

ALSO BY DIANE WILLIAMS

*This Is About the Body, the Mind, the Soul, the World,  
Time, and Fate*

*Some Sexual Success Stories plus other Stories  
in which God Might Choose to Appear*

*The Stupefaction*

*Excitability: Selected Stories 1986–1996*

*Romancer Erector*

*It Was Like My Trying to Have a Tender-Hearted Nature*

*Vicky Swanky Is a Beauty*

DIANE WILLIAMS

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FINE, FINE, FINE,  
FINE, FINE

 editions

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The art on the cover is unsigned and was created for a romance novella published in Mexico City in the 1960s that appeared in serial form. This piece was produced using collage and gouache overpainting on illustration board, and the back reads 'El Angel No. 64'. The printer's entire collection of these covers was recently purchased from his warehouse. Works are available from the Pardee Collection Gallery of Iowa City, and 'El Angel' is provided courtesy of Diane Williams and Wolfgang Neumann.

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How long will Harry Doe live? . . . Who will win  
the war? . . . Will Mary Jane Brown ultimately  
find a husband . . . ?

— LEO MARKUN

## Beauty, Love, and Vanity Itself

As usual I'd hung myself with snappy necklaces, but otherwise had given my appearance no further thought, even though I anticipated the love of a dark person who will be my source of prosperity and emotional pleasure.

Mr. Morton arrived about 7 p.m. and I said, 'I owe you an explanation.'

'Excellent,' he replied. But when my little explanation was completed, he refused the meal I offered, saying, 'You probably don't like the way I drink my soda or how I eat my olives with my fingers.'

He exited at a good clip and nothing further developed from that affiliation.

The real thing did come along. Bob—Tom spent several days in June with me and I keep up with books

and magazines and go forward on the funny path pursuing my vocation.

I also went outside to enjoy the fragrant odor in an Illinois town and kept to the thoroughfare that swerved near the fence where yellow roses on a tawny background are always faded out at the end of the season.

I never thought a big cloud hanging in the air would be crooked, but it was up there—gray and deranged.

Happily, in the near distance, the fence was making the most of its colonial post caps.

And isn't looking into the near distance sometimes so quaint?—as if I am re-embarking on a large number of relations or recurrent jealousies.

Poolside at the Marriott Courtyard, I was wearing what others may laugh at—the knee-length black swimsuit and the black canvas shoes—but I don't have actual belly fat, that's just my stomach muscles gone slack.

I saw three women go into the pool and when they got to the rope, they kept on walking. One woman disappeared. The other two flapped their hands.

'They don't know what the rope is,' the lifeguard said. 'I mean everybody knows what a rope means.'

I said, 'Why didn't you tell them?' and he said, 'I don't speak Chinese.'

I said, 'They are drowning' and the lifeguard said, 'You know, I think you're right.'

Our eyes were on the surface of the water—the wobbling patterns of diagonals. It was a hash—nothing to look at—much like my situation—if you're not going to do anything about it.

## A Gray Pottery Head

How tenderly she had arranged the gray pottery head of a woman on her mantel—the subtly revealed head of an archaic woman. It exhibits some bumps and some splits.

This was a gift from the Danish gentleman who had also given her a Georg Jensen necklace in the original box.

She had been lucky in love as she understood it.

And that night—some progress to report. Something exciting afoot. She has a quarter hour more to live.

Even if she only gets to the lower roadway, she'll have to manage somehow.

Her boiled woolen cloak was wrapped around her tilting body and she was driving her car as if it were being blown away by the wind.

She had gone down this particular road to go home for years. This time she also arrived close by the familiar place, dying.

A tulip tree, tucked into a right angle formed by two planes, was brought into her view.

The police officer who inspected her dead body saw one area of damage and the pretty mother-of-pearl, gold and enamel Jensen ornament that was around her neck.

She has been associated with sex and with childbirth. No less interesting, she was a traveler on this unsophisticated country road.

Her facial features are remarkably symmetrical, expressing vigor and vulnerability.

## Cinch

**M**y back started killing me and Tamara asked what else did I want and why? Oddly, she was suddenly unenthusiastic about me and she revealed resentment, of all things, and possibilities for her revenge.

But how busy I was!—building the twelve-by-sixteen rec room at the rear of the house.

I made bedplates and cut boards. And this was the day that Tamara baked her standard sponge cake.

When I reached for a taste of the cake, she took the plate away.

So I slapped her and drilled holes for anchor bolts, used a shim to level bedplates and my half-inch nuts to secure the bedplates.

‘Have I seen that before?’ I asked her, for by then