

INFORMATION TO USERS

This dissertation copy was prepared from a negative microfilm created and inspected by the school granting the degree. We are using this film without further inspection or change. If there are any questions about the content, please write directly to the school. The quality of this reproduction is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original material.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help clarify notations which may appear on this reproduction.

1. Manuscripts may not always be complete. When it is not possible to obtain missing pages, a note appears to indicate this.
2. When copyrighted materials are removed from the manuscript, a note appears to indicate this.
3. Oversize materials (maps, drawings and charts are photographed by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.



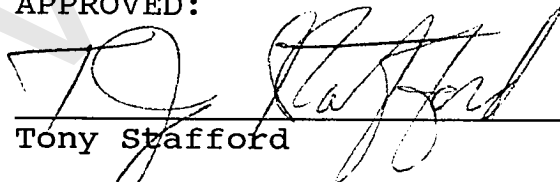
ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600


PREVIEW

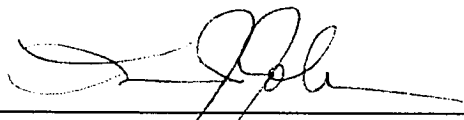
Copyright © 2013 Pearson Education, Inc. All rights reserved.


SWEET FIRE
CAROL FOSTER IKARD
English Department

APPROVED:


Tony Stafford


Rick Demarinis


Lawrence Johnson


Dean of Graduate School

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LIBRARY
1000 UNIVERSITY AVENUE
LOS ANGELES, CALIF. 90024

SWEET FIRE

by

Carol Foster Ikard

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at El Paso
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

May 1990

Preface

Sweet Fire's narrative concentrates on a single relationship where two people are suffering from the exquisite pain of love for which they can find no cure. The issue they must resolve is whether to live from heartfelt responses or the deadly reasoning and cultural clamorings that deafen the gentle callings of love.

The characters discover that love is a flood of warmth which they cannot kindle due to the resistance of those not wanting others to enjoy the splendor of the moment. They are doused by the control of others who insist on a parched landscape. In the end they resolve to accept that love is the pain of being fully alive after being totally alone.

Adultery and impotency, while discussed within the parameters of traditional values of marriage and family, no longer exist when the characters inhabit a world with a fourth dimension, neutrality. They learn from their experiences not to judge them right or wrong, but to neutralize them and consider them as part of their education

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY
130 St. George Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5S 1A5
Canada

on what love is.

The colorings of the characters are intense and primary as are their feelings once they decide to act on them. Once the characters begin to sort through the blues amid lyrical ruminations sung by the mores of society, does the music of their own making hang together like a rhapsody only to be considered unbearable by others.

Larry, who has achieved well in life by following with dexterity the parameters of his cultural maze, gets boxed in by love. He had achieved a balance between dependency and isolation to find the middle utterly boring, empty, lonely. Disgustingly satisfied with the middle where the highs weren't too high and the lows weren't too low, Larry risks loving. Prior to this, his world was in black and white with a few shades of gray until he met Jean. Now his life was a rainbow and his dilemma was whether he wanted to live on the other side of the rainbow.

Jean, who had adhered to traditional guidelines, discovers she could endure life comfortably and independently until she met Larry and could see no way to make life go tilt, his life or hers.

Ruben, whose life is pragmatic and lacks dreams, hopes Jean might provide them. Otherwise he resents what he

doesn't have. But she is not within his reach as long as Larry flounders about like a moving target. He could shoot him down if only he could control the strings that dangle the people in his own world. In Sweet Fire the subplot of Ruben's business prepares and complicates the main plot.

The issue in Sweet Fire has to do with the dues we must pay before enjoying the exclusive membership in a rich love life. In the end both forsake their bindings to find their essential selves. In this forging they communicate with each other to discover what they hold sacred.

While Sweet Fire is a romance comedy that sizzles in a Manhattan manner, it fizzles in the heat of well-tempered friends who confront and assault the passion and poetry of the heart.

Sweet Fire is to be a moving story of obsessive lovers, judged to be irreverently sacred and divinely profane.

They struggle to build bridges between separate islands of loneliness only to be told to keep a foot on the ground. So they hesitate taking the step to cross over to live in peace in the heart of love and in a pleasure garden with each other.

