

Oh my God, he thought. Remember remember what? He smiled modestly, and said, "Well, I—" letting his voice trail off.

"The anniversary of the day we met! It was at that party of the Powells and—" her voice trailed off too. He began to breathe again.

Her arm was linked with his now. "And I stopped at Moran's for gas today, and he told me all about the trouble you had last night. You poor lamb, why didn't you tell me?"

He knew enough to kill his smile. "About last night, I was tired and grumpy. I'm sorry."

"Jim," Janet said. "Let's forget all about last night."

"That suits me fine." He looked at his image in the rearview mirror and raised his eyebrows. Sometimes, you just didn't know what the hell was going on in a woman's mind.

THE FINALE

Dying in a grand leap before the pain
Of falling surged from the earth again,
The soul rising beyond thighs tight with strain
And the doll topples. . . .

Worn point shoes lying fallow in a drawer
Bear rosined witness to once-spotlit wear
While once pink ribbons whiten year by year,
Fade as she watches.

He* too fell, already mad, as his wife
Pitying from the wings, on his behalf
Prayed for his death whose dancing was his life
Before his madness. . . .

Unfeeling, childlike, immortal thighs
As ivories unguided, flesh could rise
Thoughtward, without the wounded falcon's cries.
Such is God's mercy.

Yet her heart, polished as a hussar heel,
Beats homage to the challenge of a smile
From her constant companion, to whose will
She once submitted.

Her eyes dance with young Vienna couples
And sometime swans on Sunday promenades
With Chopin and Liszt, music and love's wiles.
Tempus fugisset.

BILL MCPHERSON

* Vaslav Nijinsky (1890-1950), Russian ballet dancer.