

Meeting the Muse

We sat down at the bar, and Jean said, "There's that guy again."

"Yeah. I saw him. So, lots of guys I see around, still don't know 'em."

"He keeps looking at you."

"Yeah. I saw that. Maybe he thinks he knows me."

As I was coming out of the restroom, he was going in. We nearly collided, and I realized, *Phew. Very big dude.*

When I sat down, Jean asked, "Did that guy talk to you?"

"No. But he wanted to. He was just slow getting started, and I stepped around him and came on back. You know something? I do know him. I started remembering on the way back here, I've had dreams about him. Kind of scary dreams, but I can't remember how they go."

"You mean you dreamed about him before you ever saw him down here? Or you dreamed about him since the other day when we saw him?"

"I think I dreamed about him quite a while back. I never remembered the dreams until now, so I can't be sure when it was."

The next morning, I told her. "I dreamed about that guy again. I can't remember all of it, but it's an upsetting dream. He keeps trying to tell me something but can't get it said, or he says it, and as soon as he says it, I lose my grasp of it. While he's saying it, it makes sense, and I'm glad I'm finally knowing it. I'm amazed at what he's saying. But the instant he's through, it's gobbledegook; my memory of the sense of it is gone. There's more to it. He threatens me. I can't remember what he says, but it scares me when he says it."

That day, I left the garden mid-morning and started back on the novel I'd been working on before we began the spring garden. For about five days, I gardened for an hour or two and then wrote for the rest of the day.

Saturday morning, Jerry showed up with a pickup load of horse manure. We unloaded it and went back for a truck and trailer load of spoiled hay he had located. We spread that and tilled most of it into the area we derocked the last time we put in some long days of work.

We took the trailer back and agreed we'd done plenty for one day. But when we got back, we picked up rakes, worked

the roughed out ground down a little, and got the water set up on it. We finished about moonrise.

Jean came in from work with beer. We all sat with our backs against the wall and looked at the garden in the moonlight and drank beer.

Jerry said, "It's coming along great. That first part we worked is really fine soil now."

"One season working our butts off to get the soil in shape, then it'll be very little work. Mostly just add to the top when it needs it."

"And keep it weeded."

"Yeah, weeds."

After the heavy work and the beer, I fell asleep sitting there against the wall and had a little dream, or I had a hallucination, or a different reality impinged, but I was facing the big guy, who looked like he wanted to talk to me. He said, "Preparation now, and then very little time devoted to the garden once it's set up; that's just a story. Are you a gardener, or a writer, or a handyman taking odd jobs, or a honky-tonk man or what?"

I said, "What's a honky-tonk man?"

Jean said, "You know that. A guy goes out honky-tonkin', hits all the bars, dances, gets into the music, one place and then another. That's honky-tonkin'. We could go honky-tonkin'. Hey everybody, let's go honky-tonkin'."

Second bar we hit, I saw that big guy. I got nervous and wondered what was happening. Was that a dream, or what? How come I didn't want to hear what he was saying? I could just walk up to him and say, "You wantin' to talk to me?"

I had several more beers. Jean looked at me and said, "Something the matter?"

"Just honky-tonkin' real quiet."

"Putting away a lot of beer."

"Don't I s'posed to?"

"I don't care. You just looked like you were nervous and drowning it, so I thought I'd ask if everything was okay. Didn't know you'd jump out and bite me."

I had a couple more beers. When I went over to talk to the guy, I had a little trouble getting there. Weavy and wobbly. I couldn't bring myself to tap him on the shoulder, but he turned. I said, "Lookin' f'r me."

"What?"

"You. You been lookin' f'r me."

"I've been looking at you. I don't have to look for you because I already know where you are, but I have been looking at you."

"Yeah. What's that s'posed to mean? What's that for?"

I was feeling drunker and drunker the more I stood there, and I was hoping those last two beers were about soaked up already.

He said, "Your work. I been lookin' at you and wonderin' when you're gonna get to work."

"Work? Work? Hell, din I work all day? Hot sun. See? Blisters. Here and here. What was that you said?"

"Not gardening. Your work. Your own work. Your creative output, that you've just now drowned in about ten fast beers."

"Hey, you, who you think? What was that you said? So what if I drank ten beers? Twenty beers? So what?" I couldn't remember what it was he'd just said. "Hey, what are you to me? What's work to you? So what?" I marked on his chin with my eye the spot I was going to plant my fist, bring it up from the floor, step underneath it and drive it home, right on that little x-mark. As soon as I could gather it up. I shifted my footing, and Jean came up beside me, slipped her arm through mine. "What's up, honey?"

