The Color of Grass

On a quiet road in central Kansas lies the town of Leroy. In Leroy, there is one traffic light, with only red and yellow to stop or slow you. There is no green to let you go. The inhabitants of Leroy can, if they choose, look out in any direction. They can see out, and away, across the vast ocean of emptiness that they are buried in. The view of the horizon only obscured by the one tall building in town, which is the grain elevator. 85% of the High School graduating class will work in that elevator, or produce grain for it, or support a husband and kids who will do the same.

On a busy street in New York City, 5th Avenue in fact, the lights stream on for blocks and blocks, gleaming the urgency of green which is trumped by the relentless monotonous gridlock of traffic. Pedestrians shuffle along, staring blankly at the cold hard concrete. They work in a myriad of jobs pushing myriads of papers in a myriad of directions, all the while dreaming of a time and a place when they might glimpse the bright blue sky, which has been blotted out by the skyscrapers, piled up row upon row like giant stalks of corn.

In a semi-darkened living room in Leroy, four teenage boys sit hunched around a telephone while a fifth calls the only movie theater in town. The theater is actually a converted dancehall, which shows Hollywood blockbusters four to six months after their national release, and then only on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. The other nights are booked for dancing. The boy slams down the phone exasperated, then shakes his head to his friend who pops a worn out copy of Star Wars Episode II into a 19 inch RCA TV/VHS. The boys only half-heartedly yield attention to the screen for the good bits, the rest of the time sighing wistfully and longingly.

In a pitch black movie theater in downtown Manhattan, the crowd coughs and shifts in anxious irritability. It is the fifth time the film reel has broken. The theater's old outmoded projector has been devouring the brand new installment of the Star Wars saga for the past hour, but the theater owner is too cheap to buy a new one, even though he charges $15 a ticket. The teenagers in the front row have spent an entire month's savings just to be packed like sausages into a sold out theater. A fat guy next to the end spills into three of the boy's seats on the left. The allergies and asthma of the boy on the other end are wheezing and sighing under the strain of the woman next to him. She has bathed herself in Chanel No.5.

Within the echoing vacuum of the Leroy Dancehall the theater screen has been replaced by a boom box blasting out garbled country hits through a couple of spent speakers. The event is hosted by the Daughters of the American Revolution, whose propriety requires the lights remain on at full volume as well. Three girls sit idly sipping sodas and dreaming of Club Mtv while a large pack of boys plant themselves as wallflowers across the room. The dance floor contains one or two teen couples, but is mostly populated with middle-aged chaperones who are reliving the good old days, or at least the old ones. Occasionally one of the girls will dance with one of the boys. He thinks of whether he could get her to go with him out to his car. She thinks of the far off places she wishes she could get him to drive it.

Within the crowded New York dance club, The Limelight, a crystal ball spins diamonds upon the wall. DJ spins a throbbing headache for a crowd full of various painkillers, the sweaty bodies on the dance floor bounce between stepped on toes, brawling punks, liquored up bubbleheads, horny gropers, dirty old men, crusty