

## Like Leaves of Trees in the Summer Breeze

by Joseph Modugno

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All the honeys were gone but we didn't care. We were bringing the house down.

In the kitchen, the Bose was booming up on full blast, turning out some crazy techno, turning out I don't know what, Austin was on that, and in the middle of the floor, Dan and Nate were having a superfly dance-off while spitting out rhymes at each other that none of us could even begin to comprehend, they were so high, so far gone into the zone on some other plain above our heads. Over by the sink, Maguire, Chris, T.J, and Steve were slashing Buschs open with steak knives and shot-gunning them down, just like that. Meanwhile, upstairs, Pat, Grazz, and Dexter were on a raid, stuffing anything they could get their hands on into their pockets and plastic shopping bags -- digital cameras, ipods, DVD players, jewelry, dental floss, laptops. At one point even I think I saw Grazz going out the front door with one of those Sony flat screens, high-fi and laser-def, the works. Dexter wasn't going for any ipods or flat screens though. He'd gone straight for the little sister's undies drawer. He had them stuffed up under his armpits and down his shorts when I saw him. Tiny, cotton Little Mermaids with squiggly yellow fish and blue seashell patterns were clenched between his front teeth, and he was grinning from ear to ear.

Back downstairs, in the dining room, adjacent to us in the kitchen, Bobby was going to work on one of the walls with some old sledgehammer he'd found down in the basement, or out in the garage, or somewhere, singing, "John Henry was a steel-driving man, O Lord! John Henry was a steel-driving man!" And, "If I had a hammer, I'd hammer in the morning, I'd hammer in the evening, all over this land. I'd hammer out justice, I'd hammer out freedom, I'd hammer out love between the brothers and the sisters, all over this land." While over his head, at the opposite wall, Kev was chucking butcher knives from the chopping block, though he was having some trouble getting them to stick.

Then Jake came in, not wearing anything but his condom, and we all stopped what we were doing and looked at him.

He had this funny grin on his face. Not a smile, not a frown, but something. Sort of like he was away somewhere. He came into the kitchen and just stood in the doorway, looking at us like that. We could see that he had something to say, so Austin turned down the Bose and Dan and Nate stopped their dance battle. Bobby and Kev came in from the dining room, and Maguire, Chris, T.J, and Steve quit their shot-gunning contest.

At first Jake just stood there, continuing not to say anything. Then he said, "You've got see this. Get a flashlight and get in here. You've got to see this." He grinned some more from the doorway and then turned and went back into the living room, closing the door behind him. When he was gone, we all stood there in the kitchen looking around at each other. Then Austin smiled and said, "Flashlight!"

At the doorway to the living room, we got down on our hands and knees. Austin put a finger to his mouth and made a "ssh" sound. Maguire and Bobby started to giggle and touch each other and Austin had to box-slap their ears to get them to settle down. Austin gave us all a serious look. Then he reached up, took hold of the knob, and slowly opened the door.

Before the door was even halfway open, we heard her, Betty, the chick whose house it was. She was making these noises. I don't even know what you'd call them. Moans and moos, I guess. Sort of like one of those beached seals you see on the Animal Channel.

We crawled into the room on our hands and knees, two-by-two, Army combat style, being sure to keep low to the floor, Austin and Nate leading the way. As we got further into the room, the moaning-mooing became louder and clearer, though it was also muffled, or completely drowned out by their whack-slapping.

Bobby was next to me. He kept giggling the whole time and trying to hold onto my arm, but because he's so damn big, he was making me almost fall over. So I had to push him back and make him be partners with Maguire. I took Steve up with me instead. Word came down the line and we stopped crawling. The couch was just ahead. We pressed together, shoulder-to-shoulder, rose up off our hands and knees, and peered over the end. Because of the dark, it was hard to see at first, but our eyes adjusted.

At the head of the couch, Jake had Betty belly-down, bent over double. Her face was buried in a pillow and he was bundling her from behind. From our angle down below, all we could see were the white, sinewy muscles of Jake's ass pumping away in the dark, and then sprawled out in front of him, seeming to surround him, the vague white blimp of Betty's body. Every now and then, Jake would grab her by the back of her hair and pull her face up from the pillow, which would cause the moaning-mooing to come on full force, and then he'd bury it back down, and it'd be muffled again, followed by more whack-slapping.

