

Start
ARTHUR
My ex-wife's brother's...partner. He wrote--used to write
little restaurant notices for the Reader.

And?

ARTHUR
And nothing, that's all I got. A guy used to write restaurant
notices, for a free paper. That's as close to a publisher as I
can get you. If I can even track him down. But it's a place to
start.

Franco leaps in the air, screams,
dances, pumps his fists.

Okay, okay--

ARTHUR (cont'd)

FRANCO
HELL yeah! Look out, Arthur P., cause here we come, baby, back
from the dead! Ain't no stopping us now, man! Let me tell you
how it's gonna be: this man is gonna read America Will Be and
he'll set me up with the next man I need to talk to and that
man's gonna put a check in my hand--

ARTHUR
--right, yes, a big check--

FRANCO
--and they're gonna print my book and we'll put my book right
here in a big display in the window that says "The Great
American Novel."

ARTHUR
Very catchy, why not.

FRANCO
And meanwhile you and me are poppin' out the delicious dessert
cakes and there's people out the door of this place and down the
street, lined up to buy my book and eat our donuts and drink our
coffee--

ARTHUR
Yeah, hey, fuck you, Starbucks!

FRANCO
And then wait till we get Poetry Night going--

ARTHUR
The Superior Donuts uhh, Literary..

FRANCO
The Superior Donuts Literary Festival and Poetry Jam--

ARTHUR
"It ain't horse fat."

FRANCO
And we get a microphone and a little stage right over here--

ARTHUR

I can serve some specialty donuts--

FRANCO

And we'll get all the people from the neighborhood--

ARTHUR

--the Countee Cullen Cruller--

FRANCO

My mom and baby sister'll be right over here, eating their donuts and listening to me read from my book.

ARTHUR

You know I bet James could actually help me get a liquor license--?

FRANCO

You can have a little glass of wine with your cop lady friend, right, taking it all in, the King and Queen of Uptown, and your daughter shows up too, to take her place in the kingdom, all of us together, a real home filled with books and ideas and food and family.

Silence.

ARTHUR

That's not going to happen.

FRANCO

Why not?

ARTHUR

It's not going to happen because that isn't what happens.

FRANCO

We'll make it happen.

ARTHUR

Life isn't just what you wish for.

FRANCO

You know what life is?

ARTHUR

Derailment.

FRANCO

You're wrong.

ARTHUR

I'm old.

FRANCO

Sometimes good things just happen.

ARTHUR

I used to know a restaurant critic.

FRANCO

Like you said, a place to start.

ARTHUR

Dreaming's dangerous.

FRANCO
Dangerous to who? To you?

ARTHUR
You're going to get crushed.

FRANCO
What are you so scared of?

ARTHUR
I'm not scared of anything.

FRANCO
Are you serious? You don't talk, you don't vote, you don't listen to music. Why do you bother to get outta bed in the morning? You can't even ask that old lady out on a date.

ARTHUR
That's got nothing to do with this-

FRANCO
You can't even talk about your own daughter.

ARTHUR
You're way outta line.

FRANCO
Right, if I mention her, I'm just an employee.

ARTHUR
You are just an employee.

FRANCO
And you're just a tight-ass boss.

ARTHUR
Because I know a fantasy when I hear one?

FRANCO
They ain't fantasies, goddamn it, they're possibilities! Don't you even believe in possibilities?

ARTHUR
This conversation is over.

FRANCO
See, you're even scared to fight with me. You just wait and see, old man. Wait and see what happens with this book. I'll show you. I'll prove it to you!

ARTHUR
(wheeling on Franco)
You'll prove it to me? You'll prove it to me? Who the hell are you? Come in here with your chewed-up notebooks and your goddamn pipe dreams. Even if I find this joker, and even if I convince him to wade through your frickin' legal pads and even if he pats you on the head, that isn't your ticket. It's just another dead end. They're all dead ends. You don't want to do yourself a favor, do me one: grow up. Stop acting like a fuckin' clown.

Franco Exits.

Fin

Superior Donuts
Arthur Side (pg 22)

Arthur: A kid. In Chicago. In the '60's. Pure magic. Well. Magic for a white kid, anyway. Christmas windows at Marshall Fields, twilight at Riverview. Another world.

The city was true working class, and the bars were clean and well-lit and immigrant factory workers would sit and have a beer after a day's work. And sleeping outside with my family, with all the families, on the lawn at Jefferson Park on sticky summer nights. Every Sunday hanging out in someone else's basement,

Food all day. Or a trip to a forest preserve, all free back then, Polish the only language I'd hear, twenty pigs spinning in fire, and every friend I made became my parents' friend, just because they were my friend. Coming back from a family trip, driving along the Eisenhower, I'd see the giant neon lips of Magikist and I knew I was home.

It changed though. '66. Dr. King was pelted with firecrackers and rocks in Marquette Park. My mom got the old man drunk in the middle of the day to keep him from going down there and shaming us. Maybe that's where the trouble started with the old man.

Then in '68 I got my head cracked open by Daley's police in Old Town, the riot no one saw on TV, the one even more brutal than the others. The old man drove down and bailed me out of county the next morning and didn't say a word to me, which was worse than if he'd socked me one. He just drove me to a recruiting station, parked the car, got out, and walked away. I didn't know what I was supposed to do. I sat and I waited. I waited for my old man to come back to the car. I waited for hours with dried blood in my hair.

It didn't matter.

My notice came in a few weeks anyway and by October I was living in Toronto.

Superior Donuts

Arthur Side

Arthur tries to ask Randy out on a date.

Arthur: Where's James?

Randy: On the phone with his wife. They've got a convention coming up. Star Trek convention.

Arthur: Convention, wow.

Randy: Yeah, they get all dressed up like characters from the show.

Arthur: James dresses up?

Randy: Yeah, pointy ears, the whole shebang.

Arthur: Whatever gets you through the night.

Randy: He's a total nerd and a freakin' idiot but it's kinda sweet that he and his wife do all this together, y'know?

Arthur: Yeah...

Randy: I don't know.

Arthur: No, I...yeah.

An awkward silence.

Randy: (re: donut) Really good.

Randy: Good coffee, too--

Arthur: You know I think I-

Randy: (cont'd) Hm?

Arthur: No, sorry

Randy: No, go ahead.

Arthur: No you.

Randy: No, I was just, I just said "Good coffee."

Arthur: It is good.

Randy: Yes.

Arthur: I mean, "Is it good?"

Randy: Yes. So you were saying.

Arthur: I...

A long painful silence.

Arthur: (cont'd) I don't remember.