"Well, listen, what's up. This dude here, what he said, well tell you, let me whisper it to you."

"Come on, time to head home. You got to work your feet." Jerry came up and took my other arm, and they mostly carried me out and then helped me along until I got my feet going. Jean said, "What'd that guy say to you?"

"Work. Somethin'. I don't know what the hell he said. What did he say? He called me a honky-tonk man. No. I don't know. I was gonna deck him. He's got a little x-mark on his chin, and I was gonna plant it right there."

"Oh, I know. You're crazy, you know it? That guy's six three or four. He weighs, what? two-forty, two-fifty? He knew you were winding up, you crazy man."

In the morning, she said, "You remember now what that guy said to you?"

"What guy? Oh. That big guy. Did he talk to me?"

"You were gonna hit him."

"Boy. Wouldn't he have gone down with a crash? He's so big."

"Drunk as you were and big as he is, I don't think you would have sent even a shiver through his timbers. I'd be talking to you in the hospital now instead of here at home."

"I'm pretty sure I should be in a hospital now anyway. I haven't had a hangover like this ever. I don't think I'll live through it. Did that guy hit me? That big, pushy bully following me around and watching me, did he sock me one?"

"No. You were gonna hit him though."

"I remember that. I think I remember that. He said

something to me, and it made me mad. I was gonna deck him, but I don't remember what he said."

"Next time, why don't you just go talk to him while you're still sober?"

"I don't want to talk to him. At all. Ever."

"Why? You don't even know him."

"I do too. I don't know how or when or what, but I know him. He's some kind of threat to me, and I don't want anything to do with him or it."

"You sound more irrational than usual to me."

"And more hung-over than ever. We just can't talk about it now."

"I'll get you something for a headache, and you go to sleep."

She did, and I did, only to dream the guy was following me down the street. I walked faster, and he walked faster. I started to run, and he kept up.

I yelled, "Leave me alone. Get away from me."

He yelled, "Right!" but he kept after me. "Right! Right!"

I woke up; Jean was touching me. "You're yelling in your sleep."

"My head still hurts. It really hurts."

"Right."

"Right? What do you mean, right? Right? Right it, set it aright, or right, that's right, or turn right, right on, righteous, right now?"

"Hey, what is this? I just meant right, I know your head hurts. I can see it. You're a little bit crazy right now. I'll call in and tell them I'm sick and stay with you."

"No. No, I'm okay. Bad dream, too much hangover, but I'll get through."

So she went to work. I spent most of the afternoon sitting in the shade in the garden sipping ice water.

About sunset, the gate opened, and the guy walked through and shut it after him. First I said, "I'm dreaming again," but no, I was awake, and it was really him. I said, "I don't think you're somebody I wanna see."

He said, "Boy, don't I get all the shit down on me? I wonder what I ever did to get this assignment. I ain't looking forward to seeing you either, I tell you. It's a job I got to do, you know? If I had another offer, I'd sure take it, whatever it was."

"A job?"

"Yeah. A job."

"A job of work? For pay?"

"I wouldn't do it for free."

"What kind of job? They call this a contract? You got a contract on me?"

“Now you got a lively and somewhat morbid imagination. That you got a workin’ imagination is good and will help if we get everything else together.”

“What did you mean, right? Right away, right turn, right a wrong?”

“I know, I already know that you will go a long way to not hear what I have to say to you. I know that, and that is an example. How come you could only hear me say right? How come that couldn’t be with a double-u, write?”

“Wright? With a double-u? Mill wright? Orville Wright?”

“Oh damn. You playin’ funny games with me?”

“Games? You’re the games man, come on to me with these stupid words, try to make me guess what you’re up to. All I got is a hangover and a wish to be left alone.”

“Okay. Why couldn’t you hear w-r-i-t-e, write?”

“Write?”

“Right. Write.”

“Huh. I don’t know. Was that what you were saying? Write, w-r-i-t-e? Huh. That never occurred to me.”

“I know it.”

“So, write. That’s what it was.”

“Yeah.”

“Well. Now, why would you be sayin’ that to me? Or you know, how did you know what I was talkin’ about? That was a dream.”

“Yeah. Sure. I been tryin’ to talk to you in dreams, but mostly you ain’t listening. You listen some, but in the morning, you get busy doin’ something and let it slide away. You don’t remember a half-hour after breakfast what we worked out in dreams.”

