

Lana Takes Retirement

M. Kaul

It was yesterday that my friend Alan told me casually
That his wife Lana had decided to retire.

Though Lana's retirement has been a conversation
Between us for the last few years,
Yesterday's news gave me a pained quiver -
Its abruptness transmitting a cool disturbance through the spine,
As deep within me I thought she would not have liked to retire,
Unless confronted with the absurdities of life.
But this logical supposition may be exactly
What was not in her mind when she decided to take the retirement.
Against life we are all bumbling adolescents.

There is no definition of wisdom as applied to the conduct of human life.
Every golden rule of life is subject to debate.
What is life? - or, what is valuable in it, has been
A question tossed to every generation to answer,
With varying answers and variable meanings,
Depending on whose interpretation is considered.

Why does anyone retire when a lifetime has been invested
In the pursuit and development of worldly work? -
When one does not know any other way to live.
These questions remain unanswered,
As life fights its easy understanding.

Lana spent eighteen years in N.J. school system,
Teaching rich kids languages and other fine subjects.
She found a strong bond with her work -
As she is inclined to form with anything she does with good reason.

Years of teaching sowed in her the seeds of seeing
The possibilities in the kids,
Which lay inherently in their nature -

Unexplored and underdeveloped.
Teaching also sometimes opens windows
In teachers' minds, on a different life, on a different world.

Replanting herself in Florida,
Lana is conjuring a different calm, painting a different scene,
Which may engender a state of mind
Conducive to writing -
A fragile but surviving emotion in her,
A subliminal ambition daring to leap out now for fruition -
A veiled agenda well hidden so long.

She thinks she can push to a comfortable proximity
Her sprawling family and get away from
The torment of a working life.
She wants to contemplate Florida's and her life's horizon.
(While Alan will count the coins
And measure up Floridian fair fannies,
Though he will be unable to stay in Florida too long,
Because of its philistine and vapid culture.)

Apart from all the dreaming which a retirement triggers,
Isn't it after all an assiduous planning of the ultimate retirement?
Isn't compartmentalizing and packaging of the last part of our lives the ultimate
hypocrisy?
Why should we try to change ourselves, change the way we know best to live?
Why don't we accept the nature's agenda
And feel as a dancing bubble of protoplasm destined to burst,
Feel the nature in us and cherish the moment?

But the conventional drama of retirement
May hold the ultimate wisdom.
Human life can not be lived by facts only,
It is very much dependant on emotion and metaphor.
Man's worldly life is a rattling of a hollow tin can:
Confined, programmatic, materialistic.

Retirement creates an opportunity to get away from these and more:

It gives a taste of freedom though not necessarily freedom itself,
One can live in a cocoon and confine oneself to things close to one's heart,
Attempt to do things which were frivolous on world's watch,
Meditate on the mystery of human life
Or feel the curve of water below the sail-boat,
Write on the absurdities of life one experienced
And unabashedly espouse wisdom.

You can walk on a Floridian beach and smooth step into a reverie
On the bending horizon afar,
Contemplate the surface tension of water holding the sand below your feet,
Swim into your childhood,
Seeing new meaning in the old unsophisticated notions,
Try catching a rainbow without looking at your watch,
Put your head on a pillow of sand,
Transcending into sleep,
More refreshing than a walk through a fragrant, flowered meadow.

The possibility of reaching back to your roots which the world blocked,
The chance to be yourself and not become one of its programs,
The retirement does hold opportunities to liberate oneself from the worldly cage,
To contemplate the universe, to enjoy the beat of one's heart.

Lana, you have done the right thing,
You are attempting to arrive at a liberation from the world.