

# HAYDEN'S FERRY REVIEW

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Located on the south bank of the Salt River, the town of Hayden's Ferry was founded by pioneer merchant Charles Trumbull Hayden. While crossing the Salt River Valley for the first time during a business trip, he was detained by a flood for two days at the site of two buttes. Climbing to the top of the largest butte, Hayden surveyed a wide stretch of vegetation consisting of cactus, sagebrush, and mesquite; he foresaw "a resurrected fertility by the magic touch of water to soil . . . parched, baked, and dried from the beating down of the sun."

Hayden returned in 1872, founded the town, and began construction of a flour mill. At the same time, he built the ferry that gave the new town its name in order to transport supplies and travelers across the river when spring runoffs and floods prevented natural fording. The boat, made of heavy lumber, was large enough to carry a supply wagon, a team of horses, and several passengers on each trip. It was pulled by rollers attached to a cable suspended across the river and anchored by two poles on either side.

On May 5, 1879, Hayden agreed to rename the town for the lush Vale of Tempe between Mt. Olympia and Mt. Ossa in Greece. A practical man, he did so because he wanted to save the postmaster the space and ink needed to mark *Hayden's Ferry* on mail. After sixteen years of service, the ferry itself ceased operation upon the completion of the first bridge across the Salt River.



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## Gewgaw

“I have to tell you something,” she begins. You put down the fork. She always starts this way.

You wait and stare vacantly at your plate, at two-thirds of a three bean salad. (You’ve picked out and eaten all the kidney beans, and now you sit stupidly grinning with gas like an unburped infant.)

She drags her fingers through her yellow hair — the same vain, annoying gesture that caught your attention at a Business Owners’ Alliance meeting last year and made you stop taking notes and begin to fall in love with her.

Last summer, she took a poetry class at the recreation center. For six weeks, she carried everywhere a pencil and a pad of pastel note paper. She often paused, mid-sentence, to write down an “impression.”

“H. D. is my divining rod,” she said four times, to four different guests at a party in her ranch-style house. The guests listened politely while scooping onion dip with potato chips. Your lover’s husband leaned against the tile counter in the kitchen and cracked ice chips between his teeth. He listened and drank a slow martini.

Later, you sat on a bamboo couch in the living room, pandering to a leggy brunette. Killing time. You looked up too anxiously when your lover (your hostess) came out of the kitchen. Bare feet and matted, blonde hair.

“Ice fight,” she explained, breathlessly. Avoiding your outstretched hand and turning to the brunette.

“Have you *read* Doolittle?” Fierce blue eyes, startling as animal eyes caught by the beam of a headlight.

The brunette gulped her martini and laughed.

“Oh, Mo! I don’t read children’s books,” she said. “I don’t even have any nieces or nephews!”

“Only you understand what I mean. It’s so hard to *explain* things to people.”

She had the whitest skin you had ever seen. Especially white

across the inside of her wrists. Cotton-white. Unnatural.

“I have something to tell you.”

You watch a forkful of leafy, green things disappear into her mouth. You spy a tray of sauerbraten carried by a fat waiter with glossy shoes. You wonder if you can sneak a silent shaft of gas out at the exact moment the waiter walks by with it and decide against it. The sauerbraten waiter glides by, and Maureen wrinkles her nose at the sour smell. You pat a spot of water on the table with your napkin and feel inexplicably guilty.

Most smells repel her, though she loves to describe them. “It isn’t that it smells sour; it’s that it smells so *moist*.”

She will peel the sheets off the queen-size bed in her oversized house. She will strip the sheet from under her husband’s body while he reads a spy novel set in Madagascar.

She will shout at the maid and explain the importance of a clean bed and plunge the linen into a washer of hot water and bleach. She will wince at the ghost of a semen stain and pour another cup of bleach into the rinse cycle while the maid shakes her head.

The odor of gasoline makes her vomit. Her husband fills the car every Tuesday.

“There’s something I want to tell you.”

There is a couple eating lunch at the table next to you. The man’s head is bowed over his spinach crepes. The woman makes little circular motions with her fork, in the air. With a quick pirouette, she jabs the fork into one of the crepes on the man’s plate and carries away a piece of it. The man watches her and laughs. You have to look away.

It was a blistering Saturday afternoon. Fractured white light cut across the walls of your bedroom. The jangle of the telephone made your teeth hurt in your balding head, and you tried to answer it without waking her — your lover, the only woman who ever bothered to seduce you — rolled into a ball next to you, the skin on her face creased by the sheets.

“Hello,” you answered, inevitably.

“Stan?”

You recognized her husband’s voice with a thrill of panic in your belly. The voice of a man who shows up early at a barbecue and

brings his own meat as a gesture of goodwill.

“Stan?”

You realized you had said nothing.

“Yeah.”

“Ray here. Glad I caught you at home.”

The bundle of sheets and yellow hair moved behind you. You drew yourself up and prepared not to sound sweaty or small. Some shameful part of you even wanted Ray to like you. You imagined him sitting in his ranch house, staring at a row of brass-plated tennis trophies in the den. Maybe he was watching the maid's mean, lank ass sidle to the left as she slapped the dust off the plaques that bore his name, his company's name, the names of the best racquet clubs in the valley.

“How goes the jewelry business?” Ray asked.

It was a question he asked every time he saw you — at Alliance meetings, at parties, in restaurants. A question that seemed to come from a natural desire to put people at ease, rather than a real curiosity about silver and turquoise trinkets.

“Fairly well, fairly well. And you? How are you?”

“Up! Sales are up. I'm up. Today, I'm up for racquetball. What do you say?”

You were silent for a moment, taking in the absurdity of it, listening to the faint snore of Maureen's dreamless sleep.

“Oh, don't make that face!” she says, pushing the raw vegetables around on her plate. “This is important!” Her voice, the eyes like blue sparklers, have the same urgency they had the day she told you she was giving up red meat forever.

“I'm listening,” you say. “This is my listening face.”

Her hand drapes languidly over yours. Her hands are always dry. The lines deepen around her eyes when she smiles and her smile (still!) envelops and calms you.

“I know. You're listening.”

“Are you still there, Stan?”

“Right,” you answered, knowing there was no noble or even polite way out. You looked out the window at the olive trees, the palm trees, the mulberries. The garden that surrounded the complex where your white condo crouched among the identical condos.

“What do you say?”

“Well, it sounds fine. I, uh, don't think I have a racquet around the house, though . . . ” You walked closer to the window and

looked out, watched a Mexican man with baggy pants cutting a square of sod from the lawn.

"No problem, Stan. You can rent one at the club," Ray said.

No way out. Maureen was beginning to stretch, to push the sheets away from her body with small swimming motions. She rolled over, and you could see the folds of tired skin under her eyes. ("My luggage," she likes to say.)

"OK, then, fine." You tried to pace; your words ran away with you. "What time?"

"Say five?"

"Good. Fine. At the new club?" You threw a smile at Maureen and felt a thin pain between your ribs like the point of an icepick.

"At the club."

When you hung up, Maureen was still staring at you with those feverish, blue eyes. She waited for you to say something, then she rolled over, reached down to the floor and pulled an unfiltered cigarette out of her handbag. ("It's the chemicals in the filters that cause cancer.")

"That was a surprise," you said. "It was your husband."

She sat there, smoking, in the rumpled Mojave motif sheets, a Gorman print looming over her shoulder. A big blue Indian chief hunched up in a scratchy blanket, his eyes gazing down into Maureen's lap.

"Ray?"

"Yes. Your husband Ray."

"Oh."

"Did you expect him to call?" You asked stupidly, as you clawed your way through bureau drawers, looking for shorts, a shirt, athletic socks.

"No," she said, and shook her head drowsily. A drugged bird. "No," she said again. "Why would I?"

"I don't know. I just wondered if he said anything odd recently. You know, suspicious."

She answered in her slow, distracted way, "Everything Ray does is odd and suspicious. He's self-made."

"He's a good man," you replied, too quickly.

"Who said he *isn't* a good man?" She wanted to know.

You dressed in front of a full length mirror. You tucked in the Wilson sport shirt around your monthly-expanding stomach. The handful of Chaps cologne you slapped on your chin and neck made Maureen grimace.

"Well, it doesn't matter. I never said Ray wasn't a good man. Of

course he is." She put out her cigarette and gathered her clothes. "I have to shower."

"I didn't say you said he wasn't a good man. Your tone just sounded critical."

"Well, he is a good man."

"Yes, he is."

"I know. Everyone says so." And she disappeared down the hall.

"Is it good or bad?" you ask. The man with the spinach crepes is watching his table partner pay the bill for their meal.

"Oh, you always have to know 'good or bad.' " She laughs brightly, and shakes her head. There are no circles under her eyes. She must have slept well. You still wonder if she tells the truth when she says she doesn't make love with her husband more than once or twice a month now that she is in love with you.

You waited about ten minutes in the parking lot at the Las Palmas Racquet Club. You sat with the door of your BMW open, your feet propped on the curb, until a tan, lean girl looked you up and down as she left the club. Then you sucked in your stomach, locked the car and went in.

The cold air in the club hit you like ice water. The effect was invigorating, like the contrasting blue tile and white walls in the lobby. You tried not to shuffle your feet as you stepped up to the check-in counter and smiled apologetically at the woman behind it.

"I'm meeting Ray Mullins," you explained.

"Oh, good. Just have a seat, then. Make yourself comfortable," she said more pleasantly than you expected. "Would you like a brochure on respiration to read while you wait?"

When Ray arrived a few minutes later, he was all sheepish grins and apologies. He shook your hand, lightly clapped your shoulder. As if he had known you for thirty years.

A little later, rented racquet in hand, you followed Ray to Court Five. ("Lucky. My favorite," he confided.) You closed the door — the padded sound of a rubber cell. You warmed up with a few stretches and reaches.

Ray did some jogging dance steps — you noticed for the first time how his middle-aged body had become thick and soft-centered. He resembled a circus bear. You thought of his tennis trophies, collecting a thin skin of yellow dust on a shelf. You recalled the glass edge in Maureen's voice. Self-made.

"You lag first, Stan," he offered.

You won easily and moved up to the service line. You served wild and felt a twinge in your right shoulder.

“Short!”

You served again. This time it was good, but it fell directly into Ray’s forehand. The return left you shaking your head and trying to readjust the eyeguard Ray had insisted on. You moved back to receive his serve, center, and wondered why you had never noticed he was left-handed.

The first serve caught you off-guard and went whistling past your right kneecap. The second bounced wide and popped off the back wall. You hit it in mid-air, but not hard enough to make it all the way to the front wall.

“Two, zip.”

He put enough spin on the next serve to send the ball into orbit, but missed the angle he wanted and sent it hurling into your backhand. Like a saving reflex in a slow-motion accident, your wrist snapped the racquet at the right moment. The next thing you saw was Ray staring helplessly at a perfect rollout.

“Great one!” Ray shouted. He let his racquet down and walked back to receive, giving you a tap on the shoulder as he passed. “Wish Mo could have seen that!”

You stood next to the service line, squeezing the ball between your thumb and forefinger. The echo of games in other courts surrounded you. You measured your words.

“Oh? Does she like the game?”

“Hates it. Mo hates sports. But a shot like that — that’s almost poetry.”

“She likes poetry,” you said, bouncing the ball against the floor.

“If it isn’t too long,” Ray said. “She loses interest, you see.” He spread his legs and held the racquet handle with both hands, waiting for your serve.

You tossed the ball and served it to his backhand. He hit it easily. It came hissing by your head, within a few inches.

“Sorry!” As he passed you to take over service, Ray asked if you were all right.

“Fine. Fine.” You wondered how tired you looked.

You played harder, but kept feeling as if you were trying to run in quicksand. You lost the first game, seven to zero. Then you began to warm up and played a pretty good, tight second game. You lost, twenty-one to nineteen.

“One more?” Sweat poured from Ray. He had to take off the eyeguard and adjust it for the third time.

"Good," you said, not knowing why, knowing you would never last another game to twenty-one points. All you wanted was to go home, take a hot shower, and drink a scotch, neat. And die in the arms of Ray's skinny, wild-eyed wife.

Three points went by in as many minutes. You wiped your chin with a sweat-soaked armband and wondered why Ray didn't die of a heart attack. You decided it was his game strategy. It was all positioning, expert and unobtrusive. He rarely had to run for the ball. And when it was clearly out of range, he let it go.

You spread your feet, prepared to give in to another four points, to get it over with. If Maureen didn't give a damn about sports, she wouldn't care if you won or lost. You imagined her yawning extravagantly and reaching for a cigarette in her olive green Gucci bag.

"Oh, ha. Big night out for the boys," she would say when you recounted the game for her over lunch. "Oh."

Round as the point of a bullet, you saw it coming in the half-second of agony that anticipates disaster. In the next half-second you must have reached down to stop the raw, swelling pain in your groin, because your hands were still holding your balls when Ray stumbled over and bent beside you where you writhed in sweaty misery on the floor. Later, you would also remember the coolness of the polished wooden floor against your cheek. Later.

Ray moved as efficiently as a registered nurse, gathering personnel, lackeys to help carry you to a cot in the locker room. An icepack for you. A breasty blonde to check your pulse. You drifted in and out. An hour later, you were muttering reassurance at Ray as he packed you into your BMW and insisted, one more time, on driving you home.

"No need," you waved him away. "No need. I can drive. I'm on automatic pilot when I get in my car. I can make it."

"Well, you know best." He went on leaning on the car door, gazing down with an expression of earnest hope for your recovery. He stepped back, finally. Then he seemed to think better of it and leaned over again.

When he spoke, his tone was flat. All the kindness had gone out of him, and he became matter-of-fact.

"You know, we're not really different."

"Sorry?" You felt another wave of nausea coming on, and you longed to vomit in the privacy of your own bathroom.

"Maureen and I have been together almost four years. Married the last three. Not a long or a short time, I guess."

"Longer than most, Ray," you said as kindly as possible.

"Longer than her first marriage, yes. But then Mo was bored by her first husband. He's a banker. You probably know him. Ron Sturges?"

"I think . . . ."

"Well, it doesn't matter. He's a good man. Dependable. But not much fun for a woman like my wife."

"She likes poetry," you managed to say.

He left you with a wave of the racquet he still had in his left hand. Then you pulled away from the curb and drove as fast and recklessly as you could all the way to the private parking lot of your complex, where you belched and threw up on the seat of your car.

