

The Accident

A Morning's Mindstream

by Alan Harris

WHEN THE WISPY CRUMPETS of goodness deserve the sweet kiss of death and live on with all people who like me because I'm good and Marilyn swings her blonde hair over my lips with speed pushing our convertible with joy excitement fun turn the corner while the barn goes by and horses laugh as I curse my head and see the folly of scattered weeds dying in the sun and honeybees are stuffing their honey into the hive oh honey it's a quarter to seventy-six trombones led the alarm clock is better than nothing but not much I love you in the kitchen getting breakfast lazy husband dread anticipate herding the crazies at the hospital the brightness of the sun against our wall at \$60 a month a bargain if you think about it and look for underclothes and find them and put a Freudian leg through Jungian drawers I'm sick of Freud and automatic contorting and flipping around gets your clothes on faster than a camel's eye of a needle how come some one and some two humps but religion is often a good force while Faulkner is a Christ for other writers his long fingers rake the mud where lungfish walked and as he looks down the funnel of historical mutations and says what he sees you'll wonder where the yellow went when you brush your teeth with Pepsodent, Pepsodent, Pepsodent say it hot and write education textbooks about experimental experiments and number off the ideas of mankind in a neat column but blink the stereo speakers and flowers on top fertile artificial Easter egg the dark winter morning and morning and morning creeps in this petty race of rats and Poe's scented ropes break apart just in time for breakfast Wheaties are so orange and crinkly and light the green tablecloth is dirty with stains of the finer things of life that give us pot-bellies thank you God for everything my third grade Sunday school teacher taught me that but she didn't mean it and I do because even though I'm no holier than cow in the greenery of the sumptuous summer pasture now is frozen over but we still have the milk of human kindness big teats give watery milk but little teats give pure cream with sometimes some vodka molecules mixed in between the milk molecules to help us see the truth and not have to worry at all about the six count them six meanings of Eliot's patient etherised upon a table one an anesthetic two an impotent modern man dressed in sterile white three a heavenly sunset symbol like a little man so patient he could walk up and down stairs and worry about his tie pin while broads come and go and look at Michelangelo's pictures of naked men in dark corners and then go to parties to see who can be the artiest and suavest of all sunsets as his trousers fail to wade into the sea of life and fail to play around a little like a crab that never drinks coffee or gets pinned to the wall by a stare or gets scared seeing a hairy arm in front of a light or worries about sawdust on the ocean floor at all at all et cetera and so forth but never back always forth and fight the silly war like a battery shorting itself out wasting all its energy heating up the wire and canceling itself out like two kids who get orders to kill each other because of opposite polarity so do and then their parents cry but one side wins so that kid becomes a martyr and the other kid does too for a losing cause so is even greater and the generals get another man each from the warehouse called the draft of hot air and Biblical references justifying the murder of other men as long as they're on the other side and the other cheek always wins except when it doesn't and then gets slapped to a bloody pulp but not between the teeth of love which

proves that sonnets can be manufactured as a joke and appear profound and get all kinds of meanings read into them and everybody has a good laugh but maybe the words had some meaning anyway or else just sounded good who knows why paranoids are always afraid of cops maybe they personify death or God or Dad or Khrushchev or the devil or a mental hospital nun with a clipboard I wish I could work somewhere besides the crazy bin of course it's almost sacrilegious to compare a mental patient to an animal but sometimes I wish I hadn't gone to the Brookfield Zoo where the snakes stuck out their tongues and slithered around while the animals outside looking in tapped the glass and ogle-eyed and pointed like they'd never seen this animal before well I hadn't but they had so they were spoiling the whole thing but I liked it anyway I'll go back someday and get disillusioned and cynical about it and then I'll wonder why I went back but more than that why I get disillusioned and cynical about things that don't amount to much since a lot of people enjoy zoos so why begrudge them a little fun I love a good woman like her who's always puttering because she's dedicated to the ancient myth that the women should do the household work while the men sit around on their overstuffed chairs slouched back so far they can set their beer cans on top of their beer-bellies with no falling off and wonder why they're not as vigorous and virile as they imaginarily once were or actually once were sometimes trucks can really foul traffic up that idiot didn't even look before he pulled over the big galoot of course Volkswagens like mine don't count sort of like the ants that people step on even when the ants aren't in the way whoever tripped over an ant anyway people are just cruel and they have to feel like they can conquer something so they step on an ant and then listen closely so they can hear the crunch or the squish depending on how big the ant is and if they miss and it gets away they get madder than a general who loses a couple of enemy soldiers but if he ever finds them they may as well hang it up like the time Uncle Pete told about in World War II when they'd caught this guy and brought him into camp and were sitting around drinking beer and laughing while this guy was really scared because he spoke only Japanese and he thought they were going to torture him but pretty soon a couple of them came over to him and motioned for him to go yes we set you free they say in sign language but he got all nervous and thought they would kill him if he ran off but they said no no you go on now we're setting you free just run along back to your own camp so he hesitated a little but then ran as fast as he could away from that camp and some of the red-blooded clean-living American soldier boys opened up two submachine guns on him and he was in three or four sections before he hit the ground and they had a good laugh but not Uncle Pete who wonders why we sort of forget about these incidents when we talk about evil Communists and concentration camps and cattle cars and all that malarkey "met him in a restaurant once in Beverly Hills" "Beverly Hills yeah well Lyle is is uh is uh a member of of of a little outfit that we have and uh li-little organization comprised of Ralph Snyder, Lyle Randolph, uh Charlie Grady, and yours truly" I wonder why I ever turn that radio on there's only one good station and it doesn't play any worthwhile music until 8:00 just when I'm getting out of the car the whole world must be against me or something but it's my own fault for not getting an FM radio or else just driving to work without any music at all then I'd have to think or watch the road and we couldn't have that unless the morning view were a little more beautiful than it is with the haze hanging over Peoria I wonder if the cops are out this morning with their radar they really probably think they're smart when they catch somebody coasting down the hill at a little over 60 one guy has the radar and checks the speed while the chase car is about a quarter-mile further along getting the message and flagging down the driver who is probably late to work already and doesn't need anybody telling him he's going too fast or anybody telling him he shouldn't do this I wonder what a cop says to a guy when he gets him inside of his patrol car where

