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Robert Daseler

December Night

Crossing one day the place de la Concorde,
I heard my name called out in a shrill voice
And, turning, saw a person I had known

At school: pretty, blonde, popular with boys,
A senior when I was a sophomore,

Indifferent to me, never having shown
A willingness to smile at me before,
Now offering an unexpected choice:

Continue with the plans already laid
To meet some other people and to spend
The evening with them, or traipse the town
The whole night through with her, from end to end?
What kind of choice was that? I had made
My mind up in a trice: I'd watch the dawn
Steal shyly over Paris and pretend
To touch on mysteries I'd never known.

The rising sun found us beside the Seine,
And anyone who saw us might have thought
We were in love, used to being close.
The truth, however, was that we were not.
We would never see each other again,
Except once (coincidence, I suppose)
In San Francisco, an occasion when
I was morose and left the scene distraught.

Frieze of Girls at Play

Pretty girls, Giacomo, look almost nude
While walking down the street in summer shorts
And flimsy tank tops that leave midriffs bare.
They all have suntans and play outdoor sports,
And all of them have health and youth to spare.
Displaying coltish limbs and pulchritude,
They lie upon the sand at beach resorts.
Let's not stare too long at them—it's rude.
Now that you are bereft of them, my friend,
And with the certain knowledge that you'll never
Embrace another of that flock and send
Her home by taxi after she has showered,

The looking seems to be a vain endeavor
That makes your once-bold heart feel like a coward.

Robert Daseler's full-length plays, *Dragon Lady* and *Alekhine's Defense*, have been staged by South Coast Repertory in Costa Mesa, California. The University of Evansville published a collection of his sonnets, *Levering Avenue*, and his essays, short stories, and poems have appeared in numerous journals.