"I think it's a good thing," she tells you. While you wait, she reaches over to your plate and pinches off a corner of the bread you haven't touched. "I just want this little bit," she promises.

You reach into the right pocket of your jacket and rub the side of the small jewelry box there. You jiggle it, but can't hear the charm inside — a tiny, silver and turquoise bird of paradise.

"Ray and I talked. About a lot of things," she says. "He's fine, about us."

"What do you mean, 'fine'?" Without thinking, you withdraw your hand from the pocket and rest it on the table. Still holding the jewelry box.

"Oh!"

You follow her eyes to the box. Her hand is on it, before you can explain. Her eyes are hard as sapphires.

"It's just a little something . . . ." The words die inside you.

"I wanted to surprise *you*," she says, smiling. "Ray wants to divorce me. He brought it up yesterday, out of nowhere. And I had to tell you I'm moving out. We don't have to sneak around, now. It's all open, and I *don't* have to run home after we make love."

You know you're staring. You make a tight sound, like a growl, in the front of your throat and nod over her plans.

"And you just sit there with a ring in your pocket and don't even say anything. *You*." She jabs playfully at your sleeve.

You want to say "no" — the way her husband would. You want the thing, the foolish, wrapped trinket in your hand to be back in your pocket. Then you want it to be a diamond as big as the ice cube floating, melting in your glass of water. Then you want to kiss her hand, and get up and walk, out the door and down the street and away.

You decide against it, and when you catch the waiter's eye, you order a glass of scotch, neat.

## Springtime in the Rockies

This is not the first time the season  
changed so abruptly it failed to bring us with it.  
Spring thaw, and roots crack the pavement,  
the dogcatcher's truck moves slowly by.  
Sometimes we run out of excuses: a new job,  
the baby, pastel colors of summer frocks.  
Our life folds in around itself like a dove,  
and the world flies, flies.  
We live in the wrong places  
and survive to find ourselves only a year older.

Once in Colorado a man got through the winter  
by eating the flesh of his friends.  
By spring he had neither friend nor substance  
nor even explanation beyond survival.  
That spring the sky was a pearl gray  
and the courtroom entry jammed with the curious.  
And what did they expect to see?  
Some proof of themselves, men of substance?  
And with substance enough, no crime?

One quiet evening in March she tells you  
it's never been right for her.  
And what brass ring at the edge of a cliff  
can you grab for next?  
When you awake the following morning  
the sky is a pearl gray.  
The curious drive by the house in new cars  
and you can tell by their look of substance  
by their total absence of fear  
that they have survived the winter  
without eating each other's hearts.

## Variations on Variations on a Summer Day by Wallace Stevens

1

Being, for old men, time of their time,  
they watch, delicately as women,  
while beautiful collies walk with women masters,  
cut across the corners of their lawns.  
Yes, the old men feel themselves, as sun  
shines on the subjects from under a threatening evening  
cloud.

2

Say of the house that it was standing  
next to the man in plaid pants  
who was trying to sell it.

3

Into the sea,  
into the belief,  
into the hidden vein  
the stick divines is there,  
into the spaces car windows were  
comes the rain.

4

It was not yet the hour to be dauntlessly leaping:  
look at  
the children's bikes, lying still,  
kick stands piercing air,  
handlebars like the skull of a steer,  
bike on its ribs, like summer,  
rich with abandoned plans.

5

As a boat feels when it cuts blue water,  
at last most perfectly alone.

6

As you improvise on the piano,  
the tyrannical effect of a distant rehearsing  
marching band,  
tin sound of horns like early television,  
the random banging of drums,  
seems to interfere.

7

In objects as white this, white that,  
so the summer colors wish to be left alone  
until night, when they can wear their night disguises.

8

In light blue air over dark blue sea  
the painter finds a reason for his afternoon.  
The wind he can't record ripples his canvas  
and children fly like sparks from his schoolhouse  
in the last century. Tonight,  
my eyelids that close upon your image  
are like twin dark skies.



*"The Entrance."  
Lithograph, 22" x 18"*

## Conditions in General

My mother and I are crouched in this log together, sitting in charcoal and red mud with a wall of wood and roots around us. The hailstones drone against the outer bark. We are on my brother's planting job in the Nez Percé National Forest in central Idaho, where forest winds have uprooted isolated trees left over from the logging operations — the harvest. We are here planting seedlings for the money, my mother who is sixty-five, in her hooded-green sweat shirt, making enough to pay for a furnace; and me, making money for tuition, and thinking about my husband still in Utah at his regular job. I am here against his wishes, but after being married ten years, I can get away with that. Then too, it helps if you don't have children — it's easier to be "liberated." So I am here inside this rubber raincoat, sweating in the cold.

It was barely light this morning, the distant tree line a mere shadow picture knuckled against a white wall, when we tied our lunches and our raincoats around us and began the two-hour hike to the planting job. Perhaps what made me start thinking about conditions was falling into the creek as we crossed over on a slippery log. Being wet, muddy, and miserable is nothing new here for any of us, but it is not appreciated — especially at six in the morning on the way to work. The thing is, no one thinks to bring extra clothes for emergencies, and besides, there isn't enough room in the Suburban. So with my brother and his crew already halfway up the mountain, the Suburban locked behind us on the road, and camp hours away, my mother and I stood there knowing that "one of us" was going to be very uncomfortable for several hours until the sun came out. But then knowing that the sun will come out eventually and dry everything stiff by noon is no great comfort to someone who has just fallen in an icy creek. So it is the obvious time to start thinking about conditions, conditions in particular, conditions in general. This is usually what I try to avoid.

"My condition" — the state of being unpregnant. I used to write letters to anxious relatives about "my condition." It used to be a great joke.

I slip the tips of my fingers between the charcoaled log and the small of my back, pushing with my fingers so the knuckles can massage the tender spot above my hips. My mother looks at me. She understands the advanced stage of my condition, this topic that is delicate for us both.

This morning after crossing the creek — and me falling in — we crossed the snow drift and loaded up our trees from the tree cache where the forest service has buried them in the snow. We packed the trees into our planting bags, and after climbing the hill to the first road, my legs chafing from the cold and wet, my mind balked, and we sat down on a log by the bank. Perhaps with movement and circulation I might have been all right, but there we were — on a logging road I admit, but one that could have been passable by four-wheel drive so that we wouldn't have to walk. But the forest service does not like tourists in here, in the charred depths of their forest. People write nasty letters to the editor when they see the slashed and burned areas, and the barren tree plantations where contractors have dozer-piled the log debris and where the forest service has fired away the brush, leaving charred logs, burned-red top soil, and white ash. This is called "soil preparation," and it scrapes away the top soil into sterilized heaps, often disturbing the ecological balance, causing ground squirrels to multiply at infectious rates so that they gnaw away the tree roots when you plant the trees. Under these conditions it is unlikely that the forest will be restored.

To keep out the tourists then, the forest service plows up the roads in six-foot mounds, twenty-five humps to the mile, strung out like knots on an umbilical cord — plows them up to keep out the tourists and hunters, though they say it is to save the road from the spring runoff. These are the conditions.

And I was angry at that, and at other conditions, sitting there thinking that in spite of everything, when the reports are turned in and they indicate a low survival ratio for the trees, it will be recorded as tree-planter error. It will be my brother, the contractor, who gets the blame. But I will feel the anger too — out of a sense of family pride — because culpability is a frustrating matter, something that isn't assessed until all contracts are expired and chances for recriminations dissolved. Then it only affects your reputation.

Everyone hopes that this job will be different, that the forest service here will stop trying to lay the blame on the planter, and stop treating us as if we are here to rip off the government. The

specifications say that we must dig a twelve-inch hole. But when the topsoil has been scraped nearly to bedrock, it is impossible to dig a twelve-inch hole, and they spend all their time digging up our trees to ensure that we have dug a twelve-inch hole. And this is in spite of the fact that the specifications also require that we use the regulation mattock that has only an eight-inch blade instead of the twelve-inch mattock made by my brother. There is one exception. In lieu of digging a twelve-inch hole you may select a tree with shorter roots. But the roots are the only things that are twelve-inches around here. And it is next to treason to trim these roots or plant them in an "s" or "j" shape in the hole. This stunts the tree's growth because it cannot get water. They watch you for this, but say nothing at all about conditions, about the rocks, and the lack of topsoil that has been scraped away, or the ground squirrels. These conditions do not exist in the manual.

My mother is still optimistic about this job, but I am overwhelmed. Hiking in this morning, I was struck by the fact that we can protect the roots, keep them wet, guard them from the air into the hole, but there is only so much that we can do. It is recorded as tree-planter error when the trees die, and each year the forest service comes down harder with regulations that make no sense at all when they give you trees that have broken dormancy or have molded before you get them and are, therefore, already dead. It is the contractor's reputation in general that is harmed, and of course the trees. So the forest service watches us closer every year. My brother can say nothing, or he will end up losing his contract, possibly his bond, and may have to pay the government for lost time and dead trees.

There is always the possibility of getting into another kind of business, but we are all optimistic fools about such things.

This morning I was overwhelmed by these conditions. And a thirty-year-old girl sitting on a log with a bag of trees strapped around her waist, crying, is not a pretty sight, I would imagine; it is a force to be reckoned with. So when it started clouding up, I think that may have had something to do with why my mother suggested we crawl into this burned-out log instead of staying out in the hailstorm.

I'd like to stretch out the cramp in my leg, but there is no space. My back is curved with the arch of the inside of the log. If conditions had been different, I would not be in here. Perhaps I would be home in Utah 700 miles away; at the least I would be in the Suburban five miles down the hill on the main logging road.

But the storm caught us by surprise.

I have never seen my mother run from a storm until now. I have seen her plant through the snow, fighting frozen ground to get the trees in, until my brother comes, and tells her they are quitting for the day because it is too cold for the trees, because the roots freeze in the air before you can get them in the ground. (The cold kills the trees — but only leaves your fingers numb inside your gloves.) Until my brother comes, she always works on. This is why I was surprised when she looked up at the darkening sky and said we'd better find shelter.

I think working indoors has always been a luxury to my mother, who has always hauled hay, thrashed wheat, and fed cows. Working inside doesn't require bundling up in men's clothes and straining against the weight of buckets or bales. She insists that she was one of the original women's libbers, the ones who protested against working outside with the men. Now at sixty-five she has given up her protests, and she pulls her hooded-green sweat shirt closer around her head and tucks her hands under her arms.

Perhaps she would never admit to wanting to stay in the house and do "women's work." What she says is that she expects to recline in heaven beneath the shade of the trees she has planted. On hot days out on a bare hill, it's an accommodating thought — when the sun is frying your brains, money doesn't count for much. But she survives, and football players from the employment office only last three days up here before they quit.

So in spite of the fact that we usually work through the weather, here we are inside this log. This is why I suspect that she did this for me, is still protecting me, even though I am married and living away from home and she is in her sixties. I am confined here, but protected.

I never did get used to wearing men's boots, like my mother sitting cross-legged next to me, her neoprene soles caked with red mud, her wool socks rolled down over the top to protect her laces. I wear old Adidas that ooze out the warm water when I push against the charcoal, old Adidas which suck the water back in — cold. The men's boots pinch your toes, leave them numb for months. In the tent I rub my mother's feet, warm them next to the catalytic heater. I squeeze the bones of her metatarsal arch, and she says it feels so good — when I stop. Underneath she has been walking on a ball of deformed bone that she didn't know should not be there. I grab her big toe and try to shake it back into feeling, but she'd rather I left well enough alone. I smooth cream over the

calluses, and she pulls on her anklets for the night.

At night we play cards and talk about the forest service, and this keeps my mind off “conditions.”

When I was seven, our Guernsey cow became ill. I found her in the corral, groaning and rocking back and forth, a slick brown calf-back protruding through a large stretched circle beneath her tail. When my mother came, she wouldn't let me see any more. She made me stand back behind the railing, and I had to go up the cattle chute and get glimpses through the bars. The veterinarian couldn't come right away, so she called my brother Bruce, who came over because he was the oldest and had done these outdoor things before. He said it was a breech birth, and from behind the chute, I watched him put his hand on the calf and push it back into the mother and then saw him put his arm in up to his shoulder to turn the calf around.

From the first I had wanted to see, because it was such a horrible and intriguing thing and because I wanted the calf to be mine. I had visions of raising it myself, naming it, and feeding it, teaching it to drink the formula milk by letting it suck my fingers as I lowered my hand and its head into a bucket. I wanted to be there when it first bleated out into the world and when it stumbled to its feet. It was something you might see on *My Friend Flicka*, and it all seemed like a reasonable expectation.

But the calf was born dead. And seeing the mangled, limp nothing lying in the ditch my brother dug, the dirt being shoveled in and bouncing on the bloated belly, there seemed to be an inconsistency in the promise — a promise that all women secretly believe in, perhaps.

It starts with mud pies served on cardboard plates, served out to rubber, lifeless mannequins. Such things start the idea of the promise, the storing and recording for future use that is all intended to the one end.

At college, the first time through, I studied children's literature, children's reading, and children's psychology. I got a degree to teach children, but that was not the purpose. Most people who take those courses do not intend to teach strangers. So my files are obsolete: files of children's books, files of poetry, files of pictures mounted and laminated for sticky fingers.

There has been a progression in this, cutting out patchwork squares for baby quilts, piecing them together with sly smiles at my husband as he watched tv, smiles that dissipated as one by one I gave away my stockpile of knotted quilts. In those first years,

there were imaginary cravings that would send Roger to the store laughing to please me, but this too has become a joke that we punch each other with.

And what are the final stages of this condition? There are operations for this — operations a woman must go through to save herself. It is the doctor's desire to restore you to the "function" for which you were intended, but they do not say this. They say, "We will fix you up. How long has this condition persisted? I will arrange for a time with the hospital." And after that, "Come back on the twenty-fourth."

So I come back and back, but eventually discover that the promise itself is conditional, based on patience and long-suffering, temperature, timing, and time, longevity and hormones, procrastination, endurance, and chance. The chance is not so great as it once was.

The doctor says, "This is a minor operation which involves a scraping of the uterus." And then at another time, "Cauterization sometimes increases fertility." But both forms that I have to sign say these methods are not always effective and may result in a worsening of the condition, pain, infection, cancer. But this is the exceptional condition. I sign anyway.

