace was buddies before he got shot up and stuff. Well I started to go over to this bar. The Goldenrod. That was the name of the bar. You ain’t never missed much because you ain’t never been there. I been to lots better bars. But I met Joyce there. She was a whore. But
Joner she was all rite. She really was. You never woulda
knowed she was a whore cept for that I just told ya.

When I first started goin to the Goldenrod we would
just go upstairs for a while ya know. It wouldn't take very
long at all. She was really all rite in bed Joner. I can tell you
that cause your best pal and stuff. I know you understand.
You always did all them other times. But then after a few
times it would take lots longer. I mean cause we would just
lay in bed and talk and stuff. I mean I told her about all
kinds of things Joner. Stuff I ain't never told anybody since
you moved a way. I never talked to Horace about stuff like I
talked to Joyce about. Horace was different. I all ready told
ya about how me and Horace wasn't as good pals as you and
me was before. But it was really werd with Joyce. She didn't
really care about what I said them first few nites. Thats why
it didn't take very long. But I was really nice to her ya know.
She knowed I was really bein nice to her to. Then we just
started talkin and by god Joner she really did care about
what I said. I useda tell her how I was gonna get her outa
that dump but she would just laugh. But she listened and
stuff and it was sorta like when you and me useda lay under
the old willa tree and talk. Cept Joyce was a girl and stuff.
But she understood Joner. All most like you woulda if I was
talkin to you.

Well then we started doin other stuff. When she wasn't
even at the Goldenrod. I took her over to the river in the
park and I showed her how to skip rocks. She wasn't very
hot at first Joner but I taut her how ya know. We useda go
over to the park alot and skip rocks. Joner she liked to go
with me over there alot. Joner she really did.

Then one nite I went to the bar to pick her up and take
her over to my room. Like I always done. We all ways useda
go over to my room. Anyways I went over there and there
was this other guy there. He had his arm around her and
stuff. Around Joyce. Joner I didn't like that. You know I
didn't like that. Cause she really understood. All most as
good as you did Joner. And I got mad at him Joner. You
knowed I would. Cause he had his arm around Joyce. I
I woulda killed him to but they wouldn't let me. You knowed
I coulda killed him if they woulda let me Joner. You know
I can fight better than any body. I could even whip Tom
Burke. That one time out in the parking lot.

Anyways after that Joyce and me we would still go over to my room. Wed still do everything just like be fore but Joner it wasn't like before. There was somethin diferent. Then I wished you was there again Joner. So you could understand like you all ways done before. But you wasn't. So I talked to Joyce cause she understood all most as good as you. But she didn't seem to care like she done before. God-dam Joner what happened? I treated her so nice and stuff. I always did. And she always liked that. And when I asked her what was wrong she all ways said nothin. But I could tell somethin was wrong. Joner you coulda told somethin was wrong to. I knowed you coulda.

Then I never saw her for about a week. Never even saw her once Joner. I was really shook cause I really liked her a lot Joner. I couldn't find her no where. She was a whore and everything and I couldn't find her no where. It just didn't make no sense so I quits my job and I starts to look for her. I knowed something was wrong.

But when I was leavin the Goldenrod I asked an old lady about Joyce. I didn't even know her but I asked her where Joyce was. Joner I was scared. Dam scared. It was all most as bad as when your old lady moved rite before we got to be seniors and we had all them neat things planned. Anyways the old lady she telled me that Joyce got married to the dentist who lived in this big house on Airdale drive. You don't know the house but I knowed where it was. Everybody did. It was an old mansion and Joyce showed me where it was one time.

Joner I didn't know what to do. I didn't know how Joyce could leave me like that and mary a goddam dentist. So I gets in my car and I goes rite out of the old mansion. I knowed where it was cause Joyce showed me one time. Joner I was really mad. You never saw me get that mad before. I was even lots madder than in 7th period study hall when I yelled at Sarah like I all ready told ya about.

Anyways it was sorta dark and I pounds on trie door. A man comes to the door that I didn't know. I asked to see Joyce but he stood in the door like he wasn't gonna let me thru. I figured he was the dentist so I hit the bastard. Rite in the mouth and stuff. Then I heard a girl screem. It was Joyce. Everybody told me that I really beat her up bad. But
Joner I don’t even remember what happened. Honest to God I don’t. The only thing I remember is yelling you dirty bitch. I taught you how to skip rocks you goddamned filthy bitch. I don’t know why I done it Joner. I wished you was here with me. I suppose I’ll never know why I done it.

Then they brot me here to this god dam jail. Ya know its really werd Joner but rite now alls I can think of is rain rain let it fall I don’t need no one at all. Christ Joner, I ain’t even got your god damned address. But some day when I get out I’m gonna find you again Joner.

The shoulders that had been hunched over the pencil and paper for so long finally collapsed. The pencil hit the hard cement floor and banked off of the wall before coming to rest under the bunk. Wadding up the pieces of paper in one hand, Simon used his other hand to support himself as he stood up. Then, with all the strength he had, he threw the ball of paper against the barred window.

Poem

*by Deborah Pui Young*

*Soc., Soph.*

the funeral hymn
faint

on air
lightened by the absence
of birdsong

final.
in its passing