



Scot Sothern

Peckers Beach

Some things you think about forever, you remember word-for-word, words spoken forty-five years ago. I remember a fifteen-year-old girl named Betsy Biliyu who looked up at me one night at Peckers Beach. “Don’t let that big gorilla come down here,” she told me. “I don’t like him.” I thought she was pretty even with her buck teeth. I wanted to kiss her again but not like before, I wanted to kiss her nice, but I didn’t, I pulled up my pants. “Yeah, okay, let’s go.”

“Tell Zeke to come back down first. I wanna see Zeke, some more.”

Zeke was my best friend. This was the summer of nineteen sixty-seven, the Summer of Love in California and a summer of drunken debauchery for me and Zeke. We’d both graduated from high school in June and we both had an eighteenth birthday on the same day in August, a couple of weeks away. I had a job running a paper-folder at a print shop. I could run a sheet of newsprint through the machine and it would come out folded in eights, that was my talent. I should have been working at my pop’s photography studio, but he was waiting for me to mature into a stable person. Zeke was going to start college in the Fall and his dad gave him enough money he didn’t need to work.

It was just another night, warm and humid, and I’d ridden my motorcycle over to Zeke’s house. Zeke lived with his two sisters and his



dad who wasn't around much. Zeke had the evening planned, he knew a girl from school who would fuck pretty much anyone who bothered to ask. He'd fucked her a couple of times and I'd heard she had done a bunch-punch for a group of six guys. We were going to pick her up at her house and go somewhere and take turns with her. Seemed like a good idea, except for one obstacle, Zeke's cousin, Buddy. Buddy was about four years older than we were so he was handy to go to the liquor store to get our supplies for the night. But Buddy was an asshole and a moron and when he heard our plans he wanted to come along.

Just a week earlier I'd been at the Steak and Shake drive-in, hanging out doing nothing when a friend told me about a couple of girls pulling a train at a guy's house nearby. I knew the guy, he was another one of those guys who was older, had his own house and a fridge full of beer, liked to hang with us younger idiots. He had a little place close by, a single bedroom with a double bed, two naked girls on their backs, and a line of fine young men awaiting their turns. Kid I knew was atop one of the girls, so I walked over and talked to him for a little bit but he didn't have much to say. He came with an oofph and got up and out of the way for the next guy. The room stank of sperm and perspiration, beer and cigarettes. I had a boner but I didn't stay.

Zeke had a sixty-three red Thunderbird convertible but his dad had left his new Lincoln Continental in the drive so we took that. First stop was the liquor store where we gave Buddy the money and he went in and made the buy. Two short six-packs of Country Club Malt Liquor for me. Malt Liquor hadn't yet progressed to pop-tops so I wore an opener, the keys to the church, on a chain around my neck. I drank two cans before we were out of the lot. Since school let out a month and a half ago, I'd awaken in the local jail twice, without remembering how I got there. I couldn't think of anything more important than drinking myself into oblivion, fighting, fucking, vandalism. I remember dousing the walls of an abandoned house with gasoline, then standing in the livingroom and tossing a match.



Except for upsetting my parents, I liked going to jail, I liked the writeups I got in the local newspaper. Scotty Sothern flings his flagrant disregard to everybody. I thought that somehow showing everyone my middle finger made me some kind of hero. I wanted to be Mick Jagger or Jim Morrison, wild and dangerous, but my biggest talent was running a paper-folding machine. So I became a self-made drunk who suffered blackouts and thought it was fun. Zeke was mostly like me, except he was a great fighter and he got more girls than I did, at least he had a knack for finding girls like Betsy Biliyu.

Zeke was at the wheel of the Lincoln and Buddy sat up front even though I'd called shotgun. There was plenty of room in the front—the car was like a houseboat—but I was more comfortable in the back where I could mostly ignore Buddy. Buddy was squat with a big head, he was no more than an inch taller than I yet probably outweighed me by fifty pounds and he wasn't fat, nor was he muscled, he was just there. This is what he said: "I fucked a different gash every night for the last three months and sometimes I fucked two in one night. Alls I gotta do is snap my fuckin fingers, man, and I'm fuckin another one. Fuck yeah, fucking gashes, man, they all fuck for me, man. Fuckin skags."

I didn't believe a word of what he said and neither did Zeke. It was irritating me but Zeke thought it was funny, kept laughing, egging him on. "Yeah, man, fuckin yay, how do you get so much pussy, Buddy, with such a little dick?"

"Little dick, my ass, fuck you man. You seen my dick, you seen my dick hard cousin, you know it's a big one. I'm splittin' them fuckin gashes in half, motherfucker."

Zeke was cracking up and I was on my fifth short can of Country Club. We were in a neighborhood on the outskirts, long bumpy roads. Zeke pulled off the road into the dirt drive of a two-bedroom wood frame. Zeke got out and went to the door and knocked. I'd gone to a different school and didn't know Betsy Biliyu but I knew her older brother who was known to be dangerous but had a connection for



Benzedrine, bennies, two of which could keep me up all night drinking without blacking out, which was as good a reason to know someone as any. I watched from the car and tuned Buddy out. The girl came to the door, talked to Zeke for a few minutes then went back inside for a couple of minutes then came back outside with Zeke.