I sit here now, bent against my own insides, and wait for the rain. Mother swings her legs out of the end of the log and begins pressing the hailstones into the mud with the tip of her boot.

I am the last of ten children, the spoiled one. The first one was born with a stomach defect, one they didn't know how to cure at the time. They gave it medicine and goat's milk, but it died. Mother had nine more that lived, nine who grew up to be obnoxious adults for the most part. And now in her sixties, she is through with having children.

The pelting eases. The rain makes red streams that begin to course through the white ash forming irregular trails around the exposed roots of the log. The sun filters through the rain, and my ears seem to pulse with their own hollow sound in the absence of hail.

They say that the color of the ash is an indication of the temperature of the fire. The hotter it gets, the more the soil is irreversibly burned into a white acid powder. When you plant you are supposed to avoid these hot spots, because nothing will grow there. I can believe this. When it rains the water collects on the surface in black and red slime, but underneath it is dry white ash. At times it seems like my mind has burned into dry white ash.

Some people, like my mother, still see God in nature, in a beautiful sunset, a quiet pond, a blade of grass. I get sick of that. My mother, who has raised nine children, fully expects, in the next life, to raise the one that died. After fifty years she still puts flowers on the grave in anticipation of the resurrection.

But this is nature too, the great Mother Nature, this landscape that has been logged of life, mangled by dozers so that roots and trunks lie piled and partially burned together. Where is God in all of this? Can these people find God in a piece of charcoal? Do we have to bring him into the discussion?

I remember a story from one of my college classes that does this. In *Losing Battles*, set in the middle of the Depression, in the middle of poverty, Eudora Welty has Jack Renfro sing "Bringing in the Sheaves" as he treads home with wife and family. Symbolically, I am told, he is a soft-bodied chimney swift who nestles down in the bosom of his family, hundreds of them together in the sooted walls of their chimney. Now that is optimism. But pure optimism will never be avant-garde again, so they say. Eudora Welty thinks God is alive and well and living in a chimney. I think God sits on the tree line at sunset and stirs our optimistic imaginations.

Mother begins to sing now, now that there is space for hearing. "Said the thousand-legged worm/As he gave a little squirm." How many times have I heard that? She used to rock me to sleep with that worm. "Hasn't anybody seen a leg of mine?" Her voice is dry and cracked. "If it hasn't been found/I'll just have to hop around/On the other nine hundred ninety-nine."

The rain begins to stop. We sing another one. "Detour/There's a muddy road ahead." This was always our traveling song, passed around just before the cookies. "Detour/Paid no mind to what was said/Detour." We'll never make *Ted Mack's Original Amateur Hour*. "Should have read that detour sign."

She guesses it's time we went back to work. We crawl out head first into the warm light drizzle. We straighten ourselves after our confined condition. I take off my rubber raincoat and massage my lower back. The clouds are breaking up and moving away with perceptible speed; the earth is mottled with shade. But even in this shaded drizzle, the sun begins to warm my back, and already there is steam rising from wet logs.

On the fire trail above us is my brother and the bedraggled crew. They have come after us. Compared to them, we are relatively dry. Mother yells something about not having enough sense to come

in out of the rain, but they are not laughing. We are all going home before they catch pneumonia. Mother and I pretend we are ready to go back to work, but secretly we are glad to quit for the day.

On the horizon the standing trees flash tentatively with light as wreathing clouds dismember. The men trail off down the muddied slope, and Mother and I follow, winding around logs and roots like optimistic centipedes. Our boots slide in the ashen mud, but we keep our balance and slosh down to the pickup on our feet.

## The Waitress's Kid

Before you left for the Lucky Strike  
I ironed your outfit — straight black  
indestructible skirt, low-cut ruffles  
on the K-Mart blouse. I hated

the chore as you must have the job —  
toting beer to the leagues, Al Ball's  
Chevron, Addressograph-Multigraph.  
Once, I made you late. You came

when I called, and held me,  
fought for me against some pure  
and adolescent pain. Most nights  
we couldn't afford it.

You'd bring home the best  
of a bad lot to dance till they fell,  
the crashing bodies payment  
against some larger debt.

I'd yell, then cry most school nights  
till exhaustion tucked you in.  
But one night my anger rose past  
double-edged blades in the back bathroom,

and I uncapped the little white tube  
free from the Avon lady, Furious Passion,  
my color, not yours, and wrote in virgin lipstick  
three words on the mirror, then opened the window

and left. You held your lipstick smack  
against your mouth, one wide pull  
in each direction. You'd smear your lips  
against each other, then kiss

a square of toilet paper, leaving always  
surprised, a mouth. Under the oleanders  
behind the public pool I waited  
for you to miss me. I knew you would yell

*I know you can hear me* just like you used to  
when I was little and you said stay  
within hollering distance or else, and you did  
yell *I know you can*

*hear me*, but I heard in your voice how much  
you did not know. When you left, desperate,  
to wake up my friends, I walked home up the arroyo,  
sure the punishment would be swift.

# The Cousin on Holiday

Lise-marie spread boysenberry  
preserves on my knees and licked  
them. She said she must  
till the butterscotch tab  
between my back teeth  
disappeared completely.  
But the parents drove home  
a day early from Boston.  
Of course, they sacked  
poor Lise-marie  
immediately. Papa drew me  
off her lap, smoothed my smeared  
skirt, then shoved me  
into the bath. There was great shouting,  
breaking jars, and I longed  
to soothe Lise-marie with the tips  
of my braids.

Voluntarily, I signed myself in.  
The matron allows me  
run of the grounds, if only  
I'll keep my smock  
buttoned. It's coarse,  
Lise-marie, and gray, with the poorest  
excuse for sleeves. At dusk  
I lower a long-handled  
dipper into the radium springs.  
I empty it in my lap.  
Along the path, forced water  
splays upward in a silver cone.  
They expect snow soon.  
No one mentions  
my going home.

## Hôpital Albert Schweitzer

1

Fulgent moon springs the bocors, the island  
witch doctors masquerading in the negro streets  
as sapphire wasps whose painterly wings tinge  
pestilence in the village with an uncanny voodoo.  
Inside their mud huts, tar babies teethe on sticky sorghum,  
mothers squat by dung fires to cook rice and red  
beans, curse the judás priests promising outright  
to heal all the while bleeding you turnip poor.

2

Portered by litter, the lame can cross the quag  
God gave Cain: they assemble to wait out  
front the Hôpital, pipesmoking sinsemilla  
beneath the giant mapou tree. A lightfoot child climbs  
far up chalky and spraddled limbs. She  
melds candle snubs facing the bark; warm wax  
drips down onto the footway like fallen notes,  
calling out benevolent ghosts on the inside.

3

The diesel generator turns on, keeping the bulbs  
hung in the morning wards alive: here summer's  
jaundice festers and dies. The sick sleep  
on biafran cots and stumble into dreams: ice water  
flumes down the mountains in deep aqueducts,  
pungent night orchids seep through the shut louvers.  
Baby-green iguanas scurry along volcanic ledges  
where a child pelts them with stones that don't break.

# The Night Light

Fresh breezes in the patchy piedmont dark stir  
the cedar spires; the switches scratch the tin roof  
like the straw whisks from the oo witch on  
broom swooping indoors to fetch all souls.

The youngest girl fills her father's consumptive lungs;  
his returning breath bellows in dank wreaths around  
her throat, tight as pythons coiled around the sleeping  
mongoose. She presses styptic spider webs against

his bleeding bedsores, pours more coal oil on the ingle  
sputtering to animate his dim room where electricity  
isn't permitted. When slow tobacco fails its office,  
she unstoppers his sniffing salts to spell his bad

dreams and broken sleep. The Milky Way becomes a  
cowpath

she can drift down with her father, pleasuring to see  
him mend fence, mow vetch. Back then he'd been quick  
to laugh how he'd wind up in Hell pumping thunder,

by Jezebel, at three cents a clap. She hears his rasping  
cough, steps lightly into his room carrying  
a coal lamp. She leans over the open mouth, softly  
blows out the wick of his tongue; the room goes dark.

## Enisled

It's a test if you can stand apart  
from fuss and foam where shells are dropped — so many  
empty cases, transitive intentions littering the strand.

I come as others sometime come, to see the forms  
of execution force performs on what it tosses out,  
its own. On this beach the live, the lost are gone

from slick familiar movement they most likely liked  
if they had sense and no continuing ambivalence  
but since so many meetings end like these,

grit is no doubt general in the gills. The flounder  
we throw back is shocked beyond perfection, even if  
it lives, now hybrid with the feat of living on the land.

Thus we cover our own bones with towels, with sand  
and granite, silken linings, shrouds, depending on the  
weather,

hoping for what seems unlikely all place else; more of  
this or better.

## The Text

A five-day rain & our 95 yr old cellar  
clay exfoliates  
clods faster than the pump,

autodidact, can catch the way  
the story changed —  
the pump's too-literal thirst

is to pucker dry the dirt walls;  
its method is to thread hose into the dark

second meaning its hose's kin,  
the roots, already know  
as they surrender to text,

to interrupting small rocks,  
changing course & changing course to come  
out in this version of root-heaven,

this not-quite liquid dark  
so derived the roots

wash phosphorescent in currents  
the pump stirs.  
I listen like one already wet

to the raining against what's man-made,  
against roofs, the ping off windows —  
catch the talk of a bad listener,

not the conversation of equals.

# Frontier

Sizing weeps through  
the SP depot mural,  
weeps through the wagons & the pioneers

more red-faced from the high fanlight sun  
toward which a trapped  
real bird beats, screaming

one accurate note against the depot noise,  
its wings blurring  
with the effort of staying

outside the picture.  
Ignoring bird & mural both,  
a sweaty woman with a baby

urges a boy to pull  
harder at the stuck men's room door  
which squeals as it opens

a rectangular cut of painted prairie  
grass: the contemporary  
renovator's renege or a joke one kneeling pioneer

seems to examine as he plucks  
wheatheads or a fugitive  
strawflower solitary in the crossed stems.

He won't show the flower to the others,  
the artist seems to say as he too keeps focus  
on the mural's archaic purity,

the wide women,  
the mix of men & draft animals —  
equals in an eden where art leaves them.

## Cinders

Cinders  
of dead things, of forgotten ills,  
of ineffable contacts, of still  
desires —

bright  
flames from you envelope me  
even while, from care to care, I near the brink  
of sleep,

and to sleep,  
with those bonds, impassioned and tender,  
that bind a child and mother, and to you, cinders,  
I yield.

The anguish  
ambush at the pass — I disarm it. Like  
a blest one on the path to paradise,  
I climb a staircase, pause by a gate  
at which I rang in other times. Time  
suddenly has collapsed.

I feel myself,  
with garments and soul of long before,  
in a splendor of lightning; a joy  
descends on my heart in a whirl  
like the end.

But I make no cry.

Mute,

I leave the shadows for the vast imperium.

*Translated from the Italian by  
Michael L. Johnson*

## The Bluebird

The arrow clutched the purse in his throat,  
the bluebird pinwheeled through slush and bushes.  
“Another boy shot it!” I wanted to yell.  
I dropped my bow and chased after.

Dying, he was so much smaller, tangled up in vines,  
juvenile beak wide for food. Except  
it was air he craved — through his neck  
the arrow plunged, jammed across the gullet . . .  
It made me sick, I had to run, had to run back again,  
scared and furious with tears, each time I touched him  
he jerked and flapped, tearing his feathers apart.

So I worked the arrow loose and lifted it free  
of the prickers, the bluebird dangling dead, I knew,  
when he lunged and struck my face, wings  
and arrow rose, the contraption circled, flew!  
Then fell. I gathered him from the mud  
and made my hands a jar from which an arrow poked  
and his blue head flamed. In his eye my own head  
fit like a seed which must crack and open.  
I closed my eyes and killed him.

I was eight or nine that spring. It was the year  
the new boy brought from Texas an unimagined  
thing: a bright, green bow made, he swore, of glass!  
We watched him string it and turn toward  
the windows — in rapid fire arch  
one invisible arrow after another  
out into the streets, over the houses and clouds.

The teacher made him unstring it; then share.  
It came to my desk like a glazed wave  
from a petrified sea — I stroked and turned it —  
oh green edge! That pane held not to the wide  
and window-loving world, but on end where  
within the glass we regard the harder task  
than seeing through: to push back the horizon  
where sun and stars cannot go, and whatever  
we think ends in a tiny bird, a blue spark  
blown where nothing merges again with nothing.