“I think I have an inkling. Phew man. I still got a hell of a headache. Really a vicious, brain-splitting headache. I just am not into talking about this right now. You stay here and enjoy the garden if you want to, but I’m goin’ in and crash out a while. Sorry, man. I could talk to you later, when I feel better. I just can’t handle it now.”

“But, hey, this has been going on a long time. I mean, I been tryin’ to get you to let me talk to you a long time, and even getting your attention is a problem. Then, when I do get your attention, there’s something you have to shuttle off to, so you can’t hear me at all.”

“Maybe there’s a reason for that. See, you ain’t even. Phew man, this is bullshit, you realize that? Ow man, don’t make me holler like that. Drives the blood up into my head and just really really hurts.”

“I didn’t make you holler. I can hear you if you talk just

gentle. You hollered your own self.”

“Okay. Sorry. Don’t get upset. I will listen to you. I really will. Only not now. I’m really sick right now. I’m pretty sure I’m gonna start vomiting if I don’t lie down. If I get started, I know it won’t quit for a while. I’m going in.

“You try to use force, grab me, I’m so sick right now, that would just kill me. I’d let go and die. You stand in front of me to stop me, I’ll vomit all over you and then lay down and die, I swear it.” I went in, walking just as slow and steady as I could, lay down without unbuttoning or unlacing anything. I felt Jean take my shoes and socks off when she came in at midnight.

I woke about six and ate a small breakfast and started fixing a larger one for when Jean got up. She came in a little before eight, upset. “Curt.”

“Breakfast is ready.”

“I just looked out the bedroom window, and that guy’s sitting under the tree out in the garden.”

“How come you see that guy?”

“What? What do you mean?”

“I decided this morning he’s a dream I’ve been having.”

“Looks pretty real to me, sittin’ out there under the tree. Doesn’t look like a dream.”

“You ever hear that guy say anything all the times you’ve seen him?”

“No.”

“See. That’s it. He’s a dream I’m having. It’s so strong that sometimes you see the visuals on it, but you don’t get any of the sound or anything like that. It’s weird, I know, but you can probably imagine, it’s weirder yet to me, because I’m the one having the dream.”

“Curt.”

“What?”

“Are you asleep right now? Am I part of the dream?”

“What’re you? Funny or something? You’re a dream, honey, but I ain’t dreaming you. Hey, where you going? Your breakfast’ll get cold.”

I’d already decided I was not going out there, so I just waited until she came back in. “I spoke to your dream, and he spoke to me, and I touched him, and he’s real.”

“Where’d you touch him?”

“Oh Curt. Criminey. He won’t tell me what he wants. Just says he has to talk to you. He assured me he meant you no harm, and I believe him. He has some business he has to settle with you. Do you know what it’s about?”

“More than I did before, but not enough to talk about.”

“Well, I wish you’d get it settled. If you want to know the

truth, I think you've been a little strange about this. Do you think he means you harm?"

"Not physical harm, no. Oh hell. It just can't be."

After she left, I washed dishes and tried to work inside, but I knew there were some plants that needed water, so I went out and got the hose. I ignored him and watered the garden.

He said, "You're feelin' better this morning, looks like."

I kept watering.

"I don't mean to come on strong or put you off. People tell me I don't know what tact or diplomacy is. I just do the best I can. I guess you can see what a position I'm in."

I put the hose down and pulled a few weeds.

"You can see why I got to talk to you, can't you? I can't just leave and drop it, or I sure would, cause I don't like sticking with something that just don't go."

I threw a handful of weeds to the ground. "You can't be what you say you are. You just can't be. Phooey. I think what you're trying to say is you're a muse."

"Not a muse. Your muse. Yours."

"No damn it. No way. Something got messed up."

"You want to see my work card? It says there."

"A muse is a beautiful woman who comes to you in spirit form and whispers in your ear and plants supportive inspirations in your mind. And in the second place, there's no such thing anyway. You just got things goofed up a little is all."

"No. You know, deep down. Already, part of you says this is right, what I'm tellin' you. That's why you're fightin' it so hard, 'cause you know it's right, and you don't want to accept it. You got what a muse is confused with a variety of legends and a lot of your own imagination. A muse is a function, a force, not defined as to physical form. You're too confident in your own self, where you should give more weight to the forces that feed you. Your strength only comes together when you let go of your individual identity a little and accept the forces that are given to you."