I'd been taught to always open doors for girls, but I was the only one. Zeke climbed into the driver's seat and Betsy walked around to the passenger side where Buddy was sitting with the window down. She looked at him and he looked at her, then she looked into the backseat and looked at me. Unlike every other American car the Lincoln's rear door opened to the left, as if that made it somehow more exclusive. I opened it and Betsy opted to get into the back with me. She was blonde and skinny, short in a still-budding little girl's body. She had on white canvas sneakers and pink socks, white shorts just above her knees and a sleeveless blouse with rows of hearts, blue and red. I could smell Chanel No 5 and my heart was racing. She was shy, looking at her hands in her lap and I got shy as well. I also had an erection.

Zeke drove out to the highway with all the windows down and hit a hundred and ten, on two lanes while sucking on a bottle of Southern Comfort. He laughed a lot, more than anyone I'd ever known, and when he laughed so did I. He cranked up the Rolling Stones, speakers front and back, *Get Off My Cloud*. Hey you. Buddy was strutting in the front talking and talking but nobody heard him. The back seat was like a bus bench, Betsy and I moved toward the middle. I put my arm around her shoulders and pulled her closer. I looked at her face but she didn't look at mine. I put my hand down her blouse, inside of her bra which was loose, and pinched her nipple between my fingers, but not hard.

In high school I went steady with a girl for two and a half years. I was in love as profoundly as with the ones I married, maybe more in one instance. We spent hours upon hours steaming up the windows and I always treated her with respect, probably more than she wanted. She set the template for the girls and women I would love for the rest of my life.



She was smart and funny and did well at school. I liked girls who were smarter than me. I wanted my grammar corrected when it was wrong, I wanted to be as smart as they were. Sometimes I envied all the guys who never fell in love, guys who could fuck em and leave em. Sometimes I wished I could be cruel, though looking back I was a pretty big asshole. I turned Betsy's face toward me, put our lips together, stuck in my tongue and she kissed back, thickly, like a scream, like we were going to die at any second. I got dizzy.

Zeke had the Continental fish-tailing down a dirt and gravel road, running parallel with the James River, green and busy; swimming holes and rope swings. Somewhere across an invisible line we arrived at Peckers Beach, a popular spot for teenage drinking and fucking. Zeke pulled to the side of the road and parked. He was laughing and I looked up from my embrace and saw him watching us in the rearview mirror. He said, "Fuckin yay, nookie, nookie. I'm the engineer of the nookie train, Scotty gets boxcar and you're caboose, cousin."

Buddy said, "Caboose, shit, Spiky. I'm a one oughta be driver."

"You came in late, Buddy. Besides, we don't want you splitting her taint before we get to it."

Betsy and I had untangled. "Zeke," she said, "You said just you and Scotty Sothern, you didn't say about anybody else." I opened another can of malt liquor and thought about how she knew who I was, how cool I thought I must be. Everybody knew who Scotty Sothern was even girls who pulled trains. I downed the brew in about five seconds and then opened another. Zeke got out of the car opened the back door and took her by the hand. "It's just us, you and me an were gonna go down by the water, cmon." She turned and look at me. "Bye, bye," she said, and gave me a weak smile. I said bye bye back which cracked up Zeke and I could hear him laughing until they disappeared and I heard crickets, frogs and the river.

Buddy said, "Hey Scotty, I went to New Orleans and I got so fucked up and there were these whores all over. You oughta see it,



because you've never seen nothing like it, not like I have."

I'd gone to New Orleans with another guy the month before and stayed for a few days but I didn't bother telling Buddy. We got out of the car and sat on the hood drinking and smoking. I could see the stars and they meant nothing to me. Buddy was telling me about how he knew a guy could hold a cat's head in hand and crush its skull like a beer can. I've forgotten a lot of my past life but I remember things like that. Down the road a ways I could see the glimmer of another car, a group of idiots milling about. Someone gave a drunken rebel yell and Buddy answered with a yell of his own. Someone yelled, hey fuck you shit ass, and Buddy yelled for them to come down here and say that to his face. He drank down a bottle of Budweiser he'd been nipping on and threw the bottle; a good throw, landed and shattered close to the car in the shadows. "Hey, what the fuck," someone yelled. "That's not cool, asshole." Then we didn't hear anything, then we heard the car doors open and shut, saw the headlights come on and the car came barreling down at us, honking the horn. I stood in the middle of the road and threw a baseball sized rock that didn't hit anything. They swerved and missed me by a foot, filled my nose and eyes with dust, and then they were gone.

