

Oklahoma r e v i e w

Roger Jones

Long Ago Dream of a Bad Love Affair

Because the hotel, whose door
you approached in dream, was drab,
shabby, its neon light fluttering,
you gathered this meant your heart
took no pride in this affair. The entrance
button outside seemed worn out,
malfunctioning. You pressed and pressed.

No response. But when the handsome
visitor who came up next tried it,
and was let inside at once, you did what
dreamers do, and followed him.

Alone in the big lobby, which smelled
of old cigars and rumbled with the low
profane din of old men arguing money,
you saw no immediate way to go
but sensed somehow the stranger had taken
a narrow stairway up to where she was.

You divined your way as well, up steps
to a small hallway and two doors, both
hers. You knocked on the first -- no answer.

Tried to enter, but the way was blocked

by a heavy iron bed frame (just as the bed had blocked the way for the two of you in life). So you went to the other door and rang the bell. She answered, wearing a worn silk kimono drawn up in front to hide her nakedness. Smiling tiredly, her face wan, lined, gray, she let you in, asked you to stay for coffee. But from the other room (whose door you'd tried), you heard springs creak and caught a glimpse of the young man from the doorway, shirtless now, rousing from sleep in bed. She asked you to stay longer, but you declined. Her offer meant nothing -- just chit-chat over a cup, beside a window, quiet talk on a gray morning, the two of you little more now than acquaintances, with nothing in common. Least of all love.