

My heart swam briefly

By Dave Hansen

Dec. 18, 1988

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My heart swam briefly just now as I walked past a blossoming cherry tree. They say spring does that — that fluttering, juvenile sensation which doesn't quite make it to the groin. Whatever it is, it hurts, innocently vague and pervasive, like a painless heart attack. I look back at the tree again, hoping to overcome this emotional fever. And there stands a splendid, lonely white tree; and here I stand, a gawking, redolent, lonely white tree. Perhaps it's the lonely connection which affects me. I am single, and as I walk on to school, I try not to notice the kissing couples — love birds — those swaggering men and voluptuous ladies. I hate spring. I get too distracted.

But it's necessary, I suppose, this natural, sexual distraction. We must procreate the species and all of that. Besides, after one accepts the enormity of seasonal changes and rising, sexual tides, better to enjoy it. So as I sit here in class, trying to fathom Kant's "Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics," I can't help but notice the soft, wavy brown hair that is cooing in front of me. I nonchalantly lean forward and smell without sniffing — you know, slow and deep, as you would a rose. I slump back lazily into my chair and hold the scent until I become slightly hypoxic, and then let out a minor groan and gasp quickly for air.

My heart swims again.

This time, though, I think it's because of some biological dysfunction. I regain my senses as the professor says, reading from the text, "I say that things as objects of our senses existing outside us are given, but we know nothing of what they may be in themselves, knowing only their appearances, that is, the representations which they cause in us by affecting our senses."

Indeed, my affected senses just about killed me.

He reads on, "Consequently, I grant by all means that there are bodies without us, that is, things which, though quite unknown to us as to what they are in themselves, we yet know by the representations which their influence on our sensibility procures us, and which we call bodies."

Bodies, lovely affecting bodies. But what bothers me is the "bodies without us" part. I think of the lonely cherry tree, the singular, kissing couples, the girl in front of me, alone, sitting in her chair, her bodies-without-us chair. Doesn't anyone sit in loveseats anymore?

And so I leave class following her. Every now and then I catch her scent, and my nostrils flair trying to retain it. She is soon lost in the crowd and I sit down under a tree. For a while, I watch students walk by but then lose interest and fall back on the ground to rest. I can't help but look up into the tree, and I notice a squirrel is watching me. I make a few clicking sounds and he moves, darting back and forth like he's trying to make an exquisite basketball move.

"Here kitty, kitty, kitty," I say. He stops.

"C'mere boy," I holler. He just stares.

I reach into the sky and form my hand as if I were holding a piece of bread. He leans forward and twitches his nose. I throw the imaginary piece of bread at the base of the tree. He scurries toward it. Figuring I've got him fooled, I feel guilty that I don't have anything to feed him. If he were a man, he'd probably hit me. He stops half way down the trunk of the tree and looks. I wave my arm again and he scoots to the bottom and jumps on the grass.

He looks at me and seems to say, "Well...?"

I smile and ask, "Do you want to go out on a date?"

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