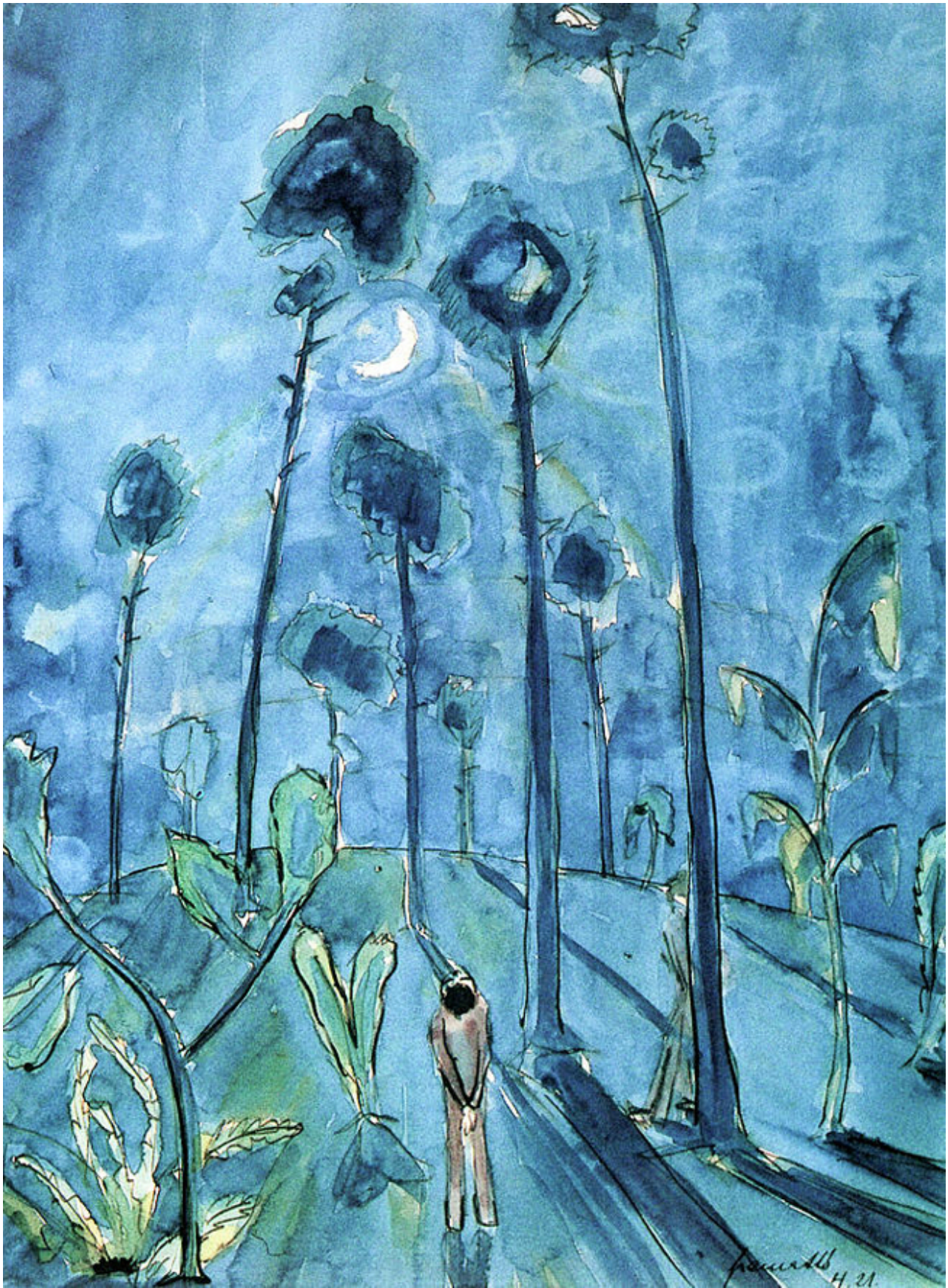


Poor Casanova



Moonscape, Walter Gramatté, 1921

Tony was a New Yorker who found himself transplanted to the Midwest because of his job. He was not doing well in adjusting to the new surroundings. He simply could not hide his disdain for the people and the culture that he found himself in. On top of that, his New York City arrogance was one that forced people around him to suppress an urge to punch him in the face. As a result, he had no social life, which embittered him even more.

On the weekends, he would check out the various nightclubs in an attempt to pick up girls. Unfortunately for him, he would first get drunk because he felt that the booze loosened him up and made him more sociable. In reality, the alcohol made him even more obnoxious.

One particular Friday night, he entered a nightclub, like most clubs having the smell of old, spilled beer. He started drinking right away while checking out the place, once his eyes got adjusted to the darkness. One table had a couple of girls, one of which was a knockout: pretty face, long blonde hair, gorgeous body. After his fourth drink, he came over to the table, now that the band was taking a break and plopped himself down next to her, uninvited. The New Yorker introduced himself and proceeded to spew New York all over her and her friend. Occasionally, his hands would wander where they had no place to be, so the girls decided to split, since they didn't like the band anyway. They did not tell him that they were going to another club in case he decided to follow them. Tony insisted on getting Linda's telephone number and address before they left, so she complied and wrote them down on a napkin and gave it to him before departing. Both the telephone number and address were bogus.

Linda and her friend left and Tony was left behind to charm his other victims. Without luck.

Next night, the would-be Casanova went to another club and, after striking out, drove—unsteadily—to another one, namely

the one he had attended the previous night. He had even more drinks, checked out the place and proceeded to work his magic, with the usual result.

Leaning against the bar and feeling morose, Tony reached his hand into his pocket and withdrew the napkin that Linda had given him last night. He read—with difficulty—what she had written and the memory came back. He had been so drunk last night that he had forgotten all about her, and he remembered that she had been really into him. It showed. He felt like a fool.

He called up the telephone number, but it was busy. He decided to drop in on her. She'd be delighted to see him! Of course! Tony had "one for the road" and stumbled out into the parking lot and his car, where he programmed her address into his cellphone's GPS. Her address was nearby, a mere fifteen minutes away.

He drove away, following the directions. "Turn left."

"At the next stop sign, turn right." He did not stop at the intersection. It was a good thing that he was not stopped by a policeman for his erratic driving.

"Your destination is ahead on the right."

There were no cars parked on the right so there was no possibility of scratching another car with his.

"You have arrived."

Tony parked his car at the kerb and squinted his eyes, since his vision was blurred.

It was an open field. It was not totally dark because there was a little bit of illumination around the perimeter from surrounding structures, but nonetheless, he could not see a house.

Casanova got out and walked unsteadily into the field. Maybe it was a house with a really big front yard.

"You have arrived."

Or maybe it was a playground that was in front of her home.

Stupid hicks!

The New Yorker kept walking, trying to find the house. At one point, it dawned on him that if there was truly a house there, then there should be some lights on. Through a window, or at the front door.

"You have arrived."

He took his cellphone out of his pocket and looked at the settings. He found the flashlight mode and turned on the light. Swinging the light around, Tony saw a couple of trees, apart from each other. Nothing else.

He frowned, puzzled.

On the way to this spot, he had stepped on soft ground and grass and occasionally on something hard, but flat. He was doing that now, so he shone the light at his feet. It was a plaque. It read *Henry Farias 1929-1971*.

Tony frowned some more.

He was in a cemetery! This cemetery was one that had no headstones, it was one of those with just plaques level with the ground. She had sent him to a cemetery! What, that—! He began swearing loudly, punching the air, stumbling and swearing some more. He lost his balance, fell backwards into an open grave, in the process breaking his neck.

"You have arrived."