they always look like they're discussing free will versus determinism or whether US Steel is a solid investment or whether sex is really a major problem on today's college campuses except you can see that the driver has a sort of defensive but cool look on his face while the cop is trying to be friendly as he sternly attacks sort of like a cat with a mouse out in open territory or an American soldier with a Japanese prisoner but cops always seem afraid that people are afraid of them so they try to be friendly and nonchalant yet still slap a fine on you which is mainly why people are afraid of cops well let's get out of that circle and onto this ramp and see if there's anybody coming no well we're safe till the first stop light and who knows what will "30 Speed Limit" okay "Right Lane Ends Ahead" okay so everybody else now gets out of the right lane which doesn't really end ahead and into the left lane where they have to wait for about 38 cars to make a left turn in front of them as those cars in turn have to wait till the oncoming traffic has all passed and by that time the light is red again so you're still 38 cars behind the light until you get wise like me and pull into the right lane which didn't really end so here I go sailing by all those drivers that believe in signs because their mothers taught them to with the only advantage being that they will not get to their busywork office jobs quite on time and thus will not waste quite so much time dictating nothing letters to nothing people on nothing subjects now already here's the beautiful little intersection of College and Main and here I am in the right lane and here's a green light so I'll just chug on through and drat I never could figure why they let guys park up ahead there it's a menace to what is she doing hey she hit me and she isn't even going to stop to exchange information well two can play this game and I plan to get her for not only hitting but running that's about the least courteous thing she could have done not that women are usually very concerned about courtesy men are supposed to look out for them and throw their coats down in front of them well I'm not throwing my Volkswagen down for her Chrysler to run over although maybe she thought that's what I was doing oh turning a corner are you well fine but you forget that I can turn corners too you didn't disable me that much I see you yes don't pretend like you don't know what happened a Chrysler may have a thick hide but you had to hear that bump just as well as I could oh here you give up do you well I'll just pull into this parking lot right here beside you and we'll have a nice little chat what a lovely day for an accident don't you think I do yes lovely well go ahead and get out of that tank I've got to get to work there now you're out "Did you hurt your car?" how much gall would it take for her to say that how much Lord "Well either I did or else someone else hurt it but I'm not just sure yet" "You pulled into me. I just kept going straight in the same lane and you pulled right into my lane" "Yes mam but if you had only noticed that I was trying to avoid an illegally parked car and if you had only noticed that there was nothing coming ahead of us and if you had only pulled over a little to the left we could have avoided this" "Well you pulled left into me" "I'd rather not argue about this mam the insurance companies can decide whose fault it was but could I please have your name and address and the name of your insurance company" "Really I'm late to class already" then we exchange insurance information "OK I have to get to class it didn't hurt my car so there won't be any claim against you" how much Lord how much gall would it take to say it that way she should have had somebody take away her candy or paddle her when she was a toddler or at least when she was a child of sixteen the impudent irresponsible coed oh I forgot to remind her that it isn't considered correct etiquette by Emily Post to put a dent in the left front fender of an orderly's Volkswagen and then drive away as if ignoring it erases everything in fact cops don't even consider this lawful and that's exactly who's going to hear about this you go to class and climb your ivory tower another step or two but you're not done with this and I'll give you a one-year warranty on that including all parts and labor I'm so mad I can't see straight hey get ahold of

yourself and watch the road or you'll get into a worse accident here by the mental hospital I hope none of those patients see me pulling in that one guy should never have been given a grounds pass the other day he wanted to know what kind of car I drive I'm sure so he could smash the windows how did I ever get this job I must have read way too much T.S. Eliot before I flunked out

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