Though Austin was doing his best to keep us quiet, it seemed like it was all becoming too much, especially for Maguire and Bobby. I thought any moment one of them was going to shout something or jump up and give us all away. But then Jake turned to us. He turned very slowly and gracefully, almost as if he was an actor on a stage or something, and as I looked close, I thought I saw that strange, faraway grin appearing across his face again in the darkness. He looked at us for a long time without doing anything but fucking. Then he held out his hand and Austin gave him the flashlight. After that, he turned back to Betty. Though he was still working her from behind, he was also doing something different now. It was hard to make out because of the dark, but it looked like he was nibbling along her spine, slowly making his way down her back towards her ass.

"No, no," I heard Steve breathe beside me. "What's he gonna do? What's he gonna do?"

A new silence came over us then. We gripped each other's arms and watched with a sense of expectation. Then Jake plunged his head forward, face-first into her ass.

The silence that followed came so suddenly that I thought one of us was going to call out. Our knuckles must've all been white, we were gripping each other's arms so hard. But then, out of no where, there was this funny rustling sound, and we all turned to each other with puzzled faces. The sound was not coming from either Betty or Jake, and it didn't even seem human. You could barely hear it, it was so low, but it was definitely a ruffling or rustling of some sort. Austin hushed us. Then he crept forward and peered higher over the end of the couch. Just as he did so, a light came on, and we instantly drew back.

It was Jake with the flashlight. He was holding it up to his face. He waved us up closer and then plunged his head down into Betty's ass again. Because we'd moved back, we couldn't see him or Betty at all anymore. Just a dim yellow spot of light coming up over the edge of the couch. We all looked at each other. Then we edged back up to the couch. I don't think anyone wanted to be the first to look. Finally though, Austin made a face like he was gathering up all his courage, and then went for it. We all followed.

In the light from the flashlight, we could see Jake's face in between Betty's cheeks, his nose plumped smack right in her crack. She was lying completely flat on her stomach with her face submerged in the pillow. Neither of them was moving, and it was very quiet. Then it started again, the rustling sound. It started low and stifled, but then it gradually began to grow louder and more distinct.

"What the dang?" Maguire said.

Betty started to giggle and wiggle. At first she only giggled a little, but as the rustling sound grew, she really began to squirm. She was lifting her head up from the pillow and craning her neck around, trying to look, but Jake kept pushing her face back down into the pillow.

"Wha, wha?" she was saying. "Wha is tha? Tha ickles."

As we peered harder into the dark, we could see that Jake was doing something with his mouth. His cheeks kept drawing and puffing, like he was blowing on something.

"Wha? Wha is tha? Stop tha. Tha ickles. Wha'er you doing you?"

Jake rose and drew his face away. He was still making the puffing motion with his mouth though. And in between puffs, he started talking, too.

"Like leaves of trees in the summer breeze," he was saying. "Like leaves of trees in the summer breeze."

Then, as he raised the flashlight clear to his face, we saw what was making the rustling sound. A small white square of toilet paper was stuck in the crack of Betty's ass.

"Like leaves of trees in the summer breeze," Jake kept saying, as he blew on the piece of toilet paper. "Like leaves of trees in the summer breeze."

And as he turned his head to look at us with the flashlight held up close under his chin, illuminating his face in half-light and grinning his faraway, ghost grin, I think that was about the strangest and happiest I'd ever seen Jake look in all his life.

## ABOUT JOSEPH MODUGNO

Joseph Modugno is a recent graduate of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, where he studied English, Journalism, and Philosophy. Prior to going to UMass, Joseph spent a year at the United States Military Academy at West Point. During his junior year, he studied abroad in Norwich and Oxford England and backpacked through Europe. Currently, he is working as a substitute teacher in Milton, Massachusetts. In June 2009, he will be leaving for overseas for two years to work as an English teacher in the Peace Corps.

His fiction and poetry has appeared in several undergraduate literary journals, including "The Jabberwocky" (UMass Amherst), "Shortcuts" (UMass), "Round Robin" (UMass), "Workshop" (University of East Anglia), and "The Circle in the Spiral" (U.S. Military Academy, West Point), and is forth-coming in ["Bent Pin Quarterly"](#) (January 2009).

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