

# John Cale, The Gift

Waldo Jeffers had reached his limit. It was now Mid-August which meant that he had been separated from Marsha for a long time. But lately Waldo had begun to worry. He had trouble sleeping at night and when he did, he had horrible visions of Marsha's faithlessness haunted him. Daytime fantasies of sexual abandon permeated his thoughts. The idea came to him on the Thursday before the Mummies' Parade was scheduled to appear. He had to go. Then it struck him, he didn't have enough money to go to Wisconsin in the accepted fashion, true, but he had a plan. By Friday afternoon, Waldo was set. He was packed and the post office had agreed to pick him up. Marsha Bronson had just finished setting her hair. It had been a very rough weekend. She had to go to work. Sheila Klein, her very, very best friend walked in through the porch screen door and into the kitchen. "Oh god, it's absolutely maudlin outside." "I know what you mean, I feel all icky!" Marsha tightened her cotton robe with the silk sash. "I'm supposed to take these salt pills," but she wrinkled her nose, "They make me feel like I'm dying." "I don't think I'll ever touch a daiquiri again." She gave up and sat down, this time near the window. "After last night, I thought maybe you'd be through with him." "I know what you mean, my God, he was like an octopus. Hands all over the place." Sheila was giggling with her hand over her mouth. "I'll tell you, I feel the same way, and even worse." It was at this point that Mr. Jameison of the Clarence Darrow Post Office rang the door bell of the late Mrs. Bronson. "What do you think it is?" Sheila asked. Marsha stood with her arms folded behind her back. She stared at the brown cardboard carton that had just arrived. Inside the package Waldo quivered with excitement as he listened to the muffled voices. Sheila ran to the door. Waldo felt his heart beating. He could feel the vibrating footsteps. It would be soon. Marsha walked around the carton and read the ink-scratched label. "God, it's from Waldo." "That schmuck!" said Sheila. Waldo trembled with expectation. "You might as well open it," said Sheila. Both of them tried to flip the stable flap. "Ah," said Marsha groaning. "He must have nailed it shut." They tagged at the top. Inside the package, Waldo was transfixed with excitement that he could hardly breathe. His skin felt like it was on fire. Sheila stood quite upright and walked around to the other side of the package. Then she sank down.