"Accept the forces, okay, but no damn way some six foot four, two hundred and sixty pound moose of a football player is going to be my muse."

"Going to be? What's going to be? The good ones, the ones you like best yourself, I worked with you on them. The ones you put away and don't circulate anymore are the ones I couldn't relate to and help you with."

"Some of those are still good story ideas."

"Sure. Good ideas. But no inspiration. You got to have the muse working to keep the inspiration high. I never played football in my life. How about if I started calling you a runt

because you're so little and skinny next to me?"

"I'm muscular."

"Muscular? At one hundred and fifty pounds, nobody over five foot seven is muscular."

"Don't I have any choice who I get for a muse?"

"Some. You could solicit for a new muse. No guarantee what you'd get, somebody who's out of a job, who knows why, or if you time it wrong, you could run with a vacancy for a long time. It would put you in an unfavorable position to come to a good workin' relationship with your new muse. He's gonna know you threw me off without just cause, so he's gonna be worried enough about his future with you, he won't be workin' at his best. He's bound to hedge on being honest with you, to protect his position, and that would be disastrous."

"You keep saying 'he'."

"A convenient word. You might get a female muse."

"Are you worried about your position?"

"A little. It's hard times right now to be without a job, and it's going to be tougher to get a position if I've been fired. But I'm not so worried that I'd compromise ideals. Frankly, you're not easy to work with, so in a way, it'd be a relief to get on unemployment and just quit hassling with you."

"What's so hard about working with me?"

"What've you been doing all summer?"

"Lots of things. Worked at a job for a while, got the garden going, been writing sometimes."

"Sometimes? Once. One time you got down and did some work for a few days. You've been drinkin' beer and tryin' to be a honky-tonk man, and gardening and daydreaming. You haven't even been writing any of the daydreams down."

"Gardening is good."

"Sure. But you don't just garden. You sculpt the ground, make nice shapes in the garden, put it together for show."

"That is not bad. No way."

"No, it isn't. Unless you use it as an excuse not to get back to your desk, make the garden work four times fancier'n you need, take four times as long to do it, keep telling yourself you're doin' it from necessity, to get lots of food coming in. Deep down, you know a lot of the projects stretch out so long because you just don't want to get back to writing. That's why I've been tryin' to get you to listen to me. And that's been hard."

"I still don't have to listen to you or do anything, you know. I never signed a contract with you or about you."

"Things in my line of work don't run on signed contracts. When you started writing seriously, you prayed for inspiration. You qualified, and I was put on the job. You accepted the help.

That's a contract. Now you got some obligations to fulfill, and some work to do. That book's too far along to quit now. If it doesn't come through, I'm probably going to have to find another line of work."

We sat in silence, looking down the rows of vegetables. Then he said, "Maybe that would be okay. Get into another line of work."

The sun set. He said, "You gonna write?"

"Yes."

"Okay. Then I won't be seein' you for a while, at least daylight hours, you know, like this," including in his gesture his own physicality and that surrounding us, and he left.

I sat there against the wall until Jean pulled in the driveway. I went through the back door to meet her as she came in the front door.

After she slowed down a little from getting home from work, she asked, "What happened to your friend?"

"He left."

"What did he want?"

"He talked to me about getting to work on my writing."

"Really? Is he a publisher?"

"No."

"An agent?"

"Agent? Well, in a way, he's an agent. Yeah. He is an agent."

"A literary agent?"

"This is going to take a little while to tell you. You want to go down and have a beer, and I'll explain it to you?"

I had five or six beers and didn't explain it very well. I didn't believe it, I discovered as I was trying to tell about it. It seemed so absurd, I started laughing and couldn't get anything said. Then I got drunk and stopped trying to explain. I said, "You never really saw that guy, did you?" until she stopped saying she did see him and started saying, "Whatever you say, Curt. I don't want to argue about it."

She had to help me walk home. I woke up late in the morning with a hangover. I got up and took a shower and ate. Then I sat at my desk and sorted pages. After a couple of hours of trimming redundancies and rereading, it clicked, and I wrote straight through until daylight. I just said, Hello, Goodnight to Jean when she came in from work, ragged out from the night before and then a full shift.

It kept clicking, and I kept at it for about two weeks, most days six to ten hours at my desk. The form of the book was coming together, starting to function.

We had an abundance of radishes, peas, lettuce, and spinach

from the garden. Some of the cabbage started to head up, and the tomatoes and peppers blossomed and started to set on. The new ground worked well; the hay rotted; worms moved in, and we turned it again to get it ready for late planting. I started splitting my days between gardening and writing.

