

Mr. Kaffeemann's Flat

Dorit Paul

I HAD been asked by the executor of Mr. Kaffeemann's will to pick out some memento from his possessions. Despite our short acquaintance, he had written to his lawyer that I was, in case of his demise, to receive something to remind me of him. The lawyer had told me that he always checked on his will before each trip, although he had little to bequeath and few to whom to give it. So I had not only to arrange for the transportation of his corpse from Lugano to Zurich, but also to visit my friend's apartment for the first time when he could no longer receive me. So here I was.

Evidences of Mr. Kaffeemann's schizophrenic life could be seen all over the flat. The walls were hung densely with pictures of mountains and mountain climbing. They were mostly cheap prints or clippings from magazines, but immaculately framed and mounted. The lone bookcase contained mostly books on medicine written for the layman, and as I looked over them I saw they dealt chiefly with heart ailments and blood pressure, the diseases which afflicted him. He also had a chart on the wall which evidently represented his deductions as to his possible life-span. He had carefully calculated how many high altitude journeys his heart could take. This morbid and no doubt medically incorrect chart was juxtaposed with an exceptionally lifelike picture of two young supermen about to reach the peak of the Matterhorn. Poor Mr. Kaffeemann had surrounded himself even in his home with pictures of the mountains he loved, and which he felt would kill him if he approached them too closely.

Stuck away in a corner alcove at the darkest end of the already dim room I found several swimming trophies. I had not realized he had been such a good swimmer. His careless tossing of these trophies into an odd corner made me see all the more how little he thought of the abilities he did have, and how much he yearned for achievements impossible for him, or which he thought were so.

Aside from the meticulously hung pictures and the straight rows of his books the apartment was undistinguished. I had expected it to have at least one of the many views Zurich affords of its lake and surrounding mountains. But the house was located in a small alley and his view consisted of dirty gables and angular roofs. The sky was visible, but everything else one saw out the window was man-made. I knew he could afford better; his flat was another example of the self-deprivations to which he had subjected himself in his life. He had purposely chosen a room without a view.

The furniture was dull, and seemed old and abused. The couch was gray, and the three uncomfortable chairs in the room were faded green. He could not possibly have worn out this furniture himself, living alone and solitary as he did, and no sun came into the room

to fade anything. He must either have bought it second hand or accepted hand-me-downs.

There was just the one room; he slept on a bed which collapsed from a closet. The kitchen was in a recess off the wall. The glass-enclosed cabinets again revealed the sharp contrasts which marked his life. All his dishes were of fine china, and here as in the living room there was a profusion of hand-painted ceramics. I lifted an ashtray to confirm a suspicion, and was right. All his ceramics were from the factory on the Zurichberg, a mountain near the town.

He had no bathtub, only a shower. He had once confided to me that he was afraid he might fall asleep or slip in a tub and drown himself. Poor Mr. Kaffeemann! Afraid to drown in a tub, but willing to swim in the largest sea. Afraid of a heart attack if he stayed in the Alps, but ultimately drowning in a lake.

The room was small, and despite its few furnishings seemed crowded. In the poor light, the heavily hung walls seemed to press in upon me. I wondered how Mr. Kaffeemann, or anyone else for that matter, could bear to live here. I reflected that when he was in his bed at night he must have been even more enclosed: the closet doors flanked the bed like devilish sentinels.

The gay pictures on the nondescript beige wall, the delicately painted ashtrays on the shabby table, the prominent medical books and the uncherished trophies—what a sad life my friend must have had. I picked up one of the ashtrays on which was depicted a rolling alpine landscape and fled.

Grandmother's Advice

Betty Winn Fuller

My grandmother may have been in her heyday at a time when all a girl was supposed to do to attract a man was give him a coy look from behind a fan, but believe me, when it came to understanding male psychology my grandmother had Dr. Kinsey beat a mile. She was a real help to me when I was in college—thanks to her expert coaching, I never had to worry about where my next date was coming from. At first some of her advice sounded a bit old-fashioned in view of present-day methods, but a girl is willing to try almost anything once, and to my amazement, her way worked like a charm.

That's why, when I met Donald P. Easterman, I wasn't a bit worried. All the girls on campus nearly fell on their faces every time he walked into the grill at noon. He used to sit down at the Delt table, and the parade would begin. It's really amazing how many things girls can remember up at the lunch counter, and how many trips past the Delt table they suddenly had to make to get there. Of course if they happened to know one of the boys at the table, that made it even better. They could always think of something they just