If Larry and Jean, like lovers, like moon walkers, or probably even writers and graduate students, decide to explore the possibilities of love, it entails looking at both the lighted side and the dark side. It also entails not forgetting the myriad of dazzling potentials, stars, planets, and black holes, that glitter beyond where the foot falls securely or where we can see clearly. Treasured in life's chest of our own and others' experiences are a wealth of gems that await in the universe. They await like jewels on black velvet, to be selected and worn in a work of art of our own making.

FADE IN:

EXT. SUBURBIA, MORNING

A SERIES OF ANGLES

The wheels of a new day begin to move, the paper boy throwing papers, car pools honking, a man driving a station wagon backs up and runs over his child's tricycle, and a school bus has teenagers running to it.

The man driving the station wagon gets out of his car, walks to the rear to investigate, looks at the tricycle, picks it up, walks to his neighbor's garage and places the tricycle behind his neighbor's rear wheel, and then he goes back to his car and drives away.

EXT. VIEW OF A TWO STORY HOME

INT. VIEW FROM INSIDE TAKES THE VIEWER FROM THE INTERIOR FRONT DOOR, THE STAIRCASE IS ON THE RIGHT, CAMERA'S VIEW PROCEEDS TO THE KITCHEN. NOISES FROM A FAMILY IN THE MOTION OF STARTING A DAY ARE HEARD.

MARGARET

(in good humor, yells
from upstairs)

Bye, Larry. Don't forget to come
back.

Larry standing in the kitchen reads the headlines, downs his coffee, blows a kiss in her direction, and proceeds towards the garage. Two teenage girls sit waiting in the car. He places the suitcase in the back seat and proceeds to drive to the high school.

INT. CAR

ANDREA

Dad, can I have some lunch money?

LARRY

Didn't you pick up your sack lunch?

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
FILM ARCHIVE

ANDREA

Sorry, I forgot.

LARRY

For Christ sake, it was right there by Mary's. Why didn't you pick it up, Mary?

ANDREA

Mary wouldn't lift a finger to help a fly.

MARY

Don't flatter yourself so, you little r-a-t-t.

ANDREA

See, I told you she was a spoiled, selfish brat and that's b-r-a-t-t.

LARRY

Oh for Christ's sake, Mary, you mean you walked right by her lunch and didn't offer to bring it?

MARY

Of course not. Why should I? She'd never lift a finger to help me.

LARRY

Girls, you can't live that way. Just because one person does or lives a certain way shouldn't dictate your behavior. If one person jumps out a window, should you? If no one helps a bleeding man on the street, should you walk on by, too?

MARY

Great, here he goes again.

LARRY

Oh yeah? Well, what's so wrong with what I'm saying?

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60607

ANDREA
It's preachy, Dad.

LARRY
Oh yeah. Well, it just so happens I think your generation could use a little preaching.

ANDREA
Please, Dad, spare us. Preaching doesn't become you. Besides, all that stuff doesn't work in today's world.

LARRY
Oh yeah? Like what?

ANDREA
Like the Golden Rule.

LARRY
And what's wrong with the Golden Rule?

ANDREA
It's manipulative.

LARRY
Well, what's your generation going to do instead?

ANDREA
Take care of ourselves.

They arrive at the school.

MARY
Dad, can we get out?

ANDREA
Dad, can I please have some lunch money.

LARRY
(reaching into his
pocket)
Looks like your generation is off to
a bad start of taking care of itself.

ANDREA
Thanks, Dad. Love ya.

LARRY
See you when I get back. And help
each other, God damn it.

Larry kisses his children good-bye, and proceeds to pick up
business partner.

EXT. AIRPORT PARKING LOT

Larry parks the car and gets his suitcase.

INT. AIRPORT

In a routine fashion the two men buy their tickets and are
seen at the boarding gate for New York City.

FADE IN

EXT. DARK OF EARLY MORNING

EXT. A SERIES OF ANGLES ON THE HIGHWAY

Car rushing in determination through the early morning hours
of the freeway, and overhead view is seen of the car taking
the airport exit.

