2012

Dogs can Fly

Russ Canham
Concordia University-Portland

Follow this and additional works at: http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean

Part of the Creative Writing Commons

Recommended Citation
Canham, Russ (2012) "Dogs can Fly," The Promethean; Vol. 20 : Iss. 1 , Article 11.
Available at: http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean/vol20/iss1/11
Every Saturday night our household had a particular custom. At 7:00 o’clock our Grandmother commandeered our only television in order to watch Saturday Night Wrestling. My parents and my sisters couldn’t figure out why this particular program held her interest. This program was the local version, sort of like the minor leagues of wrestling. Most of the combatants were overweight and lacked the rudimentary skills, but they had flashy names and would prance about the ring and beat their chest like a perverted version of an Orwell novel. She had her favorites; Tony Bourne, Lonnie Mayne and Dutch Savage could do no wrong.

My grandmother had moved in with us to provide babysitting and the majority of the meals since mom worked and dad couldn’t turn on the stove without burning down the house.

“KIDS, WE NEED TO GET SUPPER!” our father’s baritone voice boomed off the walls of our house.

“WE HAVE 5 MINUTES!” he continued as he picked up the keys off the kitchen counter. To my sisters and me, this was our signal to head towards the “red torpedo.”

My older sister Karen named our father’s pride and joy, his 1965 Pontiac Bonneville the “red torpedo,” a deep red on the exterior and jet black top and interior. Like a torpedo that zeros in on its target, dad’s torpedo always found its destination in the shortest time possible, especially with dad behind the wheel.

We reached the curb just as dad started the engine and was lowering the top. Jumping in, I noticed our dog, a long-haired Pekinese named Dolly, wanted to go. By the time we started up the hill, all of us had taken our assigned seats: Karen up front with dad, my younger sister Donna and me in the back.

Our destination was the Speck drive-in, 6 blocks away at the top of the hill. As we screamed up the hill, my dad had this content look on his face and I always thought he imagined himself at Daytona, piloting the red torpedo into turn 3 with the checkered flag in mind.
At the top of the hill sitting at the drive-in, we took inventory to see if anything flew out of the car. Dolly was the lightest and still in the back; we deemed this a successful trip. The red torpedo was still smoking and groaning as we started back down the hill. My little sister Donna had the responsibility of holding the two buckets of chicken that epitomized our dinner. As the red torpedo gained speed we were in sight of the house when Karen looked towards the trunk and saw Dolly standing in the center.

I have always marveled at that little dog's ability to balance on a trunk of a moving car racing down a hill. She might have stayed there had Karen not tugged at my dad's sleeve. What happened next has been the stuff of legend in the Canham household. Many versions exist, but I believe mine is most accurate: as dad saw Dolly on the trunk, he did not hesitate and slammed on the brakes. The red torpedo was a very fast car but it could also stop on a dime with two cents change. As my body bounced against the back of the front seat, I saw Dolly flying through the air. Just before she slapped against the windshield, she had the most content look on her face; I thought I saw her smile. Since my father thought seat belts were an unnecessary government intrusion, everything not nailed down defied gravity and hit whatever was in front of them.

Realizing what he had done, my father screamed: "SAVE THE CHICKEN!" I was still seeing stars, picking chicken pieces off my shirt when I sat up and realized we lost one bucket. I told my sister to be quiet because if we told our father he would want to take the red torpedo back up to the drive-in. I don't remember the rest of the trip home because my stars turned into short bouts of blackout. As we were coming through the front door, Dolly was the only member of our party who displayed no ill effects. It looked like she still had a smile on her face.

Our grandmother, still transfixed to the television commented: "You missed Tony Bourne absolutely demolishing Shag Thomas."