Jerry and Lynn came back from vacation and took care of the garden while Jean and I hiked into a wilderness area, something we'd been wanting to do for about three years. It was really good, healed up some places in us that needed to be somewhere with nothing but country, God, and a few people on foot.

When we got back, Jerry had most of the greenhouse framed up, and we spent several days finishing it. I set up benches and prepared soil.

We had bills coming up, so I worked four weeks driving tractor, ten hours a day, six days a week. Jerry and Lynn kept the garden going. By the time I finished farm work, we had vegetables to freeze and can, melons and berries ripe every day, dozens of things to walk around and eat, pull weeds away from. I sat quite a few hours under the tree in the garden, just draining the remnants of tractor driving out of myself.

Jean changed jobs and had her evenings free. We went to restaurants and bars.

I'd almost forgotten the guy, so I had to think a minute when we came out of the movies about midnight and Jean said, "There's that guy again."

Then I did know who she meant, and I said, "Where?" and she pointed. I grabbed her arm, and we headed up the other way fast. We trotted almost around the block to get to the car, and I squealed tires pulling away from the curb. After a while, she said, "Curt?"

"Yes."

"Are there things in your past you haven't told me about? Big things?"

"What? No. Oh, you mean that guy keeps popping up. He's not out of my past. Just the very present time."

"You're so afraid of him."

"No. Actually, I'm not afraid of him. I just don't like him, and I don't want to talk to him."

That night, I dreamed I went into a bar and ordered a beer, and the bartender looked up, and it was him. He shook his head and gave me water instead of beer.

The next day was Jean's day off, and we worked in the garden part of the morning and then spent some quiet time together. At lunch she said, "Are you going to do any more writing while you have some time? I don't like this job much,

so you might have to take a job for a while again sometime.”

“Did you dream about that guy last night?”

“What guy?” Blank look. Maybe too blank.

“Yeah. I’m going to get back to it. I have to do it when I do it, though. I can’t be pushed into it. Pressure just makes me nervous.”

“Well, I didn’t mean to pressure you. I was just asking about it and talking about this job. That’s all.” Quiet time of being in close touch began to drift away from us.

I tried to get to it that afternoon. I couldn’t make sense of what I was reading. Everything I’d written seemed like so much disconnected trash. Jean was in the house, going about here and there, and I put my attention on her instead of on what was on my desk. I thought she looked at me with disapproval when my pencil wasn’t moving. She stopped and looked at me, and I said, “I tell you, I can’t write if you’re pushing at me. It has to flow.”

She threw the towel she had in her hand to the floor. “I was standing here thinking what a fine looking man you are and just about to say something about it. If my presence bothers you that much, I’ll go do something else.”

The next couple of hours, I didn’t get anything done. I started wondering what she was doing and went looking for her. I found her, and we ran into some friends and went for a pizza.

When I reached for my beer and there was only water in the glass, I was startled, inhaled, and choked on the water. Jean pounded on my back, and I got it cleared. I said, “That son-of-a-bitch.”

Jean said, “What son-of-a-bitch? Whatever is going on?” I didn’t answer. She explained to the people we were with, “He’s been kind of funny lately. I don’t know what it is.”

The moon was full. We drove home, and Jean went in and went to bed. I went out into the garden, sat in a lawn chair in the moonlight.

After a while, I realized there was someone sitting in the shadow of the wall. I said, “I can’t be pushed into writing. It just doesn’t work.”

“What does?”

“I don’t know. But I know you have to get off my case.”

“I was off it. I wasn’t around for a while, I think you might remember.”

“You been doing anything in my wife’s dreams?”

No answer. I said, “Well, I tell you what. Can’t find privacy in my own garden, I think I’ll go downtown and have a beer before the bars close.”

“The more you spend on beer, restaurants, movies, the sooner you have to get a job. Jean isn’t going to stick out that

job more'n two or three months, you know that."

"Something will get published and bring me in enough money to get by on a while, buy me some time."

"Something will get published. You have a grand total of three stories in the mail, and you haven't had a publication for more than a year. You're playing a game."

"Well, those beers I was talking about, if you'll excuse me."

He stood in my way in front of the gate. I said, "Ah phooey." I stepped to his side and came up from the ground with it and landed on his chin as he turned toward my motion. He bounced against the wall and sat down hard. I started through the gate, favoring my hand I hit him with, but he reached out and caught my ankle, and I went down, managed to kick loose, rolled and came up just as he came charging head down through the gate.