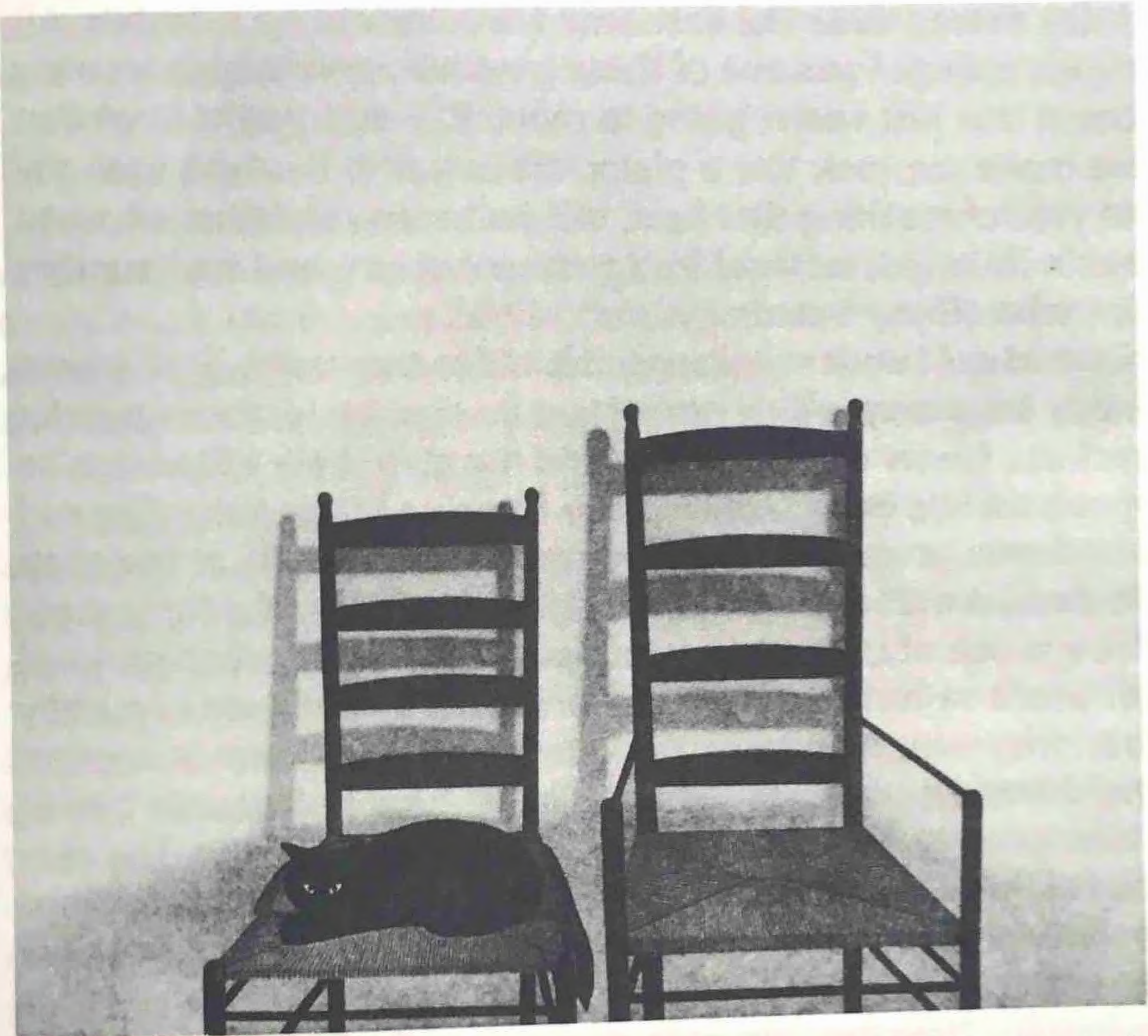
## Preparing For Loons

From the extensive unexplained  
mortality of Loons last Summer  
here's a skull now cleancooked  
under weather to cushionless bone  
I stare at its convexities each fossa  
inhabit the delicate cloisters of sinus  
note which parts cleft or sutured notched  
for the passage of nerves through Loonpate

Study access to the brain bulb  
where lay under the arachnoid codes  
to the marsh nest sequence tables  
of constrictions for Loonish vocals  
follow tuberosities prepared to interlock  
with cradles for spine cord

Fish scissors the unsheathed beakbone  
gives a slight gape as if speaking goofily  
the rami shrunk to tiny processes  
where ligaments restrained the mandible  
the head is six parts beak and cheekless

I scan the fendered orbits of matte calcium  
in symmetry & studwork so when I see them sinking  
in snap black/white no ripples I will recall  
the airless bones and look right through thinking  
with my sharp face flying after fishes



*"Two Chairs."*  
Mezzotint, 12" x 13 1/2"

## Faculties

I was twenty-three the first time I was shaved by a barber. All through college I was one of those guys who persisted in wearing a beard that just wasn't going to make it. Photographs from that time make me look like a plainclothes Hasid. It wasn't until my first year of teaching that I sat, as I had seen my father sit when I was a little kid, reclined in a mirrored room, and had another man take off my beard.

The school I work at is a venerable old money outfit. Such places always keep some little vernacular corner amid their grander precincts. Under the stairs or behind the gym there will always be an outpost like Bob's barbershop: a clearing house for gossip and speculation, a treasury of school folklore. The walls of the shop are decked with photographs, tattered glimpses of a long story. There is one of Bob grinning out among the half-naked ranks of last year's swimming team. The boys' expressions are comically dour; they wear identically V-pointed crew cuts. There is another one, framed and beginning to yellow, where Bob stands beside a triumphantly returned alumnus, then freshman senator. The man tousles Bob's hair. There are yearbook pages and sports clippings around the place. And on the little ledge by the mirror, just below the image of yourself throned and bibbed, is a picture of Bob's daughters. Now they are both grown — gone from campus flirts to paralegals in the town. In the picture they are little girls with serious expressions, hanging from parallel rings in the gym.

Having spent the last two decades pruning diplomats' children, Bob wields an elaborate bedside manner. He sits me down, removes my glasses and tells me that I must be the young man that Gleason was so excited about. It's still hard for me to imagine the head of our Math Department, a sparsely-spoken ascetic type, as being very excited about anything. But I wanted to play along.

"He likes multiple choice problems. I guess hiring me came down to something like that."

This didn't go over. Bob just looked at my stubble and said, "I suppose we'll want to do something about that." He washed his

hands, pushed a button on a silver machine, and spread warm lather across my face. As Bob began to work his blade across the strop, I eased back in the chair, content that I was going to get the whole show. He made a few strokes about my chin and lips, then started telling me about my predecessor in the job. I'd never met the guy; neither had anyone explained why he'd packed up his slide rule and stolen away.

"Lovely people, the Stimpsons. Van and Kathy. Great teacher, all the kids say. And she was supposed to be making a tidy salary at a brokerage house in New York."

"Why did they leave?"

"It was because of their kid."

For a moment it seemed as if this settled it. Bob put down his razor and suddenly, at the touch of a pedal, he leaned me back to an angle reminiscent of the dentist's chair. My feet were just above the level of my head. I felt a vertiginous stirring of panic as I watched the ceiling and heard Bob move across the shop.

"Their kid?"

He came back and placed a steaming towel on my face. It was corded up in a wet bundle and wrapped so that only my nose came through. When I opened my eyes, I just saw a white haze. The heat stung my pupils.

"They called the kid Justin. He was only four when they left. Cute as the devil. Van used to bring him in here to me. Let me tell you he was quite a handful in the chair. Used to just howl when I got started."

It was getting hard to concentrate on Bob's story. I felt my breath coming shallow through the heat of the towel — like breathing in the blast from an oven when you open the door to look in. The razor's questioning edge made its way cold across my throat. I drummed my fingers on the arms of the chair.

"One day the kid went in for his first vaccinations — measles, polio, you know. They say it happens in one case out of a thousand. Justin reacted the wrong way to the serum. Came down with the measles while the Stimpson's were driving to the Vineyard. They brought the fever down in a week, but by then the kid had gone deaf, just stone deaf. Van's hair went grey inside a month. Kathy started to look like an old woman. They went back out west to put the kid in a special school. They brought him in here once before they left. He was just as good and polite in the chair as if he was grown up. No crying or squirming like he used to. Couldn't hear the sound of the scissors, you see. That was what always

scared him. Just sat there like a perfect gentleman. Deaf as a stone. I felt terrible, terrible.”

Bob said all this in bits as he moved the steel along my throat. Canted backwards in the sweltering towel, I felt dizzy and sick. The muscles in my legs were clenched for running, and my hands clamped the arms of the chair. For a moment the thought came crazily to me that this had all been planned as an elaborate hazing. You take the new guy, suffocate him in a hot towel and tell him a horror story at knifepoint. I imagined the rest of the faculty listening outside the door, swallowing their laughter until Bob let them in to slap me on the back. As it turned out, he only tilted me up, removed the towel, and sent me off to my morning class with a single blemish of styptic pencil by my Adam’s apple.

Justin’s story stayed in my head that fall. It stopped me silent as I stood before my classes; sometimes it came to me at night in my little room. And it was not a room where you wanted to be thinking this sort of thing. As a new guy, I had been given pretty shabby digs. The homes of the higher-ups are ritzy: framed art, coffee table literature, and heirloom furniture. Their windows open onto green campus prospects; they have fieldstone fireplaces or Franklin stoves tucked under the eaves. I just had two narrow rooms on the second floor of a large boys’ dormitory. My windows looked out upon a parking lot and tennis courts. The paint was old and the walls were bare. The last guy who lived there was a gym teacher, now moved on to a quieter set of rooms above the field house.

The place he’d abandoned was right in Indian country. Pipes from the john crossed my ceiling with rust scabbing their paint. They whooshed and clonked all night. The kid in the room next to me played L.A. hardcore punk; the kids upstairs played a Van Halen single again and again all fall. Outside my door the hallway rumbled with sneakers and adolescent flyting. Basketballs bounced and typewriters pattered. I got so I could distinguish the sound a frisbee made when it brushed the corridor wall in its flight.

It was a game we played during the study hours. Two or three of them would have a bit of silent catch outside my door until I’d hear the disk and chase them back to their rooms. On the whole, I liked being there. After the way I’d lived at college, the bustle of the house seemed refreshing. I was never very strict with the kids. I took my authority lightly, at least when none of the real authorities was looking.

One evening during study hour — it was still back in the first

September of my enlistment — I sat at my desk going over a batch of quizzes. The house was quiet; I had just broken up a game of handball in the can and watched the players sign out for the library. My window was open, and through it I thought I heard a small calm voice call my name. I rubbed my eyes, wondered, and then started on another quiz. “Mr. Greenberg,” came the voice again, still calm but edged with insistence this time. I went to the window, stuck my head out, and saw Van Dyke, the Dean of Students, standing on the grass one flight down.

Our Dean is a dapper little man given to epigram and to a deprecatory style of humor. We had already clashed once about my wearing sneakers to teach. (“Greenberg, if you’ll put your feet up on the desk, maybe we can get a yearbook photographer in here to preserve those things for posterity.”) Van Dyke was in the habit of walking around the houses during study hour to see that all was serene. He stood below me on the lawn, his demure little terrier in tow, and said without a glimmer of his usual humor, “Mr. Greenberg, one of your young men has been urinating out the window.”

For a moment I thought of saying, “Let’s be thankful he at least opened it first.” Instead, I managed a straight face and said, “I’ll be right down.”

Van Dyke, his dog and I reached the door of the offender together. I knocked, and a joke-falsetto voice answered, “Who’s there?” We walked in and found the two boys — Adam Berger and Ben Patton — perfectly strung out with laughter on their beds. Van Dyke crossed the room, took a couple of sweatshirts off the armchair and sat down. The terrier followed and settled between his feet. The kids laughed themselves out; the Dean and the dog were silent. Apparently I was on.

When I asked which of them had done it, Berger volunteered. Then, invention all tapped, I fell into the formula and asked if he usually did this at home. I felt Van Dyke relax; the formula was probably what he had been waiting for.

“Rarely, Steve. We live too high up,” Adam came back.

“Don’t be funny Adam. Not when I’ve trucked all the way down here to sit on your verandah and chat. It can’t be more than ten feet down the hall to the bathroom. It wouldn’t have been such a journey. You know we have certain standards here of courtesy, of adult behavior, of consideration for the other members of the community . . . .” On and on in this vein, sounding, I thought with an inward wince, like every other high school teacher that ever put

chalk to board. Finally, I suggested that Adam apologize to the Dean. He complied; Van Dyke and I left.

Outside the dorm he said, "You don't quite sound convincing when you take the strong tone, but you said all the right things. A little like Jeanette MacDonald reading Nelson Eddy's lines. I did like the bit about the verandah, though. Goodnight, Greenberg."

When I went back in the house, Adam was crouching on the stairs. He stood up, straddled the banister and said, "I don't know what he's getting all worked up about. That dog of his has peed in every bush around here."

"Travel, Adam. Read a book. Make the lessons."

"Did you have to say 'Do you do this at home?' We've come to expect more originality from you."

"I'll be as original as the situation merits, thank you. Now take off."

"Don't you want to come bounce a quarter off my bed, or check the shine on my boots?"

"Go."

He dismounted the banister and went.

I knew a little more about Adam than about most of my charges. Back when all the kids first moved in, I had assisted in a Berger family drama. Adam and his parents had driven up from Manhattan in a Cadillac as pure and shiny as a piece of wax fruit. Somewhere on the campus, one of its tires had gone flat, and it came limping up to the house. Mr. Berger, a realtor in tennis clothes, was searching for the jack under Adam's suitcases when I came down to meet and greet. Mrs. Berger had already established herself in the common room. She was of a noticeably later vintage than her husband, and she had a petulant sort of good looks. She sat by the fireplace in a pastel jumpsuit which matched, I noticed, the shade of her fingernails.

By the time Adam's bags were upstairs, Mr. Berger had discovered that the jack was nowhere to be found. "Company car," he explained as I went off to borrow tools. Eventually we got it boosted up on a little foreign car jack — looking ludicrously vulnerable. But the joke had begun to crawl too far. None of the sockets on the four-way wrench I'd scrounged fit the Cadillac's lugs. Mr. Berger slapped his brow — suddenly vaudeville in his tennis duds — and said, "Oh my God, I forgot." It turned out that the beast was fitted with coded lugs and needed a coded wrench to remove them. This way you could take it slumming and not worry about your hubcaps.

"We paid extra for this," Berger muttered. He kicked a tire, and

the car swayed queasily on the little jack. The drama went on well into the afternoon. Berger called the Auto Club and made their day with his story. He tried Cadillac dealerships in three states. He raised no one: it was Sunday. Adam had gone off and lured a squadron of girls into a volleyball game. Mrs. Berger fumed over a copy of Sidney Sheldon, saying only that she didn't want to hear about it. The father sweated and cursed.

Finally, I borrowed a car and put them on a slow-boat local back to New York. Mr. Berger gave me a crisp twenty dollar bill, as he put it, for my time. His wife didn't say much to either of us. The Cadillac they left, hobbled and garish, on my doorstep until some minion from Berger's office could come up with the magic wrench. Their goodbyes to Adam had been hurried and it occurred to me, as I drove home from the station, that neither of them had gone upstairs to see their son's room.

That night Adam stopped outside my door — he was a copper-skinned boy with eyelashes you'd notice — and made a little apology.

"I'm sorry you had to go through all that. There are always hassles with them." I was grateful for his saying this, more grateful than for the bill his father had slipped me. The kid had a sort of innate courtesy that I would come to value as the semester moved along. I worried now that things would be tense between us after my taking "the strong tone" with him for Van Dyke.

Apparently not, though. The evening after the Dean's and my balcony scene, Adam came into my room and sat down to study. I smiled up at him from my papers, and we set to work. After about ten minutes he came over and sat on my desk.

"Do you have a girlfriend, Steve?"

"Yeah, she's hiding in the closet. Don't spread it around."

"No, seriously."

"No I don't."

