

The Prairie Light Review

Volume 11
Number 2 *Arcade*

Article 12

Spring 5-1-1992

Hilda

Robert Calisch
College of DuPage

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.cod.edu/plr>

Recommended Citation

Calisch, Robert (1992) "Hilda," *The Prairie Light Review*: Vol. 11 : No. 2 , Article 12.
Available at: <https://dc.cod.edu/plr/vol11/iss2/12>

This Selection is brought to you for free and open access by the College Publications at DigitalCommons@COD. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Prairie Light Review by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@COD. For more information, please contact orenick@cod.edu.

HILDA*Richard Calisch*

Pa walked away one winter night during Hilda's acne and virginity,
stagged out to buy a bottle and did not return.
Ma said that was okee-doke with her
and they moved in with her old pop.
Grandpa died on high school graduation day;
so Ma could not attend
to see Hilda handed the diploma
she had not worked very hard to earn.
Then Hilda's lover broke off their affair,
ransacked her apartment,
stole her imitation ruby ring and twenty-seven dollars,
slit all the upholstery with a knife,
and left no explanations,
just two rooms filled with tears and feathers.
So when Thomas charged into her life,
Hilda turned her back on him;
even though he was a save-the-whales-and-ozone-layer kind of guy,
a good-job-loved-his-mother-and-his-dog-and-pizza kind of guy,
she'd have nothing to do with him:
hung up on all his calls,
tore up his letters,
sent back his flowers,
and when he camped on her front steps one week,
she started going in and out the alley door,
stepping daintily around the dog shit and debris.
He sent her candy which she flushed.

He wrote haiku which read the same forward and backward
and hired skywriters to fly them in smoke across the sky.
He rented a billboard opposite her window
and painted it in pink, red and green
old English script,
"Marry me!"
She pulled her shades
and hunkered in her bathtub in the dark all afternoon.
He appeared on cable public access Channel Three and proposed.
She turned her TV to the wall.
He bribed disc jockeys
to play love songs to her on the air,
and hired a banjo band to strum out in the street;
she went to the movies.
When he sent a telegram from another city,
she opened it, not realizing that it came from him.
"Marry me -- last chance," it said.
She tore it up and ate the pieces.
They were sweet.
Then for a month she had a rash of second thoughts,
and after itching beyond her tolerance for itch
one sleepless night, she dialed his number.
A woman answered.
Hilda placed her phone back in its cradle.
Then she took Pa's picture
from the little heart-shaped box
where she had kept it all those years
and burned it.