

THE NIGHT BEFORE

Part III — The moment of truth is near.

*Last night is the night I will remember you by
When I think
Of things we did
It makes me want to cry*

(Beatles, 1965)

The honks of taxicabs were Miles Braun's alarm. Another day to worry about. He draped on his robe and shuffled over to the window. As the sun peaked over the city skyline, he squinted to see the morning rush. It reminded him of blood cells rushing through a vein, from a film he saw in science class. He scratched his flat top and walked into the bathroom. Today was the day he had to see Helen.



John Rood

It had been an electric Christmas for Miles — an electric razor, electric toothbrush and a hi-fi phonograph. The first two gifts sat on his dresser unused. He feared being electrocuted in his own bathroom.

Miles stood before the mirror. "Hello, Helen. It's so nice to see you again," he nervously rehearsed. A grin surfaced. "Now she's got me talking to myself," he disclosed to the reflection. He proceeded to brush his teeth meticulously, as if before a dentist appointment.

Miles knew he had to look his best. He would wear what Flip would refer to as "funeral threads." He walked over to the closet and pulled out his finest. A charcoal flannel suit, white wing-collared oxford shirt, gray and black-striped narrow silk tie.

"Looks like the ol' wingtips need a buffin'," he thought as he searched the room for his shoeshine kit. He found it under the bed, next to a familiar shoebox and pulled them both out.

It was the ViewMaster he had spotted, the toy that had made Helen's family so filthy rich and socially prominent in the Big Apple. Miles flipped through his discs — Superman, Mr. Ed., Howdy Doody, Gunsmoke. Gazing through the ViewMaster spurred a look back through his memory. Of Helen. Of the times they had together, the plans they had made.

Miles saw the separation as only temporary, but an inspiration to him, to do whatever it took to win her back. He put the ViewMaster away and went through the dressing ritual, like a matador before the fight. He even slapped on a bit of "Lust Nectar" cologne Flip had once given him. He straightened his tie, put on his overcoat and scarf and left with a burst of desperate confidence.

Taxi fare to the museum was expensive, but a small price to pay for the rekindling of romance, for chivalry. Helen had worked there since he had known her, since the Woodwards had donated an undisclosed beneficiary to the museum — the price of social acceptance.

Miles wasn't too fond of modern art, and his friends were even less appreciative. Flip was once kicked out for being too loud — he was laughing at the price asked for a prized finger-painting.

Miles arrived at the moment of truth, he ran his hands through his crew cut and paced up the stairs, hitting every step. The confidence was the beginning to drain from his armpits. He reached the top and paused. With a deep breath, he spun through the revolving door. His unshined wingtips clapped out echoes as he walked through the gallery to find Helen, to

face his phobia.

Helen Woodward sat before a fountain, gazing down at her reflection in the pool. Poised and pure. Her amber curls perched upon a tan cashmere cardigan, a burgundy wool skirt draped smoothly down to her calves. Miles recognized her soft beauty and stood behind her, admiring, pondering her reaction. He straightened his tie and posture, took a deep breath, and walked boldly toward the fountain. He neglected to wipe the beads of sweat from his brow.

Next time: Helen speaketh.

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Juan Hernandez—Folk Singer
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- 10:00-12:00 noon NE Union Cultural Identity with Ralph Grajeda, Key Nickel, Juan Hernandez & Marty Ramirez
- 1:00-3:00 pm NE Union Featured Speaker: Rodolpho "Corky" Gonzalez
- 7:00 pm NE Union Guest Speaker: Corky Gonzalez
- 10:00 am Pioneers Park 6th Annual M.A.S.A. Fun Run
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