"But you have?"

"I seem to dimly remember having had one once. That was back on the farm in Kansas. Before the big storm that brought me here."

"Was she good looking?"

"I thought so."

"Did you screw her?"

"What are you, taking a poll?"

"Did you?"

"Adam, there's a reason why we call this time *study* hour. We can play Truth or Dare later."

This settled him for a moment, and he went back to his textbook. I remember thinking that he looked very much like a child, sitting there in my overstuffed armchair. His hair fell into his eyes, and his shoes — pricey track shoes — were untied. But he was all right, this kid. There was definitely a person in there. He could take the occasional piss out the window, and it would be all right with me.

“I’ve got a girlfriend now.” Clearly Adam was not here to study.

“Splendid. Give me her address, and I’ll send a horseshoe of flowers.”

“Don’t you want to know who it is?”

“Do I?”

“It’s Melissa Wallace. She’s in your geometry section.”

I knew her. An indifferent student, a looker of sorts, and one of those girls trying her best to take on the look of middle-aged ennui. I had had to reprimand her once for reading the Laura Ashley catalogue behind her looseleaf in class.

“She’s very nice, Adam. I’m pleased for you.”

“Thank you,” he said. It was as if he’d chiselled her out of stone and was pulling back the sheet to let me compliment his work. “We haven’t done anything yet. Just sort of messed around. That’s what I wanted to talk to you about.”

Oh Lord, I thought, not this. Haven’t you had slide shows in school? Didn’t Mr. Company Car sit you down and draw the pictures in the sand? But Adam’s concerns were more practical than academic. He came right to the point.

“You see, we haven’t got a place. The Gleasons supervise her dorm, and I bet they only do it on holidays. Mrs. Gleason makes them keep their doors open during study hour. Mel says she’s always checking around their rooms. They can’t even bring in pizza, let alone me.”

“So you’d like me to talk with Mrs. Gleason, explain that she was young once too, and get her to fluff up the pillows for you guys?”

“Actually, I don’t think she ever was young once.”

“So where do I fit into the strategy?”

“You know.”

“I think I do, but let’s spell it out.”

There was a pause. He was beginning to realize that I wouldn’t tumble.

“Just let us in here.”

“Come on, Adam. You know I can’t do that.”

"Why not? We'd be discreet."

"This isn't a good idea, Adam."

"There's the free hour after sports. Nobody's around then."

"No."

"Sunday morning after chapel. How about that?"

"I'm serious. No."

"We're serious too. Give us a little credit."

"I think we should talk about something else now. For example, how are you coming with your homework?"

He stood up, eyes flashing, and drop-kicked his textbook across the room. I had never seen him angry before. "Shit, Steve. You know you're getting to be just like the rest of them. Pretty soon you'll be wearing the goddamned school tie to bed. You just can't wait to be one of those stiff old guys, sitting around the faculty table and talking about their storm windows. Don't worry, Mr. Greenberg. You're going to be a pillar of the community."

All I could manage was, "What do you know about it, Adam?"

"I know you, and I'm getting to know this place."

It was getting late and there were still another ten quizzes to do. "If you know so much, why'd you come to me? There's got to be a dozen places on these historic acres where you can have all the privacy you want. I'm tired, and I don't want to have this conversation any more. Take a hike."

He left without another word.

For the next few days, we passed each other silently. He seemed to enjoy playing ships in the night, as if his silence advertised the righteousness of his position. I didn't really regret the line I'd taken, but his reserve wounded me. It seemed unfair that he had to take it so hard.

Our argument had been on a Tuesday; by Friday night, the time of the weekly faculty get-together, Adam still wasn't talking. The Gleasons' house was the field for that night's exercises. I got there around nine. It was the second of October, but there was a slick scent of air conditioning in the rooms. Outside it was perfect shirtsleeves weather; inside, with twenty of us assaulting the hors d'oeuvres, it must have started to get warm. Mrs. Gleason loaded me up with ginger ale and little sandwiches, planted me on the upholstery, and asked me how I was getting along. She was being very kind — kidding me about what a coup it was to entertain a single man for a change, supplying tips about the laundries in town, the cheap restaurants, the acceptable bars — but all I kept thinking about was her and Gleason only doing it on holidays.

She left me to her husband when a cry of distress went up from the kitchen. One of the English teachers was mixing a drink in the blender, and shards of ice had got loose, peppering the walls with a clatter. Gleason took me up with his usual economy.

“Classes going well?”

“On the whole. Still a little stage fright, and some of them still don’t want to take me seriously.”

He chewed on this for a while, looking me dead in the eyes. The sounds of the party drifted between us. Then, as if bringing it out of some long and inward deliberation, he said, “Don’t be afraid to use the blackboard.”

“Thank you. I’ll keep that in mind.”

“Help yourself to something else to drink.” Then, his oracle delivered, he followed his wife to the kitchen.

I went and poured myself some bourbon. I had never been an accomplished drinker, but I’d begun to feel that I’d be willing to learn. I settled back on the wall, between two fake Audubons, and took the lay of the land. A couple of History people were talking heatedly about football. A knot of faculty wives was rehashing the story of a kid expelled last spring for plagiarism. The Gleasons’ expensive stereo was silent. Van Dyke was not in evidence. No one, I was thinking, mentioned storm windows.

When I’d made it conscientiously through the better part of the bourbon, Stephanie Grier came up to my outpost on the wall. She was the other new recruit that year, an English teacher bound in a few years for divinity school.

“Are you having a good time, Steve?”

“You know me, the life of the party. I’m just sitting back here deciding which lampshade I want to wear when the dancing starts.”

She laughed, “Good for you.”

Mrs. Gleason glided up, took my glass and brought it back filled with scotch. I couldn’t see how it tasted different than the bourbon. Stephanie started telling me about her plans for some weekend in New York when the guy from the blender fracas homed in on us.

“Evening, kids. Enjoying the party? Say, Steve, I understand your kids aren’t using the bathrooms anymore. Taken to the great outdoors instead.”

“That’s right, Tom. Think of what it will save in wear and tear on the pipes.”

Stephanie was looking puzzled; Tom filled her in. He didn’t seem that drunk to me, but he was talking fast and loud. There was a line of sweat along his upper lip.

“One of Greenberg’s kids answered nature’s call out of his window when Van Dyke was walking his dog underneath. Really Steve, you have all the fun. I wish I could have been there. You know, there’s got to be a word for it.” He pretended to hunt for one, but this was plainly rehearsed. “I’ve got it — mictrofenestration.’ Van Dyke caught your boy in the act of mictrofenestration.” He gave a loud laugh at his own cleverness and slipped an arm around Stephanie’s waist. “How do you like that, Steph?”

Searching for something to cover this awkwardness, I found myself apologizing for Adam. “He’s really an all right kid. He’s pretty articulate, and he has a sense of humor.”

“Don’t worry, Steve. I don’t think anyone’s going to argue that he hasn’t got that.” But he had already closed the subject. Now, with a look of oily sincerity, he was leading Stephanie away. I went back to the bar, dispatched another scotch, and thought about how to make my exit. Mrs. Gleason was presiding over a loud group of Science teachers around the sofa. “So soon?” she said when I told her I was off. I tried to say something funny about answering the siren song of geometry homework, but it came out a little muddled. She walked me to the door and sent me off — a little unsteadily now — into the fall night. It felt good to be outdoors. The moon was up, and the air was fragrant of the season’s turn. I took the long way home.

Back in my room the assignments were waiting. I sat down, squinted at the first one, and promptly fell asleep with my head on the page. I couldn’t have been out very long — it felt like the length of a blink — when I woke to hear someone clearing his throat. Van Dyke stood in the doorway.

“Good Lord, Greenberg. You look like a Norman Rockwell illustration about burning the midnight oil.”

I jumped in my chair. As the adrenalin began to subside I realized, with a funny clarity, that I was thoroughly drunk.

“Sorry,” I said, apologizing for nothing very specific.

“Listen, there’s a problem. Adam Berger, our friend from the other night, seems to be missing.

“I don’t understand.”

“He signed out with everyone else for the library at eight. I just checked. I’m sure you saw to that before you went to the Gleason’s.”

I wasn’t too clear about eight o’clock just then, but said, “Right.”

“His father phoned a little before nine. It doesn’t matter how clearly we spell it out, they always call during study hours. Got

me at home when no one answered here. He said it was urgent, so I called the library. Mrs. Hounsley couldn't find him. She said that knowing looks were exchanged when she asked. I just checked his room."

"So do we go look for him or wait to see if he turns up at curfew? It's twenty after ten now."

"Thank you, I know what time it is. It's an embarrassment when something like this happens. You'd better hunt about."

"How does one go about doing this?"

"There are two classic routes: the strip in town or the woods. What do you think is the nature of the case?"

"Woods," I said and then thought I shouldn't have seemed so positive.

But Van Dyke just said, "Off you go. Call when you find him."

I took my passkey and rummaged through a couple of kids' rooms until I found a flashlight. Then I started out across the green, by the austere buildings in the drunken moonlight.

You cross the picture-postcard bit of the campus downhill to get to the road. Across the street is the gym and the football field with its shadowed bleachers. Beyond this are the track and the lacrosse field. Then you climb again, through a narrow stand of pines, to a couple of practice fields laid out in the woods. After that it's just more pines. I hoped I wouldn't have to go that far tonight.

Out in the air I hoped I'd feel the liquor less. But as I hiked along there was no shaking what would have been in other circumstances a very pleasant buzz. The grass took my steps softly. A little wind came up. The moon let me turn off the flashlight. Crickets, the last of the season, chattered in chorus. Veined with their song, the night seemed to pulse at rest like a dreaming heart. It was simply a lovely night to be a boy and girl in the woods.

A skein of melancholy began to unravel here. The scene was miscast. Why should Adam get to be the one romancing in the moonlight while I was the poor schmuck coming to blow the whistle? There in the fields that hid my quarry I felt a pang of loss. It was like waking up to realize you've ended a dream that daytime memory can't recapture. What was lost I couldn't have precisely said, but out there with my flashlight and my debts to the company store, I knew that something was gone. There weren't going to be any trysts in the autumn woods for me.

Another reflection brought me to a halt. What would I see if I found them, and wouldn't I rather not see it? I suddenly had a vision of Adam, rapt in his discovery, ass bare to the moon, while

I crashed in on him. This would be too much. I stood there and made a drunken review of my options. I could press on and see what had to be seen. I could just sit down where I was, wait till eleven thirty, then tell Van Dyke I'd come up empty. I could even turn around now, tell the Dean to find another bloodhound, and get on a train back to the private sector.

It was probably just simple momentum that moved me along. I turned the flashlight back on and searched around the gym and track. Then I climbed into the first pines. They were thickly dark after the moonlight in the open. I made my footsteps heavy and abrupt. Adam could have avoided me in here easily if he were slick. The crickets were louder in the woods, and they could cover the sound of movement. I climbed fast through the pines and came out on the little plain where the practice fields are.

End to end they run, two hundred yards of pampered velvet grass. They're closed by the woods all around. Between them is a rise planted with oaks and a commemorative stone. You can't see one field if you're standing in the other. I climbed the rise and took a drink from the water fountain there. My watch said ten of eleven, and I wondered if Adam and Melissa mightn't have called it a night by now. Maybe they'd already crept back to their dorms while I had been sleuthing around in the woods. Maybe they'd gone off into the far pines where I could hunt till morning and not find a thing. But it was here that, in a fine anticlimax, the thing ended.

I went down into the far field and yelled his name. With a promptness that startled me, a voice came back from the edge of the woods, "Coming, Mother." Two figures emerged into the moonlight and headed toward me. They came quickly, Adam ahead of Mel. She looked dull and angry. They were unruffled; they held no hands. I could see that nothing had happened. Adam, if anything, seemed happy to see me.

"What are you doing out so late, Steve? You know I worry that you're not getting enough rest." He wagged his finger at me.

I didn't say anything, just pointed the way home with my flashlight. We headed off, the three of us, back to the campus. Then, as we were looking for the trail back into the pines, a loud hissing sound came up behind us. We all turned around. The sprinkler system, timed for this hour, had opened up on the fields. Tall jets of spray, luminous in the moonlight, wavered across the grass and probed the night sky. There were dozens of them all down the length of the field.

"It's beautiful," said Adam.

I agreed. Melissa was silent.

"Steve, would you give me a minute before you take us downtown and book us?"

I knew what he was thinking. "Sure Adam. Go ahead."

He took off running. When he first hit the spray, he let out a whoop. He zoomed to the far end and started back, tumbling and rolling and throwing cartwheels through the jets. As he circled away from us again, I heard him calling out above the sound of the water, "I love it!"

Melissa watched him coolly. "Do you want to go too?" I asked.

"No thank you, Mr. Greenberg." She sat down on the grass while Adam made one last sweep through the fountains. I honest to God felt a throb rising in my throat as I watched him playing. I thought again of giving up the game, of leaving them out in the fields and telling some story to Van Dyke. It wouldn't exactly be the handsome thing to do, but at least it would feel right. But I just stood there and waited. Adam came back to us smiling, his clothes soaked and his hair plastered in his eyes. We climbed back down through the woods, Adam's sneakers squishing in the darkness.

The next day I ran into him when I went to return my tray after lunch. He was back in the kitchen wearing a white apron and one of those paper hats you see in hamburger joints. I watched as he wheeled a rack of trays over to the garbage cans. This is what happens at our school when you cross the line.

"How you doing, Steve. Do you think you could put in a good word for me with the warden?"

"No problem."

He started dumping stuff into the cans. I lingered for a moment, fighting off an impulse to apologize.

"It didn't happen with Melissa, you know."

"I got that impression."

"She is a very stiff young woman."

"I got that one too."

The kitchen supervisor came in, but turned around again when he saw it was me.

Adam hadn't stopped clearing the trays. We were quiet a little, and then I asked, "What was it that your father was calling about anyway?"

He laughed. "Wasn't that great timing? It was just that he's breaking up with Julie." I didn't put it together for a minute. Then I remembered Mr. Berger's old lady in the jumpsuit.

"Oh, Adam. Christ. Do you mean they're getting divorced?"

He only smiled the broader. "Shall I get you a Kleenex, Steve? You look all broken up. Don't worry. They weren't married. She was just living with him after he stopped with my mother. She's one of a series really. He sounded pretty bad on the phone — bad enough to overlook our field trip last night. But he always pisses and moans for a while. Then he makes out fine."

