



We Don't Live Here Anymore: Three Novellas

By Andre Dubus



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Hank and Jack have been best friends since high school. Hank married Edith, the prettiest girl Jack had ever seen, and Jack married Terry, whom he thinks he may no longer love. But Hank and Edith's adultery didn't begin or end with Jack and Terry. Moving, perceptive, rendered in clear-eyed prose, **We Don't Live Here Anymore** maps with preternatural insight the often separate lands of love and marriage.

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We Don't Live Here Anymore: Three Novellas By Andre Dubus Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

"His writing . . . take[s] us deep within the heart and then suddenly out again to our own lives, where we blink, recognizing what we have seen as our own." —*The Boston Globe*

"His power is ominous and genuine." —*Vanity Fair*

"Not since Flannery O'Connor has there been a writer who explores so compellingly the polarities of violence and redemption, anger and tenderness, sexuality and asceticism." —*Boston Herald*

"What [Dubus] gives us is an unastonished account of his characters' puzzlements and desires, and those small moments in which momentous movements of the heart happen." —*The New York Times Book Review*

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WE DON'T LIVE HERE ANYMORE

Pity is the worst passion of all: we don't outlive it like sex.

-Graham Greene, *The Ministry of Fear*

Come see us again some time; nobody's home but us,

and we don't live here anymore.

-A friend, drunk one night

1

The owner of the liquor store was an Irishman with graying hair; he glanced at Edith, then pretended he hadn't, and said: "There's my ale man."

"Six Pickwicks," I said. "And a six-pack of Miller's for the women."

"You hardly find a woman who'll drink ale."

"That's right."

We leaned against the counter; I felt Edith wanting to touch me, so I stepped back and took out my wallet. Hank had wanted to pay for all of it but I held him to two dollars.

"Used to be everybody in New England drank ale. Who taught you? Your father?"

"He taught me to drink ale and laugh with pretty girls. What happened to the others?"

I was watching Edith enjoying us. She is dark and very small with long black hair, and she has the same charming gestures that other girls with long hair have: with a slow hand she pushes it from her eye; when she

bends over a drinking fountain, she holds it at her ear so it won't fall into the basin. Some time I would like to see it fall: Edith drinking, lips wet, throat moving with cool water, and her hair fallen in the chrome basin, soaking.

"World War II. The boys all got drafted before they were old enough to drink in Massachusetts, see? So they started drinking beer on the Army bases. When they came home they still wanted beer. That was the end of ale. Now if one of your old ale drinkers dies, you don't replace him."

Outside under the streetlights Edith took my arm. In front of the newsstand across the street a cop watched us get into the car, and in the dark Edith sat close to me as I drove through town. There were few cars and no one was on the sidewalks. On the streets where people lived most of the houses were dark; a few blocks from my house I stopped under a large tree near the curb and held Edith and we kissed.

"We'd better go," she said.

"I'll bring my car to the Shell station at twelve."

She moved near the door and brushed her hair with her fingers, and I drove home. Terry and Hank were sitting on the front steps. When I stopped the car Edith got out and crossed the lawn without waiting or looking back. Terry watched me carrying the bag, and when I stepped between her and Hank she looked straight up at me.

We talked in the dark, sitting in lawn chairs on the porch. Except Hank, who was always restless: he leaned against the porch rail, paced, leaned against a wall, stood over one of us as we talked, nodding his head, a bottle in one fist, a glass in the other, listening, then breaking in, swinging his glass like a slow hook to the body the instant before he interrupted, then his voice came, louder than ours. In high school he had played halfback. He went to college weighing a hundred and fifty-six pounds and started writing. He had kept in condition, and his walk and gestures had about them an athletic grace that I had tried to cultivate as a boy, walking home from movies where I had seen gunmen striding like mountain lions. Edith sat to my right, with her back to the wall; sometimes she rested her foot against mine. Terry sat across from me, smoking too much. She has long red hair and eleven years ago she was the prettiest girl I had ever seen; or, rather, the prettiest girl I had ever touched. Now she's thirty and she's gained a pound for each of those eleven years, but she has gained them subtly, and her only striking change is in her eyes, blue eyes that I fell in love with: more and more now, they have that sad, pensive look that married women get after a few years. Her eyes used to be merry. Edith is twenty-seven and her eyes are still merry, and she turned them bright and dark to me as I talked. When Hank and Edith left, we walked them to the car, hugging and pecking them goodnight as we always did; I watched Edith's silhouette as they drove away.

"Come here," Terry said. She took my wrist and pulled me toward the back door.

"Come where."

"In the kitchen. I want to talk to you."

"Would you let go of my wrist?"

She kept pulling. At the sidewalk leading to the back door I stopped and jerked my arm but she held on and turned to face me.

