

"perfervid" outdistances in decadence.

"Monday, Monday, as the wistful song warns, can't trust that day." The wedding invitation arrived on Monday, requesting my presence on Friday at Linden Hall, where Roderick was to be joined in holy matrimony with Madeline on Saturday.

Wait! I remember why ending is best - it is more important to take away from sentence that narrator's presence is requested on Friday though nuptials are Saturday. Gotcha..

With evidence to the contrary.. the awkwardness re: how were these two best friends starts anew for me, but I'll read on & suspend judgement for now...

"be damned" is lame, however; be wary of laziness re: writing characters of dramatic gestures they require continual care not to lapse into cheesiness, the kind "intended ironically" included.

So, Roderick was not dead! Evidence to the contrary, an obit posted at our high school class's website, be damned! Roderick, almost certainly the fervid member of bands (marching, symphonic, concert, stage and rock), orchestras (symphony and concert) and clubs (Concert Choir and Modern Music Masters) documented in the obit, must have been the victim of a cruel joke. Or he was the prankster himself. My memory of him would not support the latter suspicion, but people change. And he could not be getting married and dead at the same time unless he had put that restless brain to some even crazier shit than mine. I inspected the envelope. The postmark looked legit, and indicated Roderick, if he was indeed the sender, lived in the community where he and I were raised. The thought that he had never left the womb sent a cold shiver down my spine. Instead: The suspension of time, the muffling effect this suggested to me of the life of a boy who swore, even in jest, that he'd leave town at 18. The next mystery was Linden Hall, a late Gilded Age mansion located in a quiet corner of our native southwestern Pennsylvania. Why get hitched there? The event's timing (inhospitable January) was also suspect, as was a footnote on the invite announcing that the newlyweds would spend their honeymoon at the Hall, rather than fly to sunny climes. A storm was brewing. For old time's sake, I tuned my rental car's radio to an AM station. The national weather service was dubbing the storm "Madeline," an odd coincidence. Treacherous road conditions between Pittsburgh airport and my destination treated me to near-death experiences as I struggled to unlock the code of the driving directions on the wedding invitation, printed in black Gothic script on imitation vellum. Outside my window, spindly branches waving precariously from leafless trees cautioned me against approaching a dark tunnel. A bridge over the frigid Youghiogheny River marked the point of no return. The radio's reception became spotty, voices fading in and out eerily. At a railroad crossing, a freight train almost slammed me violently to kingdom come.

yes, but you'll have to contend with the anomaly of tenderly nostalgic reference layers as held for example, the lyrics of a few song, at that first textual layer, or least, derives from a girl's response when asked for a motive for committing (gun) murder (I forget whether of parents or classmates, or whether she was American or British - but it was one or the other in both cases); she coolly answered "because I hate Mondays."

At a railroad crossing, a freight train almost slammed me violently to kingdom come. need adjective to modify "bridge" by the brush up of the present against of decades intelligent spirit of those educators and the hustlers and contraband school kids and to us boys - he was especially funny, is a bit of a mess, but he looks like a damn good prankster. Had Roderick been disabled? wheelchair bound, was he now grateful for all of the bridges he couldn't burn after all. Through Roderick had been a bit wild, of imagination, and alarmingly so - the world of parents, school admin, shopkeepers, and the elderly public at large.

and still are, a lot of quaint decorative, as well as hefty & functional bridges back home, this was more than a little disquieting. Had Roderick been disabled? wheelchair bound, was he now grateful for all of the bridges he couldn't burn after all. Through Roderick had been a bit wild, of imagination, and alarmingly so - the world of parents, school admin, shopkeepers, and the elderly public at large.

he had also been a boy of immensely creative, recog

To calm down, I glanced over the property's welcome brochure, as the Hall... etc.

Upon reaching the estate gates, I breathed a tentative sigh of relief. My mind was uneasy, but I was thankful to have my body in one piece. The Hall, dominating a small hill, beckoned: four floors, 35 rooms, 27 fireplaces, 13 bath-and-powder rooms (a resort brochure accompanied the invite) sealed in icicles.

unseen
unfelt

it's not a "resort," really

The shadow cast by the Hall directed my attention to the parking lot, which was filled with slush and ice instead of cars. Where were the other guests? Where was Roderick's car? Madeline's? There were no tracks in the snow - no trace of a rented Rolls-Royce, either. Ominous signs. I had RSVP'd that I would not be bringing a guest, therefore my hosts knew I would be alone.

newly
the obligatory ride of wedding couples & their parties

Good; nice & simple

now: pick one

The air bit like a sadistic nurse's needle stick. The struggle to maintain my balance on the slippery path leading up to the Hall distracted me from becoming alarmed by precipitation building a 785-acre white maze around me.