"I see. But listen, I'm sorry the news had to come to you the way it did." The apology had finally escaped me.

"I think you're taking this too seriously, Steve. We're all going to be OK. Honestly. I'll see you around the campus."

He went back to get another rack of trays; I headed back to class.

And he was right, we did make out OK. Adam did three more years with us, then vanished into the Ivy League. Berger, I'm certain, found himself another helpmeet. And I'm still here, growing old in the service. I've moved to better digs. And I'm no longer the first person they call to ferret young lovers out of the underbrush. It's not so bad being a pillar of the community. But I wonder sometimes if things would be different — if *I'd* be different — had I turned off my flashlight that night and retired my number as I was so tempted then to do. Perhaps I've lost something besides years in coming to a sense of affiliation with this place: a sympathetic ear, a sensitivity to the cadences of youth — call it what you will. I stand now before the ranks of kids looking up at me and the board, tone deaf but curiously effective.

## Oppenheimer Leaves His Family For Work Again, Los Alamos, 1945

In/Out. My not being born in  
this house keeps guilt away: not leaving  
in the first place, I've always entered  
one time more  
than I left. My back's closed door  
my kids make faces behind,  
stab in —

no bloodshed in paternal absentee,

though stories of burned children  
leave my wife scared how small  
coordinating hands might fill  
with matches and repetitions,  
air and flammables. Kitty,

there are years of innocence,  
health ahead in the youth of our daughter,  
no obscenity in her  
skin — that skirt letting out its own hem,  
no hiking up the bone.

# Kitty Oppenheimer Defends Her Husband As Not Being A Communist Conspirator, 1954

It was fucking, not politics  
that conceived our child the year Robert  
all-nighted that woman.

It never occurred to the prosecution  
he might put something other than communism  
in a lady's — Jean Tatlock was still a time

lovers could sway slow  
to the same music horses  
danced their riders on our swords to. But now,  
for me, there've been too many gestures

to tell which sound follows what light,  
like walking in on a man's hand  
on some woman's breast. From how many  
second honeymoons back  
does his panicked *I love you* now  
confuse his wife backing out the door?  
Her run in the direction of first love  
falling short of its hotel  
and into the house they bought a marriage after.

# Oppenheimer Contracts Throat Cancer, 1967

The radiation still given  
brings me little relief: it's sorrow  
not knowing my last words  
or who they'll be said to, only  
that they'll voice days before I die.  
I'll mouth at the end like the start  
of so many trips: enunciating through windows  
something almost forgotten,  
something simple yet misunderstood —

*I love you*

*the children*

---

*Don't forget*

---

It may as well be genius.

## After Rumi

*Jala al-Din Rumi (1207-1273)*

Why are you hiding?  
You are gold,  
brighter and finer with  
each strike of the hammer.  
You who have been brought  
from here to there,  
do you think you'll  
be left by the wayside now,  
without your eyes  
or your shining?

Why do you bite your lip  
in the other room  
and dwell in garments  
of disbelief? There are lights  
in these skies these nights,  
they are the days  
that are yours on earth,  
they are diamonds.

Why does the simple miracle  
of birds elude you?  
The breath is a bird  
and it rises when we believe  
from its nest of sleep  
on pale winds and circles  
in the waking world.

A valley is a breath  
and clouds of course  
and the pond  
where the heavy berries

tremble for your coming,  
and the mountain when it fires,  
and the night before it flees.

Do you think love will unself you?  
Do you think it will snatch you  
with its talons to a thinner air?  
You who sought your desire  
in water and clay  
while all evening in felicity  
and glory you might have pastured  
among hyacinth and narcissus.

You who are repose in pain,  
and the spirit's bitter treasure,  
do you think your love  
will just lie down with you  
like a panther in your heart?

Do you think love  
will make you drunk?  
Will you dance its praises  
in the village square,  
will you whirl like a dervish  
through the guilty city?

Once more the sun draws  
a flat blade across  
the frozen world,  
once more, beneath  
a thin Islamic moon,  
the star is out of its sheath.

# **At Munsan on the Imjin River I Think of The Lower East Bank of the Upper St. Croix**

And I like to imagine  
a delicate red-headed  
high school girl of Swedish  
dairy farming stock,  
nervous but determined  
lay down on the mossy bank  
and gave over to her youth,  
a cool breeze off the river  
at his lightly muscled back,  
and the drone of a semi  
occasionally across the highway  
70 bridge two hundred yards away.

Ten years later  
she'll bury her father  
a mile further down the road  
among four monumental oaks  
he had planted as a boy.

All the sisters except her  
would have husbands to hang on to,  
the brothers, single still,  
would make fists behind their backs  
and stare tearlessly off  
into the encircling woods.

Earlier in the dark  
vestibule of the sprawling  
old farmhouse, many neighbors  
would stop and whisper,  
bring platters full  
of food and leave.

During the ceremony  
in the small wooden church  
the soloist sings "Further Along"  
and tin strips with the donors' names  
fastened to the rough pine walls  
say how much each had given  
towards material for the drapes  
or towards repairing the furnace.

I would be with her there,  
the youngest, the sullen  
and unmarried. I would lie down  
with her in the pastures of the same  
and I would learn to love the land.

I would learn its slow accretion,  
the fine, red-headed children  
tumbling out of haymows,  
and I would learn to walk the path  
between her mother's house and ours  
on moonless nights, in trackless snow,  
perfectly, from memory.



*"Agave Colorata."  
Photography.*

## Props

Cotton Mather turned into the shop, Yale's Store for Big Men. He had been attracted by a pair of Tony Lamas, long and lean with leather soles and lizard-skin toes.

I'll take that pair, he told a big man with flaccid chins, perhaps Yale himself, Cotton thought, he wasn't really sure.

What mattered was he had a new pair of boots and a sandy-brown Stetson, too, and as he left the store he tilted the hat upon his head so he could tip it to a young woman, twenty or so and tan, dressed in French sunglasses and a green mini-skirt and a blue, oversized tank-top which read *Party Naked*. She did not tip her hat in return because she did not wear one, nor did she curtsy; but as she walked by, Cotton did catch what seemed to be the shadowed curve of an elliptical breast and it was this salutation which caused him to turn on his new leather heel, to stop and light a filtered cigarette and watch her step into a doorway and ascend a narrow flight of steps, those steps which would lead, ultimately, to a wonderfully cool and comfortable bar.

Cotton told himself it was still early, only a few hours after noon, but still the sun was hot. She had blond hair, he told himself, like Jennifer, his daughter. She would be twenty-four if her mother gave him her address in Chicago. He'd lived in Chicago before, like Abilene; still, he preferred the desert with all its arid possibilities.

He gave the girl four more thoughtful drags on his cigarette before he followed her up the stairs.

I find you attractive, he'd say, and I was wondering — I know this might be a bit bold and all — but I was wondering if maybe you'd like to water down your throat with a beer. On me, I mean. Today's payday and I don't work, anyhow.

How 'bout it, he'd say. You're quite a filly, you know.

She'd laugh, of course, flick a golden string of hair from her forehead and pull it back around one of those ears that those glasses had sat on like the stem of a flower, maybe, and he'd chew on a toothpick, thoughtfully, the kind he liked to chew because it made his chin look sharp and sometimes cleft.

He stopped to scuff his boots and hide the glare of the sun. He would cross his legs wide like a river so she wouldn't think he was a dude, and he'd lean on that one elbow of his, cool and comfortable now that he was in this bar, and he'd say,

You know, you remind me of my daughter; she's about your age. Brown hair, of course, and she don't drink like her mother. But still you do resemble her in a curious kind of way.

And she would ask, her eyes aflutter,  
What do you do?

I'm the son of a minister, really. That's enough. He used to give sermons. I'm settled comfortable now.

He'd sit back and think of that tan ellipsis, pert and sure of its independence; the certitude of glands, perhaps. He'd think of Jonquil and her own long hair, its color transient as the seasons, and he'd remember the way she wore it when they first met, when he was on leave in San Diego, before they married the same way most of his shipmates had married. Get married and raise a family, they said, and don't forget the bonds.

I'd love a beer, she'd say, a tall cold one in a glass.

I don't suppose you go to the University?

Why yes, I do.

No, he thought.

Why yes, I do. Well, actually, I graduated a while back.

No. He just wouldn't ask, that's all. It really wouldn't matter. All that would matter is that they were in the same place now.

I used to race cars down in Birmingham, Alabama. You were just a little girl then. Had a cam go right through my carb, though, sent me into the wall at one-hundred-thirteen miles per hour. That's why I walk with this limp, he'd say, and then he'd point to his new boot with the scuffed toe.

She would smile and look at his stump of an arm and understand, maybe, the way she used to understand.

By the time he reached the top step his knee was grinding itself into a mechanical tantrum. He was out of breath as well, the cigarette burning in his hand and still wanting more of that breath in which lingered the flavor of a decaying tooth. He walked through the doorway and felt a cold draft blowing from a large ceiling fan. The roof was held in place by large wooden beams. To the east was a wall of glass which looked out onto the Avenue, over Yale's Store for Big Men and across from the U.S. Post Office.

I rodeoed for a bit, you know. Took third place in calf-roping U.S.

all 'round championship up in Salt Lake. That was in sixty-four. Then my horse up and hit the rail, God knows why, really, he just went all gamey and went down and broke both our legs. Had to shoot him that afternoon and I said to myself, Cotton, that was a plum good horse and look how you went and killed him. Hung up my spurs after that, he'd say. Made a lot of money that year, though. Still got my saddle hanging up in the garage so I can keep it oiled.

If you don't mind, she'd say, I'd love another.

She would pull her arm over her head and scratch the back of her neck, slow and gentle so he could see the soft degree of her breast peering out through the exaggerated armhole of her top, just wanting to peer like a girl, he'd think. Just like Jennifer, always wanting to show her Daddy what she's got. He'd chuckle softly, father-like, and look at his nearly full beer so she wouldn't think he'd seen anything like the way she wanted him to.

Just oiled these boots, he'd say. That's how come they shine so. What's your daughter do?

Oh, nothing really, I don't have one. I mean, she's just a kind of step-daughter, a niece really. Her father died a long time ago, too much booze, you know. Drank himself into the penitentiary so — he'd shrug his shoulders — I did what I could. Sent her money so she could go to college if she wanted. She's so smart, you know, but she didn't want to. Bought a car instead.

He was thirsty now, sitting alone in this bar with the frigid air blowing on his head, drying the sweat from outside stiff on his face. He walked up to the bar, empty like the rest of the place, the bottles hawking their brands and glaring irresolute in the greasy mirror. He leaned on the bar with his arm and called out.

She appeared from a back room. We're not open yet, she said. I'm awful thirsty, Cotton said.

What do you want?

A beer. If it's all right, I mean.

What kind?

She had bright teeth even if she wouldn't smile; they matched the white letters on her top, he thought. He looked at his hand, clenched its fingers, saying,

I'm not partial to any special kind. A draft will do.

Right. But what kind.

You pick. I've been enough trouble.

She poured him a draft, golden and carbonated; watching it

made his mouth sweat. She poured him another.

Happy hour, she said. You get two.

He set a dollar on the bar.

On the house, she said. The register's still closed.

He left the dollar on the bar anyway. He wandered back to his table upon which sat his new hat, stiff and determined the way the movies used to be, when Audie Murphy or Jimmy Stewart wore one over their flattops. While he was away the hats had become dirty and water-stained and the men wore long trench coats and the movies were made by Italian fellows starring guys with names like Clint Eastwood. Clint, he thought, he was a mayor now in California.

His father had named him after a famous preacher. Cotton didn't remember anything the man had preached. His father wrote sermons and spoke on Sunday and Thursday evenings in Baltimore; this was before Cotton had enlisted and met Johnny, before they'd bought all those bonds. Then they had Jennifer, she lived in Chicago and drove a new car with a stereo imported from Japan.

He remembered the way they used to watch the old Westerns on weekday mornings while Johnny, her hair tethered by pink plastic curlers and a scarf, was off at work in the soap factory. The way they'd cheer on the good guys and groan at the bad guys and smile at the pretty damsels, the way Jennifer would curl up under his arm and nag him about his smoking, the way she'd brush her hair whenever anyone got killed or any of those damsels got kissed by a bad guy or an Indian.

I don't like the violent stuff, Daddy.

They'd watch the movies in the basement on the old couch. The basement was always dark and cool, like this place, he thought. Except colder, really, and humid from the shower. He had an old cement shower which was really just a pipe sticking out of the wall with green paint. No matter how many times he painted those walls, the green paint would peel and its chips would slide along the floor until they eventually clogged the drain. Then the water would settle out here, around the couch and television and Jennifer would brush her hair when the houses were burned, too, or when Gary Cooper strode down along the street at high noon in his brand new boots.

The way she'd play with his stump sometimes and say, did it hurt? And he'd say of course it didn't hurt, didn't feel a thing, really, nothing much at all if there was fresh ice in his glass.

Go get Daddy some ice, he'd say. That's a girl.

She came over to his table and asked him if he wanted another round.

Two more?

Yeah, I'd like two more. Thanks.

She brought him four and as she did so he watched her walk, watched the way her hips swayed underneath the green mini-skirt, the way the fabric about her chest seemed to undulate with each step like an ocean at night underneath a pitching flight deck.

One dollar, she said.

You remind me of my daughter, you know. She looked a lot like you.

The girl smiled. Like me?

Yeah, just like you, 'till she died, I mean.

She flushed and said she was sorry.

So was I.

What happened to your arm?

Cotton looked at his stump and drank from the glass. They always wanted to know about the arm, didn't give a hill'a crap about his leg or wife or daughter or all the years at sea. They just wanted to know about his stump, about what they couldn't help but see.

You're like her too, he said. She used to ask about it a lot.

She sat down, scooted herself along the bench seat in front of him. She reached over and touched it with her hand the way she would a lover's wrist.

Here, he said, sliding her a beer.

No, I can't, I'm working.

So am I. Go ahead.

She took the beer and drank a long swallow, so long that he could see it slide down the length of her slender throat.

Carrier Duty, he said, in the Pacific. I walked into a prop when I was nineteen. Damn thing went flying off into the sea and that was it, no more arm. Now days they could have found it with a helicopter or something and sewed it back on, but back then it didn't matter.