"I said let go of my wrist," and I jerked again and was free. Then I followed her in.

"From now on we're going to act like married people," she said. "No more of this crap." I went to the refrigerator and got an ale. "Just like other married people. And no flirting around with silly adventures. Do you understand that?"

"Of course I don't. Who could understand such bullshit."

"You're not really going to play dumb. Are you? Come on."

"Terry." I was still calm; I thought I might be able to hold onto that, pull us out of this, into bed, into sleep. "Would you please tell me what's wrong?"

She moved toward me and I squared my feet to duck or block, but she went past me and got ice from the refrigerator and went to the cabinet where the bourbon was.

"Why don't you have a beer instead?"

"I don't want a beer."

"You'll get drunk."

"Maybe I will."

I looked down at my glass, away from her face: in summer she had freckles that were pretty, and I remembered how I used to touch her in daylight, a quick kiss or hug as I went through the kitchen, a hand at her waist or shoulder as we walked in town; that was not long ago, and still she reached for me passing in the house, or touched me as she walked by the couch where I read, but I never did; in bed at night, yes, but not in daylight anymore.

"Why don't we talk in the morning? We'll just fight now, you've got that look of yours."

"Never mind that look of mine."

The pots from dinner were still on the stove, the plates were dirty in the sink, and when I sat at the table I brushed crumbs and bits of food from the place in front of me; the table was sticky where I rested my hands, and I went to the sink and got a sponge and wiped the part I had cleaned. I left the sponge on the table and sat down and felt her fury at my cleaning before I looked up and saw it in her eyes. She stood at the stove, an unlit cigarette in her hand.

"You and Edith, all these trips you make, all these Goddamn errands, all summer if someone runs out of booze or cigarettes or wants Goddamn egg rolls, off you go, you and Edith, and it's not right to leave me with Hank, to put me in that position-"

"Now wait a minute."

"-something's going on, either it's going on or you want it to-"

"Just a minute, wait just a minute-two questions: why is it wrong for Edith and me to go get some beer and

Goddamn ale, and what's this position you're in when you're alone with Hank, and what is it you're really worrying about? Do you get horny every time you're alone with Hank and you want Daddy to save you from yourself?"

"No, I don't get horny when I'm alone with Hank; I only get horny for my Goddamn husband but he likes to be with Edith."

"We've been married for ten years. We're not on our honeymoon, for Christ's sake."

Her eyes changed, softened, and her voice did too: "Why aren't we? Don't you love me?"

"Oh hell. Of course I do."

"Well what are you saying, that you love me but we've been married so long that you need Edith too, or maybe you're already having her? Is that it, because if it is maybe we should talk about how long this marriage is going to last. Because you can move out anytime you want to, I can get a job-

"Terry."

"-and the kids will be all right, there's no reason for you to suffer if marriage is such a disappointment. Maybe I've done something-

"Terry."

"What."

"Calm down. Here." I reached across the table with my lighter and she leaned over to light her cigarette, cupping her hands around mine, and under her flesh like a pulse I could feel her need and I wanted at once to shove her against the stove, and to stroke her cheek and tousle her hair.

"Terry, you said those things. Not me. I have never wanted to leave you. I am not suffering. I'm not tired of you, and I don't need Edith or anyone else. I like being with her. Like with any other friend-man or woman-sometimes I like being alone with her. So once in a while we run an errand. I see nothing threatening in that, nothing bad. I don't think married people have to cling to each other, and I think if you look around you'll see that most of them don't. You're the only wife I know who gets pissed at her husband because he doesn't touch her at parties-

"The other husbands touch their wives! They put their arms around them!"

"Hank doesn't."

"That's why she's so lonely, that's why she likes to tag along like your little lamb, because Hank doesn't love her-

"Who ever said that?"

"Hank did." Her eyes lowered. "Tonight while you two were gone."

"He said that?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I don't know, he just said it."

"What were you doing?"

"Well we were talking, how else do you tell people things."

"When people talk like that they're usually doing other things."

"Oh sure, we were screwing on the front porch, what do you care?"

"I don't, as long as I know the truth."

"The truth. You wouldn't know the truth if it knocked on the door. You won't even admit the ..."

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Juan Elam:

Do you have favorite book? In case you have, what is your favorite's book? Publication is very important thing for us to find out everything in the world. Each e-book has different aim or even goal; it means that publication has different type. Some people experience enjoy to spend their a chance to read a book. These are reading whatever they acquire because their hobby is usually reading a book. Consider the person who don't like studying a book? Sometime, individual feel need book once they found difficult problem or even exercise. Well, probably you will want this We Don't Live Here Anymore: Three Novellas.

Lois Silvey:

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Johnathan Fuller:

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William McDowell:

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