

IMAGE OUT *Write*

Volume Eight



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Table of Contents

THE MOON IN JUNE.....	1
THE SWAN RAMBLER	3
ODE TO LIFEGUARDING.....	19
PETE, ME, AND MYSTERY.....	27
WHEN WE WERE EIGHT	35
LIFE TIME.....	39
DAYNA DANCING	65
CAMILLA.....	67
RITA DOLORES	75
SHE'S A BEAST	99
ALIEN LOOKS	101
NOT GAY AS IN HAPPY, QUEER AS IN FUCK YOU	123
MY KIND OF OBSCENITY.....	125
NOT VERY (READ "AT ALL") CATHOLIC.....	145
FOLLOW YOUR FETISH.....	147
MY BROTHER ASKS IF GETTING FUCKED IS LIKE TAKING A SHIT	173
SO YOU'RE A FAGGOT	175
MIDNIGHT COWBOY, X RATING	197
MODERN LOVE	199
SELF-PRESERVATION	229
BEWARE, THE TEMPTRESS COMES.....	231
HEART OF COAL.....	241
OVER A CUP OF TEA	243
MOONLIGHT SERENADE: SUMMER 1939	257
ANDY WARHOL GETS MARRIED IN HEAVEN.....	263
AUTHOR ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	265
EDITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	270

MOONLIGHT SERENADE: SUMMER 1939

Jack Fritscher

For the 50TH Anniversary of Stonewall

Stonewall 50/WorldPride

Reel 1

Quick queers in the Sixties and Seventies
born in the Depression Thirties
and the boomer Forties
Radio music and 78-rpm records
the soundtrack to the world war
of our detonating childhoods
grown men marching away
leaving us pierced to the heart
crying in pre-school panic
re-curved into fetal thumb sucking
curdling into romantic yearning,
morose delectation for them.

Reel 2

Surviving silent
the conformity of the Fifties,

Jimmy Dean on the Drive-In screen,
rock and roll spinning teen angels
centrifuge toward rebellion with cause,
unbeaten beatniks beating bongos
caffeinated coffee house howling
waking us to our twenties
outspoken in the Sixties and Seventies,
we war babies
politics personal
flowers in our hair
striking campuses
constructing resistance
protesting war
marching for civil rights
driving Old Dixie down
finding strength by facing fear
raging into Stonewall.

Reel 3

A hundred movies nostalgic
for war and remembrance
begin on screen
“Summer 1939”
the last anxious summer
before war book-ended love stories,
birthing my queer story:

during the bright noon hour
of that year's longest day,
Midsummer's Eve,
born of my sire, born of my dam,
Summer Solstice
sacramental sex magic
pulsing holy rhythms in my brain.
In movie palaces, incoming
through the window of the screen,
newsreel atrocities
in a world gone mad
unreeling in black and white
between a musical and a western
corpses of children hanging by their thumbs
shocking our innocence with trauma,
hardening fear of death
into death-defying eros,
reaching the age of reason
and anxiety at six,
battle-weary little men
refusing to play soldier
knowing too much too soon
when the war, which wars never do, ended
and the men came marching home again
hoorah hoorah
in their gabardine uniforms
smelling of barracks and cigarettes and aftershave

tossing us kids up high joy into the air
catching us in their strong arms
because we were what they were fighting for
until we had to fight them,
those veterans suddenly seeing who we are.

Reel 4

I will die wanting to forget
ration stamps for food, for coffee,
for shoes, for nylons, for typewriters,
no gas, no tires, no cars,
nightly blackouts
air-raid wardens patrolling
our dark neighborhood sidewalks,
lights out in every house,
as we sat sweet lilac night
visiting on summer porches,
a parley of women and boys and girls,
talking of peas in our victory gardens
rocking on wooden chairs,
the metal porch gliders gone for scrap
for armored tanks and battle ships,
talking of soldiers
husbands fathers brothers sons gone,
tolerating kindly the porch-step company
of one inconvenient young man 4F

with flat feet and glasses and violet eyes,
a lodger sharing his ration book for a spare room,
so bashful a bachelor, so book in hand, so nice
and down the block in the tender June night
we could hear a lonely woman,
mannish, they called her,
playing "Moonlight Serenade"
on her Victrola,
humming a love song
to her bob-cropped darling
serving far away,
a quarter century before,
woke with war,
our marginal militia
of Marsha and Sylvia
cast the first stone.