Not finding a soul at the front desk, I wandered the silent house in search of the happy couple. Roderick was in the Great Hall, alone.

boobytrapped roads

"I knew you would not abandon me, old friend," he said in greeting, and congratulated me on for not killing myself on the roads. I swallowed a petite tremor & fled away for later study.

I realized now, and would have imparted this irony of consistency "habitude" to Roderick, but before I could say anything further, he launched into... along with their youthful ends

Despite the passing of time, he looked remarkably the same: dressed in black like a rocker - like a mortician - like a groom. After congratulating me for not killing myself on the booby-trapped roads, he launched into a list of classmates who had pre-deceased us. The number who had evidently suffered great torments, practically defied belief, but Roderick was adamant. So, changing the subject, I popped the question.

passionate, solemn

"How did you meet your betrothed?"

wierd - he doesn't say which parent cool

"She is my step sister. Our divorced parents met, fell in love, one thing led to another. There she is now."

then (with italics)

As if on cue, a cacophony arose from the Hall's bowling alley.

"She plays a mean game of billiards too. And you will hear her tickling the ivories."

Roderick strode to red floor-to-ceiling drapes and pulled a golden velvet cord within with solemn fanfare, revealing an Aeolian pipe organ.

"Hand-carved. No, not by me. Some pipes, eh? Together with a set on the third floor, they generate a marvelous stereo effect."

Smiling with ^{hard} diabolical intensity at the musical edifice, Roderick proceeded to share the intimate detail that Madeline had selected the Hall's white-tiled basement as her boudoir.

"That sounds cold, especially in this weather." *opens up for sexual innuendo - also, Roderick to get comment on Madeline*

"She brought a bear rug."

"Kinky..."

"The world, ~~dear boy~~, is filled with people who love a clinical atmosphere."

While I endeavored to resist pondering their fetish for an atmosphere usually encountered in mental institutions and morgues, Roderick moved to the Tiffany windows. Even Tiffany could not beautify the dreary prospect. A bell jar of gray clouds smothered any spark of high spirits. *I might have been feeling*

"Fancy a round?" said Roderick, nodding toward the golf course, "I shoveled away the snow myself. Brisk exercise placates the mind."

The scale and scope of his exertions were plain to see. He had not dedicated himself exclusively to course maintenance. On closer inspection, one could detect writing in the snow. On holes 10 and 11, the closest ones, drifts formed the words "COMPETITION" and "PRODUCTIVITY" and "WAGES." Indeed he had constructed sardonic parentheses around them. A helicopter or small plane would have been needed to decipher the full text of his message writ large across the entire course.

"Is that a mining operation?" I asked, pointing to a ramshackle shack on the other side of the 10th fairway.

"No, it's a fishing hut," Roderick answered. "The lake is supposed to be stocked, but its denizens aren't cooperating, so I have to shoot them."

"You carry a gun at your wedding?" *1st-time I read this, I thought he was jokingly referring to shooting the course staff for not stocking the lake!*

"The Hall has a collection. It's in the Devil's Room. Follow me."

Cont: so - thinking you meant shooting people - prev. comment directed a lot of how narrator will play game of pretend himself
had forgotten, I think, to comment on "denizens" as better replaced with "plebes" or something a feudal landlord would call his tenants but I see now you mean the fish.
So my comments on prev. draft referred to how narrator to ignore the crazy pretends to that degree

Doesn't follow unless you eliminate the bear rug or replace

"Kinky" with "ah..." or "um..."

remembers this does not equal "dreary prospect" that even Tiffany could not, etc...

give him name a nick to call the narrator, to help establish doesn't have to be a given name - or explained

opens up for sexual innuendo - also, Roderick to get comment on Madeline

Very dramatic intro must deliver on it

therefore, confusing to reader. Can resolve with one indication of what makes for dreary prospect - not just "golf course" but must be in same ft. and * moved up to merge - just a phrase to modify "golf course" as dreary prospect will do. but remember how dramatic the intro is & deliver on your promise. Make it good

In our callow youth, Roderick had been a little crazy. Indeed, I had liked him for wandering off the beaten path.

my suggestions take care of this again, much sooner in the story

"Painful decisions were made in this room," said Roderick.

* AGAIN you've got to give him more descriptions of tone, expression-

We were in the Devil's Room, where the men used to smoke in the old days. ~~Nude~~ devils partied on the wallpaper behind Roderick.

Naked

words are not enough bc we don't have a hold on this character via narrator

"The world waited while steel industry executives and the union negotiated on this very spot."

Cardboard boxes towered over us like stacked coffins.

"Archive of the workers," observed Roderick, spilling the contents of one box onto an imposing roll-top desk.

Great sequences well done!

