

Norris

by Norman Mailer

I admire and am intrigued by the little mysteries that my wife, Norris Church, evokes in her best work. It is genre, and the painter's tale she tells is usually of middle-aged men and women from middle America, people one would not necessarily wish to sit next to on a train or a plane, tourists, housewives, or peppy grandmothers with a small but crazy light in their eye because they are on vacation. There they are, much like this woman dressed in yellow, optimistic, unafraid, and so innocent that one's case-hardened heart feels for her. Full of the glow of brilliant sun and big sky, she is nonetheless fixed in all the interred time of a family snapshot. Blissful, she is as American as her pocketbook which looks very much like a portable radio. From the white plastic frames of her eyeglasses, down to the sturdy set of her legs, she is our perfect and absolute American, sweet, optimistic, a little bewildered—oh, boy!—at the vastness of the space in which she stands, and wholly unaware of the faint shadow of the sinister that rides along that outgoing American highway down which we travel for the rest of our lives, off on our vacation, full of snapshots for which we posed that never told us where we were, and what the shadows had to say of that other highway which winds beyond our means to the mortal mystery of our ends.



NORRIS CHURCH, LEAVING CALIFORNIA, 1982