BLOWING UP by Biff Mitchell
EXCERPT

From Still Life with Sax and Muse
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It was a quiet afternoon at Molly's Cafe. Outside, gray rain sliced through the air like tiny hatchets. Behind us, a lone sax player ground out something bluesy with all the gravel and grit of a break-hardened heart. Across from me, Jo's eyes, as usual, were green, a green that could feed forests.

She wore a black turtleneck with matching black tights divided by a red swatch of tartan skirt. I tried to keep my eyes on her eyes, but the green threatened to swallow my soul and toss me around in the tides of her green forever. I focused my eyes on a couple of dust motes arguing about semantics and existentialism somewhere in that distance between her green eyes and her long legs, those legs that flowed up into an unimaginable playground, into … I refocused my eyes on the dust motes.

"Do you like my sweater?" she said.

"Huh?" I said.

"Do you like my sweater? You haven't taken your eyes off it. Are you thinking dirty thoughts again, you pathetic literary pig?"

Damn dust motes, arguing right in front of her breasts.

"Oh, uh … yeah. Nice sweater." The plan was to be cool. "I've always liked large sweaters," I said.

The plan wasn't working.

The two dust motes were cooler than I was.

She smiled. "You're blushing, pig."

"Something caught in my eye."

"And it's cutting off your air supply, goat?"

"Yeah, that's it," I said. "Air supply."

"How's life … boar?" she said.

“I haven’t slept in three days,” I said. “I drink too much. I can’t write anything anymore. I dream about grabbing spoons and stabbing people. I found God rummaging through the bottles and boxes in my medicine cabinet. He looked hungry and confused. There’s a dead rat in my refrigerator. It sees everything. Its whiskers quiver. It asked me where I go.” I slumped my head.

“I don’t know where I go.” I looked up past Jo’s black sandals and black forever legs and dazzling tartan and past those damned pretentious motes and into the deep green seas of her eyes. “Other than that, I’m fine. And you?”

“I made love to John Lennon last night.”

I nodded. “Big night.”