INT. CAR

Jean is at the wheel driving and glances at the digital
clock which flips to 3:01 a.m. Her son pushes the radio
button for a rock song.

JEAN
My God, it's three a.m., how can you
stand that? It sounds like a
tortured alcoholic being squeezed
through a fax machine.

TREY

Please, Mom, this may be the last real music I get to hear for some time.

JEAN

(flicking off the volume of the radio)

I'm not sending you off to a concentration camp. Three generations of your family went to this prep school. You should be very pleased your grandfather is sending you to Hotchkiss.

TREY

I've done my share of tradition, Mom. Carrying Haywood Hartford Hodges, III has been my contribution.

JEAN

Still, you are very fortunate. Traditions are very important. They help us feel attached, grounded in the world. Traditions are sacred. Besides, if you followed my side of the family, you would be at Ursuline Academy or Jesuit College Preparatory in Dallas.

TREY

So altogether I have a choice between being a nun, a priest, or a snob. Bitchin'.

JEAN

No, you have the opportunity of being a gentleman and a scholar and you will like it.

TREY

(mimicking)

...and ju vill like it. Couldn't I just be a regular public school kid?

JEAN

No. All the men in my life are not regular. They are to be very special, including you. No, especially you.

TREY

OK. OK. I'll be a Hotchkisser, now can I finish the song?

Trey turns up the volume and Jean grips the steering wheel, her knuckles turning white.

FADE IN

INT. AIRPLANE

Jean and her teenage son sit sleeping with their heads on pillows.

CLOSE

EXT. RENT-A-CAR LOT

Jean and teenage boy viewed struggling to get trunk and baggage into seemingly small midsize car.

EXT. VIEW OF A SCHOOL, A JUNIOR COLLEGE, FROM A DISTANCE, WIDE ANGLE

Car seen traveling up the entrance road to the school.

INT. DORM ROOM

Jean and son go through the routine motions of unpacking, making bed, kissing goodbye. Son is meeting other students and walks backwards beside new friends as he smiles at his mother, then he turns and they all run off.

INT. CAR

Jean driving in tears back to New York City.

INT. CAR RENTAL OFFICE

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO LIBRARY
540 EAST 57TH STREET
CHICAGO, ILL. 60637

Jean, signing papers, picks up her bag, gets on passenger bus, is viewed getting off bus, struggles with her bag to the taxi area at La Guardia.

EXT. TAXI AREA

Larry, and business partner, Ruben, are seen getting into the taxi ahead of Jean. Jean gets next taxi, unaware of her coming chance meeting with the men who precede her.

Shots of the two taxis taking different scenic routes into Manhattan.

INT. HELMSLEY PLACE REGISTRATION COUNTER

Larry seen completing the registration form.

DESK CAPTAIN
May your stay be memorable, sir.

CLOSE

INT. PLAZA HOTEL

Jean seen being taken through the lobby to the elevator. At the room the bellhop casually remarks.

BELL HOP
Enjoy your stay.

JEAN
What dining facilities do you have?

BELL HOP
You might enjoy the less formal Oyster Bar or the Oak Bar and Dining Room are most promising.

INT. PLAZA OAK BAR

Jean, having changed, is seen reluctantly approaching the entrance to the bar, enters and sees how crowded it is. Mistakenly, she takes the only available table.

POV. CROWD LIVELY AND NUMEROUS

Maitre d' walks briskly to Jean and intimidatingly gestures the only place for her is at the bar. Jean complies and goes to the only vacant stool. She is seen ordering a drink.

ANGLE ON LARRY AND RUBEN AS THEY ENTER THE ROOM

Men are looking for someone, see him at the bar. They make their way over to their waiting friend, who is sitting next to Jean.

CLOSE ON MEN'S CONVERSATION

JEFF

(stands to greet friends)

How was your trip? Have I got some good news to tell you two. Business looks good for tomorrow. I got the balcony seats you wanted, Ruben. Did you bring the legal documents, Larry?

RUBEN

Listen, you son of a bitch, if you think I came to meet you to talk business tonight, boy are you wrong. Larry and I are on a boys' night out.

Larry looking around.

They order drinks.

RUBEN

Any broads worth screwing in here?