He went low to the ground, reached for my legs, coming on like a bull buffalo. I stepped sideways and brought my knee up full force into his charging head, but he caught me with his shoulder and arm and slammed me down with two hundred and sixty high-speed pounds, drove me into the ground. I didn't breathe for a while, slipped around almost deserting consciousness.

I got one breath pulled in finally. Then one more. I kept working at it until I had a rhythm going. I wiggled and squirmed and got out from under, and he sat up and looked at me blank-eyed. I said, "See you later," and walked away.

I was two blocks toward town when I felt the ground rumbling and turned to meet the charge. He veered and circled me and then stopped, breathing hard. I hit him, and he let one go that threw me six feet backward, and I landed hard in the grass. I got up and went for him, and he changed tactics. He didn't hit me anymore but started trying to get hold of me.

I ran, danced, circled and jumped. I tried to slow him down by smacking him in the head again and again. Smack him, leap back, dance to the side, hit him again. His face was getting puffy from being beat at. I hit him, and he jerked backward, stepped back, like he might retreat but then bore down again with more focused intent. He was a damn tree, so massive that my blows were just pecking at him.

I had to stop hitting him with my right hand, because some or maybe all my fingers were broken in that hand from my first haymaker. The bone ends grated, and that slowed me down so much that he caught me by the shoulder. He spun me around and got both arms wrapped around me from behind.

I had trouble getting my wind because of the falls I'd taken and because I'd been dancing and working so hard. Then he

tightened up a little. All I could do was catch very shallow breaths and say, "Phew. Wait a minute. Ease up a little," in a very small voice. He bore down a little more, and I said, "Uncle."

"Uncle who?"

"Anybody. I'll talk. I'll listen. Okay. Whatever you say. Just ease up." I caught up on my breathing a little. Then I said, "You can let go of me. I won't leave."

"Sure?"

"Yeah." I walked over to the grass and sat down against a tree and rested a while. He sat down on the grass and then lay down and put his arm across his face. I said, "You okay?"

"Okay. You?"

"Okay. I know I got broken fingers, and I think I might have some broken ribs. Something's kind of grating in there. Only last thing I want to know is, how come I drew a huge, heavy dude like you for a muse?"

"Well, what's it take?"

"Yeah. Yeah. Well, it's time to get at writing anyway. I got to do something, so I might as well do that. Give it a really good go and see what happens." Then I started laughing, and that caused my ribs and lungs to really hurt, and that was funny, that laughing should bring on pain, and I laughed harder and sat there hunched over, laughing and saying, "Ow, ow, ow, that hurts, and that ain't even funny," and that was funnier yet, so I devoted a lot of attention to trying to relax everywhere so the pain would ease, the laughter come easily, without fighting anything.

He said, "What's so funny?"

"He he he, ow, ow, he he, oh ha, ow. What's funny is, oh wow that hurts, not funny, no way, ow. What's funny is, all the fingers in my right hand are broken. He he he, ow, oh, ow. I think these two are pretty bad. I guess I hit you about a dozen times after I broke them. He he he, see, I can't write; my fingers are broken."

He sat up quickly. I looked at his battered face in the moonlight, and the laughing came in storms. The pain clamped down on me hard. He moved. I stopped laughing, took an even breath and said, "Of course I can write. No problem. Just kidding you a little. Sit back down and take it easy. We don't want to do any more of that. Anybody could look at us and tell that's not healthy. Even if they put my hand in a cast, I could have them set a pencil into the cast and make it along okay."

They put my hand in a cast that goes halfway up my forearm. Turned out I also broke a metacarpal, and that will take a while to heal, but my thumb and forefinger come far

enough out of the cast I can get hold of a pencil. It's fatiguing to keep moving the weight of the cast, but I'm holding out pretty well and increasing the length of time I can keep writing at a stretch.

They also put a tight wrap on my ribs, and I'm looking forward to the day we can take that off.

I'm beginning to pile up a substantial amount of work. Jean has her own projects going, and she's happy with focusing our energies more at home. We don't see many people.

Jerry and Lynn come over, and we all work in the garden, but it doesn't take as much time now that it's all set up. Lot of the work, I can't do too well until this cast and tape goes anyway, so I sit at the outside table and keep writing. When the beer comes around, I don't drink more than one, because alcohol befuddles my word sense, and I still have some catching up to do.

Feels good to be in the rhythm of it. This run's gonna last a while.