I'm sorry, she said. I bet she was lovely.

She was a gem all right. A real peach. Had long yellow hair like yours. We used to watch the Westerns together when we lived in Indiana.

I thought she was your niece.

It doesn't matter, really, she was a lot like you. I used to think

of her as my daughter, I mean.

Is that when they broke your knee?

When?

After your little girl died, in Abilene.

Yeah, they do that to a lot, you know. Set everything straight. I showed them, though. I mean, hey, I'm out of there, aren't I?

She leaned over on her elbow and smiled, saying,

Yeah, you sure are. She was a bitch, right? A real little bitch anyway. I'm not like that, you know.

Did I tell you you look like her? In a curious kind of way.

Want another?

She didn't really die. She lives in Chicago with her mother. Just bought a new car, too. It's her mother who's dead. She slept around too much for her own good. Yeah, I want another.

He left his booth and went up to the bar and sat across from the sullied mirror, across from the noisy bottles upon which the smeared reflection of his head seemed to rest.

Let me guess, she said, you need four more again.

Right, he said.

Beside him a man in blue jeans and an undershirt drank from a longneck.

Howdy.

The man nodded and passed him the pretzels.

They're stale, he said.

Yup.

The bar filled and the humidity seemed to rise. Many of the tables grew occupied with tired, sweaty men. A few middle-aged women sat cross-legged upon various stools. A new bartender had joined the ranks of his own apparition, a young man of about twenty-five with bulging arms and white hair.

She set the mugs before him, all four, cold and wet and dripping with sweat like all the tired men in their undershirts.

We could leave here.

What?

I know a place in the mountains. It would be all right, really. She'd never have to know.

You're tanked, Cowboy.

Hey Mac, tell her to come with me.

Tell her to come with me.

Dammit, you come with me now.

Drink up and go home.

He didn't go home. He stood instead and knocked the stool to the floor above Yale's Store for Big Men. He took his stump and set it up against a large beam to keep it steady the way it did when he had to piss.

You don't want to anymore, do you?

He's really looped. Maybe you should throw him out.

We can't do that. For Christ's sake, the guy's only got one arm.

That never stopped no one. Had a horse once tried to pity me 'cause of this here stump. Know what I did? Do you know what I did? I sold him, that's what I did. I took him to the factory and I got seventy cents a pound and they made him into soap, you know? I sold the damn thing.

She told me not to, you know. Said don't, don't do that, but then she'd see my arm, you see, and you know what she'd do? Do you know? Nothing. That's what she'd do. She'd do nothing. Just lay there like her mother and twitch.

She was a lot like you, only her hair wasn't so dark, really.

Across the street on a sidewalk parallel to his own she might have walked on her fine legs.

So what, he cried, you gonna come with me or not?

There was no answer, of course. It seemed that all along the street, across from the U.S. Post Office, in front of a window which advertised boots and hats and double-stitched vests, all along the world had been mute like a jaundiced memory. He sat sprawled on the sidewalk, his life quiet as the traffic, a life so shadowed only the haze of a street lamp bothered to speak. It seemed to hold the purple sky up above him like a stilt.

# **Duet for Lost Highway: Vengeance, Murder, Cars Burning in Motel Parking Lots, Honky Tonks, and True Love West of the Missouri**

A girl who goes to concerts in a black  
tee shirt meets a boy from the darkness  
that closes in on campfires. This is  
the love story of hacked bull thistles  
on a sodbuster'd prairie, its porno  
of malls and the priest's unseen face  
in the pubic hair of choice lamb.

Soon the girl strolls her own guitar  
on a glacier of stage as a crowd  
waves Bowie blades in praise.  
Her coyote romps around her,  
that crazed yipping the same  
as when it moved a shootist's hand  
gunward beneath a lice-foul pillow.

It's the practice, theology,  
of summer's evil temper,  
an IV blood bottle attached  
to the moon and dripping:  
the priest gives it all up  
one night at the rectory  
for a new sequined name  
and four hours every night  
playing cowpunk and outlaw  
singers on the radio.

The frontier narrows and too often  
love is a dry wind, but her slight  
gold nipples brush across the boy's  
yoked snap shirt in tunneled mountains  
where Doc Holliday was a hundred pound  
god with a shotgun and pus for breath.

A boy fresh from walking his trapline,  
from making volcanoes in the heads  
of badgers with a barrel-pocked  
Smith & Wesson K-22, meets a girl  
from where autumn rain falls softly  
on spring calves as motherless  
as this mushy decade. She slides  
up against her coyote and the music  
pistol whips its way west and home,  
her voice beautiful on his honey fur.

# And the Dog is Called Lefty

The homeplace seems to hover in drizzle  
as soft as satin. Like a goofy bodyguard,  
the white goat paces the bicycling girl.  
Inside the age-rubbed house, houseflies  
are stalled in chilled dreams. Big Sister  
loosens a belt from around a large doll.  
Daddy stumbles outside with two hot bottles  
of milk replacer for the calves, drunkenly  
singing about a cowboy in Fargo, North Dakota,  
and some girl with a knack for barrel racing.  
They never imagined how upside down it would  
turn out: broccoli pie and ice tea,  
calf pneumonia, and porous old skulls  
wired to a barn as black as false hope.

## Outside the Infirmary Window

the dying line of Dutch Elm chilled the river.  
Another patient, Tom,  
grasped at branch shadows  
scratching ice-caked windowpane. My fever  
under control, I watched him  
hide aspirin, magic  
white feathers under the pillow. He believed  
the letter you wrote me was a bouquet  
of glass. Each jagged petal, one she loves me,  
she loves me not, that shatter in my voice  
imbuing every voice I would ever use.

When the midnight nurse  
implied the dance band in town  
swayed her free of her bastard children,  
I led her under  
river willow branch, the unwinding red ember  
of sunrise boring holes in the lie: "I can never be  
replaced"  
on the dangerous blue paper  
I fold and refold like a promise.

The river collected itself — the first ice  
forming at its edge. Lining matches in a row  
Tom set the first one ablaze,  
his back turned on a cold skeleton elm.

## Ballad for Gallipoli

*The battle of Gallipoli was fought during W. W. I. by the Australians on the Turkish coast, by orders of the British. The battle was disastrous for the Australian soldiers who were used by the British to distract the enemy from their own troops landing on a nearby beach.*

But I wasn't there for England. I was there

because my uncle shot the colt he'd promised me.  
Its hooves were split, bleeding it died in my arms.  
The boy to my left because his father struck him

for falling asleep in the furrows while the others planted,

the grass, green flames between his lips.  
The boy to my right won't tell us. Maybe he has  
a dark box inside him, maybe he'll break the lock.

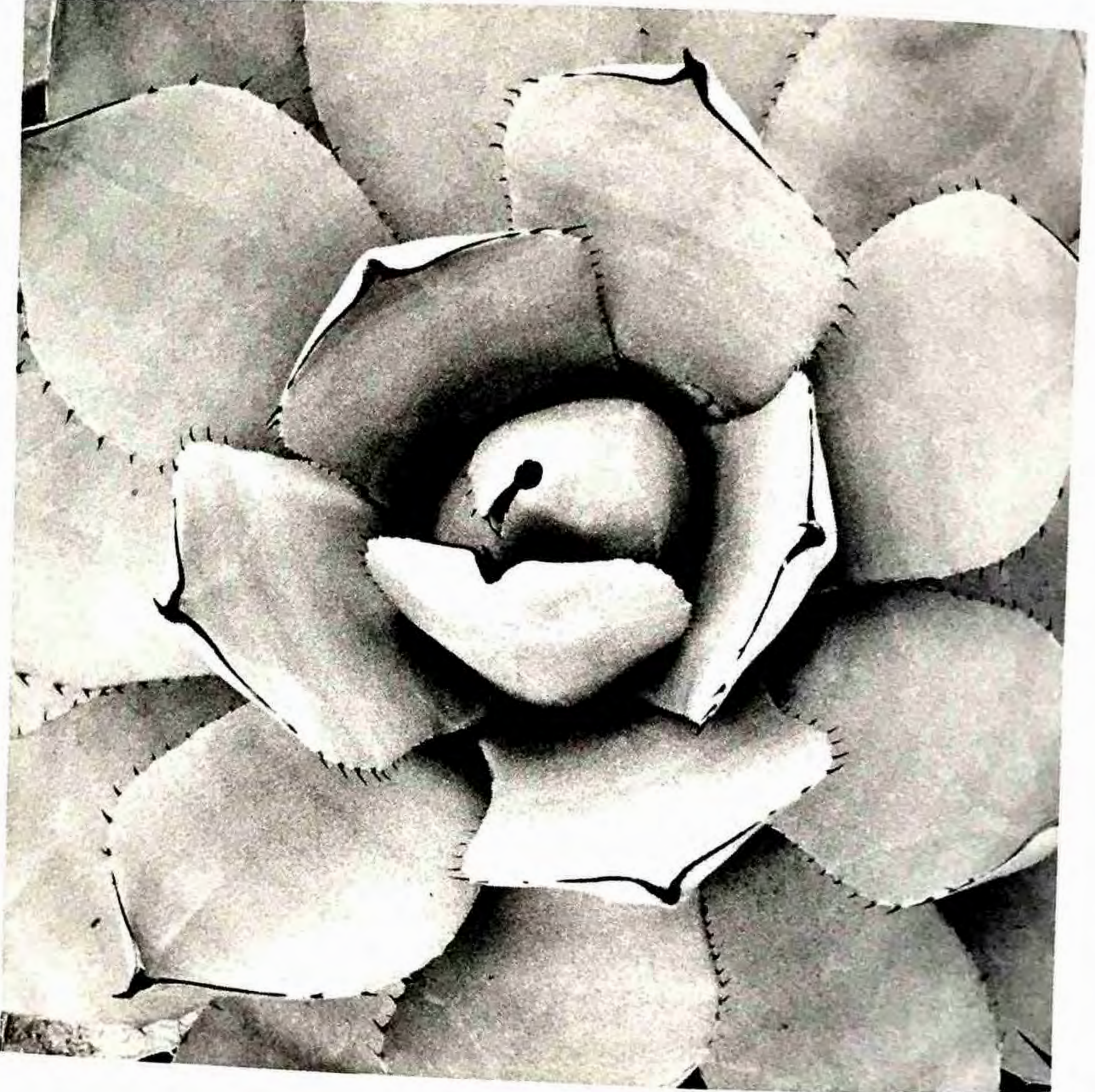
Only once I touched the breast of a woman I loved.

She was my youngest sister. She rose from her bath  
in a goblet of light, and with shaking hands  
I scraped the suds and water from her body.

Her skin was soft as the breath of a colt.

She smelled like a warm barn, the sour, the song  
of the owl. And the bugles sounded above me.  
The bugle sounds for the charge. Not for England

I reach, but for the plum in her mouth.



*"Agave Parryi."  
Photography.*

## The Bermuda Trapezoid

Everybody take a deep breath. That's what my father always said when there was big news, good or bad. *Take a deep breath and see where you are.* So do it, because I've got news. I acquired this news first hand and there is not even the tiniest question in my mind as to its validity. One night last week between the hours of 2300 and 2310 my sloop, The Chelsea, went down from under me on solo fifty-five miles due east of Key West. The weather was fair, the seas were calm. Visibility was unlimited.

I went down half a mile beyond the boundary of an area known as the Bermuda Triangle, an area notorious for mysterious ship disappearances. I am an expert sailor, and I have never believed in the Bermuda Triangle. And now, after losing my beautiful sloop, The Chelsea, I still do not believe in it. I was standing on the bow in the starlight when The Chelsea went out from under me like a trap door and I now know that it isn't a triangle at all. It's the Bermuda Trapezoid.

Let me explain.

I steer by the stars. It's something I intuited even before my father showed me a sextant and taught me triangulation. I grew up in Annapolis where he taught and when we'd drive to the shore, I would stand on the sand in the twilight and as soon as the second star appeared, I could lay out the compass and postulate the exact position of the Nail of Heaven, as my father called the North Star. He used to smile and say, well, at least you'll never be lost.

But he was wrong. I did get lost. Only once and for a short time, but it was enough to give me one principle by which I would live: I would always know where I was.

By the time I was twelve, my father and I had sailed to Miami, Jamaica (twice), and Portugal. I did most of the navigation. By then I knew I had an innate precision. I could turn the sun, stars and wind into a map in my head; it was easy. I also found I had a strong stomach and that sleep meant little to me. Both helpful traits for a sailor. Ironically, the place I was lost, when that time came, was New York City.

When I was a senior at Annapolis Country Day School, I met one of my father's students, a graduating midshipman, and you know the rest. His name was Billy Wyeth, and I remember that spring as being full of incredible pressure. Billy and I were sneaking around like mad, trying not to get caught, and we'd have fifteen minutes together five times a day. It was ridiculous. A Coke with another couple and Billy and I would grope under the table. We were always ducking into the bushes. Literally. I have to smile at it all. Anyway, we never had enough time. So we came up with a plan.

The week after graduation, while he still had family leave, I would meet him in New York and we would spend a full day in a hotel room. I told my parents that I was going up to New York with Mimi Lawder, who was also going to the University of Virginia with me, to shop for school clothes. I didn't feel too bad about it, because Mimi *was* going up with me, but to go to a clinic to see if she had VD from her boyfriend Clive, a guy who worked on the landscaping at Annapolis.

There used to be a Walgreens in Times Square, and it was there at the counter that I met Billy. He looked young in his civilian clothes and it was a little shock. He was just a kid, and I knew there in Walgreens, which is now long gone, that I had come up to New York City because I was in love. On the train I hadn't been able to tell Mimi how I felt, because I knew she would have no idea of what I was talking about, and besides she was going on and on describing in detail the gross symptoms she was suffering. But I had looked out the windows and felt the earth opening for me, offering itself, and it was so big and exciting and I was out of high school and it was all mine. As soon as we climbed off the train, even though we'd been in tunnels for fifteen minutes, I could tell we were on an island.

And as soon as I saw young Billy there in Walgreens I knew I was in love. I told Mimi to meet me there at the counter at six-thirty and she went off. I took Billy's arm and we walked crosstown three blocks to the Chelsea Hotel, as calm as married people, even though each footstep seemed printed in gold.