Old copies of the *McKeesport Daily News*, *Business Week*, *Steel Labor*, *Wall Street Journal* yellowed visibly under his care-worn fingers.

ugh! Even *Data* doesn't sound like this! "You're surprised."

"I detect surprise-in-your-visage. No, I wasn't my circle's most bookish individual. But recently I had a revelation. Or more accurately, Madeline enabled me to have a revelation. Come."

cop instead of teak, or oak, or cherry, etc.

Here, Roderick escorted me to a majestic aluminum stand, where an open, dog-eared tome greeted me.

(but newish)

"A must-read," said he, introducing me to *And the wolf finally came: The Decline of the American Steel Industry* by John Hoerr. A hasty check while Roderick's back was turned informed me that it was a healthy (or unhealthy!) 689 pages, and heavily annotated by the hand that had penned my address on the envelope of the invitation.

good clever way to let reader know that Roderick is increasingly the architect of everything - even things a groom would never (have to) do.

"Feel free to peruse during your stay," offered Roderick, before directing me away from the shrine. "Or experiment with my toys."

Expecting him to pull a gun from one of the display cases around us, I gasped - then gasped again, as Roderick turned on me with an electric guitar. *Er a ridiculous pose?*

"You recall that I dug heavy metal?" he asked, pointing the guitar at me.

Yeah.

"Indubitably. Your garage bands weren't about exactly easy listening."

bleh

More "toys" placed a crushing burden on a nearby makeshift stage: polyphonic synthesizer, amplifiers - the works. Additional inexplicable devices resembled instruments of torture.

Great

As we left the Devil's Room, Roderick plucked a guitar string, which - sounded a painfully discordant note. Was he issuing a warning, being playful, doing a sound check? →

"Well, I should rest my aching bones before tomorrow's appointment with Destiny," said Roderick, shaking my hand with sudden vigor. "Sweet dreams."

"Good night," I replied without conviction.

The response to his invitation, according to Roderick, had been most gratifying. My fellow guests, he had assured me, were present but withdrawn, resting in advance of the festivities. In reality, the place had the appearance of having been commandeered for his purposes. The help was nowhere to be found. Given the fact that his head was elsewhere, it came as no surprise that Roderick had failed to assign a bedroom to me, so I set up a cot in the Greenhouse Room. The abundance of light and proximity to exits leading directly outdoors suited me. I cursed myself for forgetting to ask Roderick about his obit. With a vow on my lips to do so in the morning, I closed my eyes.

Margot should be jarred - surprised - didn't know b/c amps were set up & turned on (way to help deal with the noise that room of his name could have R. Show's a playing a scene with another person by a warning - good?

Found a cot where & set it up in the Greenhouse Room.

In the dead of the night, my arcadian slumber was rudely interrupted by nightmarish noise. A terrestrial gastropod mollusk would have been smart enough to determine the source: Madeline was playing the organ in the Great Hall, Roderick was playing an electric guitar in the Devil's Room, they were combining their talents. I did not flatter myself with the thought that they were serenading me. No, it was a personal statement, a love song. The walls separating them were as nothing.

is a noun do you need this word? Does it relate to that book somehow?

The show opened ^{who} with raw feedback, which evoked for me - as it would for anyone grew up in the vicinity of steelmaking - iron ore, coke, and lime being dumped into a blast furnace and coming to a 3,000 °F boil. I prayed the musicians were wearing asbestos suits. The next sequence was akin to the tapping of a furnace guiding molten iron into a railroad car. This astonished listener expected the Hall to crumble in the din. But there was no time for crying over spilt iron because a riff like the screech or whine of a locomotive transporting molten metal to the steel shop, where the payload is poured into

6 Motive: Of course, I was going to have to 'assault' your sensibilities with this old refrain, but Eureka! Double-wrap: Why the narrator as side concert-goer for this show? As boys, they used to sneak out at lunchtime to the steel manufacturing (my postman's property) belonging to R's father, and watch these fascinating processes oxygen-furnace operators adding scrap steel and fluxes, rolling the mixture around for about 45 minutes at 2,800 °F and pouring the contents into a ladle dangling from a crane hook. With not inconsiderable alarm, my brain registered a monstrous crane's movement, sirens screaming, across a wide expanse of shop floor and its discharge of steel into a continuous caster, a channel hundreds of feet long and shaped like a child's sliding board. Somehow Roderick's guitar communicated the creep down the channel of hardening steel before it emerges as a slab, bar or bloom. Now, is this really the term? great!

Truly, Madeline and Roderick were punishing Linden Hall, trading solos that compromised its very future. While they covered the spectrum of 60s, 70s and early 80s rock, I recalled young Roderick's quasi-religious obsession with Pittsburgh's Civic Arena, Three Rivers Stadium and Stanley Theater, where he absorbed Blue Oyster Cult, The Kinks and The Grateful Dead - not hockey, football or Phantom of the Opera.

