

I'm Old Now

By C.M. STASSEL

I was sitting in my bathtub – soaking. The water had started to cool. In my hands which were dry I held “A Sport and a Pastime” by James Salter. I enjoy the novel but my mind wandered. Mainly, I thought of dropping the book. Not maliciously, just curiously. An accident. Drying out the sopping pages - the image was captivating. Water droplets falling from the ends of inked words caused me to remember a man named Bernel. A writer. A friend. He was writing a novel. “My fuckin’ novel” is what he called it. I wondered why he did that. “[His] fuckin’ novel.” I think it was because he was so deeply in love with the work. Such a powerful feeling can corral a person into a maddening corner.

The process of thought – my process, which was really not a process but a series – caused me to remember another friend and a forgotten time. The friend’s name was Corduroy and the time was childhood. My childhood. Both have long since gone away.

Corduroy was my dog. An amber Bloodhound. We were best friends. The first animal I ever loved. Corduroy loved, more than anything, to bury bones. By the time he was a year old our yard had been devoured by small heaps of dirt. This habit always astounded me. It amazed me.

I remember a conversation I once had with Corduroy about it all – the burying.

“Hi Corduroy.”

“Hi.” His voice was deep.

“Can I ask you something?”

“Of course. You can ask me anything.”

“Why do you love burying bones?”

He thought about the question, looking up at the ceiling as people sometimes do. No one had ever asked him and, until that moment, I don't think he had ever thought about it.

“I'm not really sure why I love it so much.” I waited quietly for him to elaborate. He panted there for a moment.

“I can't explain it but when I find a bone I immediately have a burning desire to bury it in the ground. To dig into the dirt and drop the bone in. I don't know...” He panted some more.

“...but I think I can honestly say that nothing gives me more joy in this world than burying a bone...no offense.”

“None taken.” I knew he loved me.

“I don't think I want to explain it or even understand it. It's something that's so great because I can't explain it. It's something that I just love.” He paused.

“...and it's just because I do.”

“Hmm.”

“I know it doesn't make much sense, but it's kind of poetic in a way – loving something so blindly.”

“Yeah. I guess it is.” I miss Corduroy. I do. We truly were the best of friends.

“Well, then I think you should never stop burying bones,” I said.

“Thank you.” He laughed and licked my face. “I think I will. Do you want to help me?”

“No thanks, Cord.”

“Okay.”

That was it. I really miss Corduroy. I don't have many conversations with dogs these days. I'm old now. Look at me. Reading a book in the bathtub. There's even a candle burning.

Hah. It's funny remembering. I'm not sure if I like it.