

*Mad for
Newyorktown*



Dark Verse and Light

by TERRY QUINN

PUBLISHED BY VIVISPHERE PUBLISHING, INC.

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Published in the United States
by Vivisphere Publishing, Inc.
A Division of NetPub Corp.
Poughkeepsie, NY

<http://www.vivisphere.com/>

ISBN 1-58776-031-2

Library of Congress Catalogue Number 00-101732

Manufactured in the United States of America

*Ahmed Cracks
the Cowhide*

Birds of a Certain Species

Don't say your heartblood doesn't quicken
when you read that birds of a certain species mate,
and if need be, mourn for life. My blood does.
As it does when, alone among multitudes in midtown
New York City, I think about an asymmetrical
head of hair, two delicate lips and hazel,
ever-changing eyes that, only in a sense
that doesn't matter to me, aren't mine.

What Do You Mean?

Carol,
Carol Edwards,
I cut my lying teeth on you.
And there's no way now I can let you know
how crippled with remorse I am.

“What do you mean?” I asked you
after kissing you at four grades' worth
of sweaty basement parties, when the nuns
we studied under warned how less than that
could damn a Christian for eternity . . .

after dancing slow with you in the parish gym
when stoat-eyed Father Clanahan did all he could
to locate upbeat 45's, to tighten light bulbs
we'd unscrewed, to keep the touching chaste . . .

after pedaling through your neighborhood
on a Schwinn, day after summer day — but never
down Monroe Street, Carol, never past your house —

only hoping you could feel the gentle pressure
of those endless, endless circles . . .

after hearing you tell what my scruple-wracked mind
branded a filthy joke — and that not to me
(You've never known I was at the cloakroom door)
but to Jeremiah Kelly. My rival. My successor? . . .

after turning colder and colder toward you the longer,
the louder I heard him laugh once you'd twisted
aspirins into *ass burns* for your punch line . . .

after paying you back good with seven months
of silence, yet not the glimmer of a clue
as to your “guilt,”

then, stiff in your arms at our graduation dance
and cursing the disease my furor had brought on
and listening to you make me the gift of that simple
wrenching cliché, “How about we bury the hatchet?”
oh Carol,

I looked straight into your clear green eyes
and shrugging asked “What do you mean?”

Darwin's Dream

Ballerina, ballerina.
Rockthighed, breastless,
scarywhite of neck and face.
Paddock-paraded and thoroughly bred,
by men's ideas, to junkable perfection.
Break a leg, darling,
and you might as well be shot.
Coup-de-graced right out there
in a thunderous arena — forever
for you alone
gone quiet.