LARRY

Ruben's going to take me by the hand.

RUBEN

We are already in luck. My, my, what do we have here at this table?

Their drinks are placed on the bar. Ruben signs for them and they all pick up their drinks and Ruben walks to a table of two French women, is seen introducing himself, motions for Larry to join him. Larry picks up his drink and joins

the table.

Jeff sees Jean for the first time next to him, checks her over.

Karen Tull is seen following the maitre d' and as she walks past the bar she sees Jean.

KAREN

Jean. There you are. Let's not drink at the bar. Come on, I have a table.

They both follow the maitre d' to the table and seat themselves comfortably.

JEAN

How did you get this table?

KAREN

He just loved my twenty-dollar accent when I asked for a table. Twenty dollars asks real nice in New York.

Waiter arrives and they both order Scotch and water.

JEAN

So how is the business trip going?

KAREN

God, I'm glad our trips worked out at the same time. You know when Jack's on business, he's all business. He's upstairs now. We had a fight, that's why I called your room. I needed a drink to cool down. He's probably still fuming up in the room with smoke coming out of both ears. We still fight just like when you and I roomed together at the sorority house. Only difference is I don't have you to listen to me complain about what an ol' stick in the mud he is. He's too serious for me.

Waiter delivers drinks and leaves the tab.

2025 LIBRARY
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
EL PASO, TEXAS

JEAN

What did you do this time?

KAREN

I gotta have a cigarette to tell you this one.

She reaches for the ashtray and concentrates on lighting her cigarette.

KAREN (CONT.)

So here Jack and I are in New York with two other couples from Dallas and they want to see Fifth Avenue. Jack gets on his high horse and tells me it's his and my responsibility that these people have a good time in New York. I said, "Well, hell yes, I've been here once in the sixties, by damn, I'm an expert on New York."

She drags on her cigarette. Her Dallas twang raises to a bitching level.

KAREN (CONT.)

Then he tells me,
(she takes a long gulp
of scotch)

"On this trip you are not to open your mouth once and complain. Keep it to yourself and smile the whole time." He said he had to impress these people.

She takes another drag off the cigarette.

KAREN (CONT.)

So they want to walk Fifth Avenue. Well, we start and we walk, and we walk, and damn, after awhile I suggest, real nice like, how about we take a cab back. Well, if looks could kill, Jack would have been charged with third degree murder. I mean my feet were killing me so badly. So I changed my tune to,

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS
DALLAS, TEXAS

"would anybody like to get a drink and rest a bit?"

The ice in the glass clinks as she raises it to her lips.

KAREN (CONT.)

So we went to the closest bar there was. While we are having our drinks I take my shoes off...under the table, careful so no one could see, and we rested a bit. But since Jack quit drinking he was hot to trot after one round. Said we had to hurry and get ready for the dinner. So Jack suggests we walk the other side of Fifth Avenue back to the hotel. Well, I could have died. I had three-inch heels on and the pain is getting worse with each step and all these taxis keep buzzing by, tormenting me like nasty bumblebees. But I didn't complain, oh, no, not me.

She inhales from her cigarette and takes another gulp.

KAREN (CONT.)

When we finally get to the hotel, I am in so much pain but I have kept this painful smile frozen on my face and not raised a word. Well, we get into the elevator and I can barely stand, the pain is shooting up to my knees. But I don't complain, oh, no, not me. We all get in the elevator and it's quiet, like church. Suddenly, I look down and see...

She inhales and exhales for dramatic effect.

KAREN (CONT.)

...my shoes are on the wrong feet.

Jean chokes on her drink.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS
DALLAS, TEXAS 75275-0210

JEAN

Oh, Karen, no. What did you do?

KAREN

Well, the pain was so bad, and my shoes looked so funny, I crossed my feet so Jack wouldn't notice and be embarrassed. But I started laughing. I tried to suppress it, but little by little I lost total control. Well, Jack thought by the way I was standing that I was wetting my pants.

JEAN

(laughing
hysterically)

Oh, stop.

KAREN

No. It's true. Well, when the elevator doors open, Jack grabs me by the arm and has this totally disgusted look on his face. And I am still laughing. I can't quit. He pulls me down the hall by the arm. When we get to the room, Jack says, "I told you to look like you are having a good time, but not that good a time."