* Starting with Madeline's runs. P falls apart due to change of language. Like everybody else nowadays, the boisterous pair must have had cameras rolling in order to preserve themselves for posterity. Until their wedding video is released, the world shall have to trust my account of their activities behind closed doors. Insofar as my faculties could be persuaded to grasp their compositions, I bore witness to Roderick and Madeline's showmanship, (their versatility at imitating a factory without a caster, their building of a sonic structure ~~word following form~~).

The effect of Madeline's runs across the keyboard mimicked the ~~plunging~~ **LOSE** of the ladle plug that allows molten steel to flow into ingot molds. Periods of silence stood for their subsequent cooling. Later chords took me to a place where molds are stripped away and ingots are deposited in soaking pits (sunken furnaces equipped with gas or oil burners where steel is reheated to 2,000-2,450 °F to soften it for rolling). With a plangent snap, Roderick's guitar crackled like an ingot throwing off scalding chips as it moves into the jaws of a primary mill. Manipulating levers on the body of his instrument, dancing upon foot pedals, he ran a hand up and down the guitar's neck, compressing notes, elongating them, shearing them off at the end. The bride had her own panoply of refinements: reheating, rolling, piercing, extruding, welding, galvanizing as the mood took her.

Without an intermission, the jam session went on and on, as if the duo were striving for perfection, sweating like working stiffs until they injured themselves or their constitutions gave out. Their equipment too must have reached the point of overheating. This was Roderick and Madeline's idea of married bliss, achieved without the aid of

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First-hand together. In a sense, R. brought the narrator there to marry him in this conflagration for R., there is & could be nothing more passionate or intimate than to share his opus with the one who first discovered this 'music' with him, was transfixed by it along with him - though without the musical gifts that would keep R. there the rest of the life of steel manufacture (as well as his own) in order to study and 'compose' it properly as spectacle - R. knows the narrator is perhaps the sole listener with the gift enough in his head to close, intimate with R's thoughts or reality (unified) ear to understand/ appreciate its aesthetics & his musical theory.

* See how effective this description is? Compare to P below - what happened? Good: analogy & any figurative lang. should real child's perspective - ages of R. & narrator when they experienced sights & R performances. Yeah, get rid of the word "Kinky" - causes unintended, useless static here.

Wait! Forget! the cross outs just for that sentence! Give it away that obviously - Let reader enjoy how you've created metaphors that stand alone in the moment of creation, not simile like this that doesn't equate, doesn't create the understanding of the sonic effect/evocation anyway... Let yourself sit a while with Madeline runs across the keyboard, and gives time & thought to right nouns or verb will present. B/c "runs" don't easily communicate pulling of the ladle plug... Perhaps an adj./noun to modify runs will cross the boundary with/for it - Just don't use words of analogy or simile. Ex: imitate -> create (in description) even conjure presence reverence with metaphor

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(or 'bumping uglies' as some put it!) I wouldn't advise it here, either!

marijuana or Jack Daniels, unless they had been smuggled into the Hall without my knowledge.

My knocks on the doors of their respective studios elicited no responses: They had locked themselves inside. If and when they emerged, they might explain themselves. Though untrained as a critic, I supposed they were performing a requiem for steelworkers, miners and their families. Yet it was difficult to hypothesize while inside the maelstrom..I fled the Hall's confines.

but how long had they been playing?

The deceptively placid surfaces of the fishing lake and golf course hid the fact that Linden Hall and its environs were threatened by land subsidence. Decades of bituminous coal mining had destabilized the very foundation of the Hall's foundations. Nevertheless, despite being nearly perished by the chilly weather, I was mesmerized by the aural spectacle. Roderick's "fishing hut," perched as it was on slowly cracking ice, was no place to seek refuge, so from the 11th green I watched the old house defend itself against Roderick and Madeline's powerful blasts. Their security deposit would not cover the repercussions. Would the building, whose reflection trembled across the lake, succumb? Leaning for support on the hole's flagstick, whose flag resembled a frozen face, I waited, a teeth-chattering shell of myself, for Linden Hall to sink ignominiously into a subterranean arm of the lake, where the wedding party would sleep with the catfish and trout alleged to prowl the pitiless depths.

alleged alleged - right! alleged wedding party and alleged bride
alleged argh, I'm tired

people are not, cannot, by nature, be in a story in which they aren't felt, heard, seen. Bride is heard?

I propose that she is the maelstrom of Friday night's weather report, as well as the program "Madeline," pre-recorded, running on basement equip, to which its composer, R. improvised a duet, call & response, etc., from the Devil's room.

Congrats! You have made your reader do some deductive or inductive work! Bravo! Your fondest reader in #1 fan.