Shut up and Eat Your Toad

James Tate

Follow this and additional works at: http://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview

Part of the Creative Writing Commons

Recommended Citation

Available at: https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.4657
SHUT UP AND EAT YOUR TOAD

The disorganization to which I currently belong has skipped several meetings in a row which is a pattern I find almost fatally attractive. Down at headquarters there’s a secretary and a janitor who I shall call Suzie and boy can she ever shoot straight. She’ll shoot you straight in the eye if you ask her to. I mow the grass every other Saturday and that’s the day she polishes the trivets whether they need it or not, I don’t know if there is a name for this kind of behavior, hers or mine, but somebody once said something or another. That’s why I joined up in the first place, so somebody could teach me a few useful phrases, such as, “Good afternoon, my dear anal-retentive Doctor,” and “My, that is a lovely dictionary you have on, Mrs. Smith.” Still, I hardly feel like functioning even on a brute or loutish level. My plants think I’m one of them, and they don’t look so good themselves, or so I tell them. I like to give them at least several reasons to be annoyed with me, it’s how they exercise their skinny spectrum of emotions Because. That and cribbage. Often when I return from the club late at night, weary-laden, weary-winged, washed out, I can actually hear the nematodes working, sucking the juices from the living cells of my narcissus. I have mentioned this to Suzie on several occasions. Each time she has backed away from me, panic-stricken, when really I was just making a stab at conversation. It is not my intention to alarm anyone, but dear Lord if I find a dead man in the road and his eyes are crawling with maggots, I refuse to say have a nice day Suzie just because she’s desperate and her life is a runaway carriage rushing toward a cliff now can I? Would you let her get away with that kind of crap?
Who are you anyway? And what kind of disorganization is this? Baron of the Holy Grail? Well it’s about time you got here. I was worried, I was starting to fret.