Both women take a drink and struggle to swallow.

KAREN (CONT.)

I swear to God that's what he said. So I told him I had had it with him and was goin' for a drink. And that's what I'm doin' here in this bar with you. Besides, ever since you got divorced I never see you.

JEFF

Excuse me, ladies, you two look like you are having one hell of a good time. Mind if I sit down?

KAREN

Moving her purse.

Sure. Join us and tell us all about yourself.

JEFF

My name is Jeff Lowenfield,
(he extends his hand)
and I'm from Palm Beach.

KAREN

Well, Jeff Lowenfield, coooome ooon
down. Do you know the Hamilton
Millers?

JEFF

Yes. They're neighbors of mine.

KAREN

(aside to Jean)

Hamilton Millers as in Hamilton Beach.

Pleased, Jeff strokes his red tie.

KAREN

I'm Karen Tull and this is Jean
Hodges, both from Atlanta.

JEFF

You two ladies by yourselves?

KAREN

Jean is, I'm sort of.

JEFF

You visiting New York?

JEAN

Yes, I brought my son to school and
am staying over for a few days for
business.

JEFF

What kind of business?

JEAN

Well, I'm in marketing and advertising for a public relations firm in Atlanta. How about yourself? Are you visiting or do you live here?

JEFF

I am blessed with living in this great city half the year and Palm Beach the other half. I'm a stockbroker and one of those gentlemen over there owns a large nursery, he's a Florida grower and he and his lawyer are here to see the company go public on the American Stock Exchange. My real job is to entertain them so I don't lose the account. However, they seem to be doing just fine without me.

ANGLE ON RUBEN AND LARRY

The four at the table seem to be talking gregariously.

Jeff's POV then he looks at Jean.

JEFF

Say, why don't you help me entertain the fellas? We're going to dinner; I'd love it if you both would join us.

JEAN

Just curious. Which of you is single?

Ruben saves the moment by appearing next to Jeff.

RUBEN

I am, and the other guys are separated. So how about joining me? It'll be kicks and, besides, you have the best looking legs, and I'd like to get to know you better.

JEAN

Is your friend always this fast?

JEFF

Only on weekends. Jean, this is Ruben. Ruben, Jean. Another Palm Beacher.

RUBEN

Say, what's this about dinner?

JEFF

I have just invited Karen and Jean to join us. You and Larry about ready or has Larry fallen in love?

RUBEN

Larry's fallen in lust.

JEFF

So, ladies, can I make reservations for all of us?

KAREN

Sure, why not? Any friend of Ham Miller's a friend of mine. I'll go to dinner.

Jean glances at the crowd laughing around the table and looks back at Ruben to accept.

JEAN

OK, I have no other plans and I am hungry. We won't go far from the hotel, will we?

RUBEN

Good, I'll get the others. It'll be someplace close by. Just a minute, let me go see if Larry's ready.

Ruben goes over to the table and joins the two French girls talking with Larry.

KAREN

I'll go call Jack's room and tell him I'm slipping out with you, Jean. He'll be relieved, he's on duty tonight anyway. This way he can talk

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
LIBRARY
ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

business without tending to me.

JEAN
I'm going to the ladies' room. Where
shall I meet you?

RUBEN
On the steps, out those doors.
(he motions to the
entrance. Jean
leaves)

CLOSE SHOT

EXT. SIDE OF PLAZA HOTEL, WHERE A LIMOUSINE IS WAITING
Jeff is seen negotiating with the driver and hands him
money.

JEFF
All right, everyone, let's go.

The two French girls get in first, followed by Ruben and
Larry. Jeff waits outside for Jean and Karen.

JEFF (CONT.)
Come on, the train's about to leave.

Karen comes running out and gets in the limousine. Jean
walks out and joins the group in the limousine. As she
takes her place in the limousine, it is next to Larry. At
their first glance of each other, they stare at each other
in a new awareness.

INT. LIMOUSINE

RUBEN
Jean, this is Larry; Larry, meet
Jean.

JEAN
(keeping her eyes on
him)
Hello, Larry.