I was drunk and I wanted to be that way, I wanted the world to spin, I didn't want to give a shit about anyone or anything. I kicked rocks through the dust. Zeke came into view, alone from a stand of trees between us and the beach. He was laughing, "It's your turn, Scotty, here smell this first," he put his middle and pointer fingers under my nose. He laughed like a happy person. I took in the scent and got an instant hard-on. If Betsy resisted, Zeke said, all I had to do was tell her I love her. "Fucking Yay," he said and laughed out loud. "Thanks, Zeke. Maybe I'll ask her to the prom."

I lit a smoke and stumbled down a path, I hated walking through brush and I dreamed someday it'd be all sidewalks. A mosquito stung my neck. A pigeon cooed and I told it to shut the fuck up. I found Betsy



on the beach on her back. It was dark and shadowy, she was naked. I staggered in the dark and went down on my knees between her legs. I could make out her face. “Hi,” I said. “It’s me. I going to take off my pants.” I waited for her to say something.

“Zeke told me he loves me. Boys are shits but I know when they love me.”

“Yeah, me too.” I stayed on my knees, finishing the cigarette, another can of malt liquor. “I know your brother.”

“That’s too bad for you.”

“Yeah, probably.”

“Can I have a drink of that?”

“Yeah, sure, fuck yeah. I don’t think I need anymore anyway.” She took it and finished it. I asked her if she wanted a cigarette and she said no thanks. I stripped naked and when I came to her, still on my knees, she grabbed my peter, put it where I was hoping she’d put it. She humped and bucked like she wanted to be the best fuck anybody had ever had but I was too drunk to get the total value. She seemed to know exactly when I was going to blow and she pulled it out and squeezed and jerked it and I trickled spunk across her stomach.

I gave her one of my socks to clean up with. That’s when she asked me if I could keep the big gorilla, (Buddy) at bay. She didn’t want to go, she wanted Zeke to come back down. She told me to keep it a secret, but she was in love with Zeke Dickens. I told her okay I’d go find him.

It took me a while to make my way back to the car. Buddy was waiting. Zeke had noticed a car a ways up, off the road, hiding in the bushes. He was hoping to find, a teenage backseat tryst so he could go running up screaming and yelling and pounding on their car, all for the joy of scaring the shit out of someone he probably didn’t even know. He was currently sneaking through the woods like Geronimo full of fire-water. “Where’s Zeke?” I asked.

“I don’t know, somewhere,” Buddy said. “You took a long fucking time. You going to marry her or something?” Buddy started down the



path. “Hey, she wants to see Zeke. Buddy? No shit, wait for Zeke.” He kept going. I wanted to run after him but I didn’t. I got in the backseat and drank the last three cans of moral poison.

I woke up in the backseat, and the car was sailing and I was spinning, sick. I sat up and saw Zeke behind the wheel, Buddy by the window, talking and talking.

“Hey,” I said. “Where’s Betsy.”

Buddy turned in the seat and looked at me. “We left her,” he said, “at Peckers Beach.” I was drunk but needed to be even drunker to excuse what we’re doing, what we’d done. I asked Zeke for the loan of his bottle and drank until I knew I’d puke if I drank anymore, then I closed my eyes.

Brain activity had shut down and I was nowhere. I was home in my bed at four-thirty in the morning when the cops came and took me to jail. The look on my mother’s face, when they read the rape charges, statutory and forcible, on the front porch, was such that I swore to myself I’d never ever do a bad thing again. They handcuffed me. I was still drunk and wished I could stay that way, put off facing the facts as long as possible. Walking to the police car I noticed my bike, my BSA Hornet, was parked in the side yard. I’d driven it home in a blackout. They put me in the backseat where I thought about Betsy Biliyu and the look on my mother’s face.

Looking down at my hands I noticed they were black with soot. Taking more stock I realized I was covered with soot. I hadn’t noticed that Betsy Biliyu had mistakenly, in the dark night bedded us atop a former campfire. That’s how she had appeared when her father had dragged her in front of the cops to assess the damage, black with ash bruised from two hard blows to the face, compliments of Zeke’s cousin Buddy, aka the big gorilla. Buddy was a fuckhead and he deserved to be in jail, but so did Zeke and I. There were no heroes in this story. On my way to a cell at the jailhouse, I saw Zeke at a desk with a couple of cops, like me he was handcuffed, and when he saw me he yelled, “Fucking



Yay, Scotty. I thought you made a getaway.” He cracked himself up, laughing and whooping. I admired his positive attitude.

I was in the cell for about three hours then they came and let me out. My Father was a well known businessman who golfed and hunted with the court judge. Zeke’s father was the towns biggest cattleman, a rich cowboy whose family had been in Springfield since the Civil War. Betsy Biliyu’s father was a nobody. Betsy Biliyu had a reputation and Zeke had guaranteed to supply a long list of guys she had fucked. Betsy Biliyu never had a chance and I had every chance in the world. The next day, having dinner with the family the kitchen phone rang and I grabbed it. “Is this Scotty Sothern?”

“Uh, yeah.”

“This is Rand Biliyu. I’m the father of the little girl you raped and I’m going to catch you and cut off your balls.”

“Yeah, okay,” I said. “Thanks for the call.” One more reason to leave and never come back and a couple of months later that’s what I did