

BAD LUNCH

by Oscar Treadwell

HE DIDN'T THINK ABOUT THE SMELL
STANDARD LUNCH ROOM ODORS
A FAINT WHIFF OF URINE
SEEPED FROM THE REST ROOM DOOR
AND MIXED WITH TURNIPS BOILING
ON A STOVE, WHERE COFFEE STAINS
HAD MADE RIVULETS DOWN
THE PORCELAIN OVEN DOOR.

HE DIDN'T WANT TO SIT, BOOTHS
HAD MARKS OF FOOD STUFF AND PAPER TRASH.
A WAITRESS USED A GRAY RAG
TO WIPE A TABLE AND TOLD HIM
TO SIT HERE. HE SAT AND SAID COFFEE
JUST COFFEE, AS SHE DISAPPEARED
THROUGH THE KITCHEN DOOR.

HE TRIED TO FIND SOMETHING TO LOOK AT
AND NOTICED HIS HANDS LOOKED OLD
AND HIS NAILS RAGGED. ANOTHER VOICE
ASKED HIM, WHAT'LL YOU HAVE?
HE HESITATED. SHE SAID DON'T WORRY
TAKE YOUR TIME AS SHE DID A PIROUETTE
AND WENT THROUGH THE EMPLOYEES ONLY DOOR.

ALTHOUGH OUT OF EAR SHOT HE CALLED
TO HER, COFFEE, JUST COFFEE.
THE FIRST WAITRESS PLOPPED A GLASS
OF WATER ON THE TABLE AND ASKED,
WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE? HER APRON
STRING LASSOOD THE GLASS OF WATER
SPILLING IT ON THE TABLE AND ONTO THE FLOOR.

HE TRIED TO HOLD THE WATER BACK AND STOOD
UP TO AVOID THE SPILL, WHEN THE WATER
FLOWED THROUGH HIS FLY AND TO HIS LEG.
ONCE AGAIN HIS FLY WAS OPEN AND HE
RUSHED TO ZIPPER IT UP. WITH ALL
THIS EXCITEMENT HE FELT HE HAD TO PEE,
HE HURRIED OUT THROUGH THE MEN'S ROOM DOOR.

AS HE RUSHED THROUGH THE DOOR, HE
CAUGHT HIS FLY ON THE DOOR KNOB AND
IT RIPPED HIS PANTS TO THE POCKET.
HE RAN TO THE URINAL, LOOKED DOWN
AND SAW BITS OF TOBACCO AND BROWN
PAPER, DANCING IN A POOL OF GREEN OOZE.
HE WENT AND FLUSHED IT UNAWARE OF THE SIGN ON THE DOOR.

IN BOLD LETTERS IT SAID, DO NOT FLUSH.
HE COVERED HIMSELF AS BEST HE COULD
AND RUSHED BACK TO HIS SEAT. TO BE
GREETED BY A PLEASANT VOICE SAYING
HAVE YOU MADE UP YOUR MIND? HE NOW
HAD IT DOWN PAT, COFFEE, JUST COFFEE.
A BIG MAN IN A WHITE HAT PUSHED THRU THE KITCHEN DOOR.

THE BIG MAN CAME UP TO HIM AND ASKED
IF HE HAD JUST USED THE JOHN. DID YOU SEE
THE DO NOT FLUSH SIGN? YES BUT IT WAS TOO
LATE. THE BIG MAN SAID YOU HAVE JUST
FLOODED THE KITCHEN. BUT I, HE SAID.
NEVER MIND SAID THE BIG HAT, LEAVE
I WANT TO SEE YOU GO OUT THE FRONT DOOR.

A PRETTY VOICE CALLED, WOULD YOU LIKE SOME CRACKERS?