I smile at the day. The clerk who was as nice as he could be. He looked at the two kids before him, dressed as if for school, no bags, and he just said, sign here. Our room, 714, looked out on an air duct, gray bricks and sooty windows, and I remember I thought it was lovely, maybe Gothic, so romantic. It didn't matter. We pulled the drapes closed. And all our plans about spending

the day in bed were kind of funny too. I don't think we ever got *in* the bed. I had pictured one of those scenes where I would be tucked in, with the white sheet under my chin and Billy would be bringing me a glass of water and sitting by my side. Our day was not a picture. It was a collision. We wrecked the bed. We made love, literally, all day. At one point Billy was going to go out and get some sandwiches, but we decided even against that. When I went back to Maryland that night, I wouldn't see him for a long time, and, remember, I was in love.

Late in the day, Billy woke me. He was dressed. He said it was six o'clock and he would walk me back to Walgreens. You should have seen him standing there in that hotel room. I asked him to open the curtains, and the new gray light filled the room like water. He handed me my shirt, but I told him to go ahead, catch a train home, north to Connecticut. I would walk over to meet Mimi alone. We had a little moment there. He was concerned, but all I needed to do was put my hand on his face, touch it. It was enough for me. I was as happy as you get, and the light helped me know that I would never ever see him again.

After he left I got lost. I found all my clothes, that wasn't even sad, and I took a shower, and by the time I hit the street it was after eight and all the neon lights were on, buzzing like stars. I wandered downtown, I guess, looking up all the time at the windows, some dark, some filled with light. I hadn't forgotten about Mimi or going home, but they were not right up front in my mind. The traffic was fast and bright all night, and so many things sparkled on that island.

Mimi and I made the last train. She had a disease related to gonorrhea, and had bought herself four new outfits including a pink tennis skirt. In the night, our reflections rode in the windows, and I could feel Manhattan, dislodged, sliding after me. Did you ever feel that? That part of the world is loose?

It took me a long time to get over that strange feeling. But I did.

And I went on to cross the ocean twice alone. The second time it wasn't even in the papers. I've been alone a lot. It seems to be one thing the sea and stars require, but I'm not even sure about that. I never married. By habit now I do a lot of night sailing, and one night last week I sailed into the dark and I entered the high corner of the Bermuda Triangle, heading in a quick tack for the hypotenuse. I never got there because there is no hypotenuse. It's not a triangle at all.

It's bigger than that. As soon as I breathed easy, my sloop went

down into a little known segment of the trapezoid. I know it is a trapezoid because I registered where I was and I always know where I am. I've only been lost once in my entire life.

When I bobbed from the sea like some rejected bottle, I took a deep breath and saw the Coast Guard cutter. I knew his exact heading.

And I take a deep breath now. I have news, sure: it's a trapezoid. But I want to say something else. I've always known where I was in this world, but it hasn't always been a comfort.

## Faded Green Card

If I think I hear my name  
or an insult, I no longer turn.  
If I imagine a rock thrown  
I imagine it misses;  
I've learnt to be a foreigner.  
I walk upstairs, paper  
folded under my arm,  
and when the door is locked  
I scatter the news on the floor  
to save the landlord's varnish.  
I say to myself: Seven Years  
And One Night. I put on the record  
from home and let it play all night  
until the sadness seems foreign and cheap  
and all that's familiar is the obsessive  
loyalty of one deep scratch.

# A Southern Capital

After we loved  
she lent me her comb.  
I lay naked  
as she dressed for work.  
I didn't know anyone  
in the city, or speak the language.  
When she left I slid the bolt.  
I stared out the window  
at the place where the smoke  
from foundries fused  
with the wispy trails of jets:  
in a room upstairs, footsteps  
were packing in circle after circle.  
I waited too, until a door slammed  
and the steps ran down:  
then I missed them, not knowing  
if the hoarse voices in the street  
were selling fruit or news.

# Air Well

The faces in the lit windows  
look so solemn, as if they'd just decided  
to marry, or to join the army;  
but each night they reappear  
like puppets made of articulated flame  
and I watch absorbed  
trying to read the words trapped  
like bees on the verge of their lips,  
until my lover comes home from school  
and we turn off our light.  
We stand for a second naked  
watching together as those polished masks  
eat and smoke and nod,  
then we turn inward, to each other.

## The Blue World

The two figures are lying fully clothed  
On separate beds and staring at the ceiling  
As if they could see the sky through the five  
Stories above them. It is dusk, and, caught  
In the blue world Matisse loved, refracted  
Bars of sunlight ordering their bodies like  
Keyboards, these strangers — this man and woman —  
Have forgotten the name of the city  
Outside and cannot think of anything  
They want. Fumbling a moment, he begins  
To smoke, and imagines he feels the tug  
Of gravity inside his throbbing arms,  
Which lift inexplicably, as if to  
Embrace the absent heavens. The woman,  
Who doesn't smoke, watches the tracery  
Of his breath rising and lets her mind drift  
With it, as after interrupted sleep.  
She feels that nothing will ever happen  
To her and wonders how for years her life  
Has gone on and gone on like somebody  
Else's dreaming, how little it has to do  
With her anymore. Then quietly, as if  
His voice had come back to him suddenly,  
Strange with disuse, the man begins speaking just  
To hear himself speak, and the woman shifts  
Imperceptibly on the cool mattress to listen,  
Though the glib words she hears may as well be  
Meaningless, or of another language.

She is thinking of music, of how much  
Like music this man's voice is — perhaps  
Because the sky is emptying itself  
Like the chord dying inside a guitar,  
Or because the frail notes of the streetlamps  
Seem to echo the stars. And it is like  
Henri Matisse's *The Piano Lesson*,  
This lopsided duet half-drowned in deep  
Blue shade: the boy, bolt upright, practicing  
the *Bagatelles*, perhaps; the stern mother  
Tricked into forgetting, for a moment,  
Life's cruelty; the city reduced to a source  
Of light through the bay window; the pendulum  
Of the metronome hung, forever, between beats.

## Van Gogh “L’Arlesienne: Madame Ginoux”

Nothing can staunch it, this light within his eyes  
racing to catch her, light the odor of his death  
and so Madame stares past Vincent, to herself naked.

She recalls herself Mademoiselle, in her first beauty  
half a life ago: how the calyx of her sex  
yearned to be unfolded; how she ran, aching

in her summer cottons, billowing,  
that her flesh be touched by the mistral  
at bodice and at crotch; how she unloosed

from her sepals the perfume like ripe camellias  
until she divided from their throng  
the young men, throbbing, one by one,

how she drew them to her, sapped them,  
how she dragged them down her till they dropped.  
So long ago . . . What might have drawn her,

she wonders, to this man, laying her down  
like a Japanese: black gown, black hair,  
black ribbons, he has cut her out,

a silhouette against a bitter yellow ground.  
Now he flattens her face, drains it of blood  
like a Kabuki mask, the flesh beneath it male.

He knows too much, she thinks, and dresses it  
as me, as any woman, of the woman in himself  
and has slept with that body as himself

sleeping alone, sleeping with any woman.  
Small wonder the death mask hurts my eyes  
looking into his, small wonder he still lives

this sexlessness in which my sex disappears  
with him dead center. Small wonder all my life  
I never wanted one this deep.

# An Epiphany

In rain, in January, my southern house is almost dusk  
by three o'clock, washed in an old shellac  
like a burnished masterpiece. Italian? Flemish?  
The question to the oaks is windy, academic.  
They wait like their forebearers in a lush calm.  
And the neighbor's bungalows, ghost-washed like mine  
from steps to mansard, retain the fractured light  
shining down everything: teal, amethyst, vermilion  
stand at the window they would enter at a word  
if I were one of the old masters.

Then let me be one: here in my son's bedroom  
speaking a circle of light around his crib  
that I may be a worshipper in this psalm I frame to him,  
marveling at the commonplace of his recent birth.  
Let me paint his features where the window sends him  
beams  
a nimbus; let his sleep be surrounded  
by a bray, a low, from animals invisible  
until I give them breath; let me enter my own vision  
one of the Magi, extending myrrh and homage.  
Or as the rain shifts, an angel, chartreuse, violet  
or a legion, all white, if it lifts. Or if it doesn't  
Joseph, the most benighted of all fathers.  
Here I am, flooded with color, assuring myself  
the rainbow at the window is a firmament of stars  
pointing his way, assured in myself I will not die,  
any lie, to keep myself astonished at this happiness.

# To a Willow Waist-high in the Mississippi

To take away my pain I come to you.  
You, though, being inhuman,  
continue to draw music from the evening,  
your branches fingering the last light,  
the shallows reed notes to your breath.

Now the light falls, drowning, on your limbs:  
I pour out silence.  
I draw my comfort from your long unanswering,  
the turning of your body to the wind.  
Dark one, I will leave you this next second  
while the water is still slogging your tap root.  
Purged, I make you up at home,  
nameless, graceless, unbeautiful.  
You who never hear me in your dying.



*"Sound of Autumn."*  
Watercolor, 30" x 30"

## Jelly in the Pawpaw Tree

At Golf on the Gulf, the fourth hole was flooded again. Quinn was plunging it out. The lighthouse at the sixth hole, a long par two with a roundabout metal ramp, was clicking and humming irregularly in the morning drizzle. Quinn was cold. He plunged.

He heard his partner Sid yelling to him from the shack, but he didn't straighten up. He plunged again. The hole gurgled. A car hissed by.

When it rained the slugs came out from underneath the dinosaur (the ninth hole, an easy par two, up and down between the legs of the dinosaur, choice of two ramps). They spread themselves on the carpets. Quinn generally collected the slugs in a small plastic beach bucket and threw them in the bushes behind the tool shed. Somehow they always returned to the thin space underneath the dinosaur by the next rain. They were a puzzle to Quinn. They were big, thumb-sized. How did they travel so efficiently and with such direction? He didn't know. They were slugs. Not even real animals. But their sticky trails were always straight when he found them in the early morning, straight for the safety of the dinosaur. Now there was an animal.

There was a bucket of slugs, perhaps eight inches deep, at Quinn's side while he plunged. Sid yelled again. Quinn considered answering. He plunged. The water in the hole subsided into the gravel below.

"God damn it, Quinn," Sid yelled.

Quinn straightened up and turned, letting the plumber's helper hang at his side. Sid's wide head was pushed out the small window in the back of the scorer's shack. He was chewing gum and smiling.

"God damn it, Quinn," he said, "I'm teaching the bird."

Quinn nodded and reached down for the bucket. His back cracked softly. He plunged the hole again for good measure. "What does it say?" he called to Sid before turning to the tool shed.

"Keep your hole clean," Sid yelled. "Keep your hole clean."

Quinn stopped and turned to Sid, whose big pale face crowded the little window. Sid laughed loudly and pounded the wall from

the inside for emphasis. He leaned back and put his arm out in front of him and pumped it up and down stiffly. "Keep your hole clean," he said again, laughing wildly. "Like a tape recorder she says it. I'm telling you. Keep your hole clean, Quinn." He laughed and pumped his jaws.

Quinn smirked. He could see the top of Sid's dirty undershirt and his big, round shoulders shaking as he laughed. Quinn heard the bird squawk loudly somewhere behind Sid. Sid roared again and withdrew his head stiffly.

"That's the girl," Sid said loudly. "Here's a kiss for you."

Quinn shook his head and walked to the tool shed. It was still early and the Gulf highway was quiet. As Quinn put away his rakes he looked out over the course, towards the water, and saw that the sun was burning off some of the clouds. Quinn threw the plumber's helper in a corner and pulled out a cigarette. He lit it and leaned against the shack. His joints were stiff from the rain. His butt was numb from sciatica. His large hands were covered with liver spots, and his gut hurt. He rubbed under his eyes. Bags. He had bags there.

After he finished the cigarette, he took the bucket of slugs, leaned over the fence and tossed them on the pavement next to Sid's Cadillac. They lay there like turds.

\* \* \*

The bird irked Quinn. Sid called her Jelly. Jelly shit all the time, yet Sid refused to keep her in her cage. Instead he cleaned up after the bird constantly. He called the shit "Jelly's jelly" and wiped it up with a towel that he kept behind the counter for just that purpose. All of this was too much for Quinn. He rarely went in the scorer's shack anymore; when he did he flicked burning cigarettes at Jelly.

Once when Quinn did this, Sid said, "Quinn, that is a sixteen-fucking-hundred dollar parrot you're playing with there."

"Par-RAT, Sid," Quinn responded. "The thing is a rat."

Sid was silent. He shuffled through papers on his desk. Sid looked old, although he was only a couple of years older than Quinn. His head was broad and bald, fringed by wisps of long grey hair. His cheeks hung loosely, giving his face a worn-out look when he wasn't smiling. Quinn could hear the sound of Sid's heavy breathing from across the room. Sid's forearms were thick and heavy. They bumped and crushed what they met in his shufflings in the office. Quinn often wondered where Sid got arms like that. In the Navy, he supposed, or on the docks in Miami.

Jelly leapt and flew furiously past Quinn. He ducked. Sid didn't seem to notice. Quinn sneered.

"That goddamned bird has got no manners," he said to Sid. He stood and, with an eye on Jelly, stretched his back. The bird walked slowly on the ledge of the window. Outside, a couple was kissing underneath the Hawaiian idol on the second hole. Sid ignored Quinn and opened a drawer.

Quinn repeated himself. Sid grabbed a yellow receipt from the drawer and looked up. "What did you say?" he asked, reaching for his glasses.

"The bird," Quinn said, hooking his thumb at Jelly, "The bird's got no manners."

Sid pushed himself back in the chair. "That's crap," he said, standing and walking to the window. He produced a cracker from his shirt pocket, speaking to Quinn while staring at the bird. He was intent, completely absorbed by the bird. To Quinn the bird looked stiff and mechanical; its smooth, grey feathers gave the appearance of metal. What was it that Sid found so fascinating in the bird? Quinn supposed part of it was love. Love and jokes. The bird was always good for a joke.

Sid leaned close to the bird. Jelly rolled her beak down smoothly into her breast and then reached for the cracker. Sid gave it to her and said, "That's a lot of crap. Isn't it? You have good manners. Don't you?" He leaned heavily on the counter. Jelly broke the cracker in half and picked at it. Sid smiled. "Here's a little kiss for you," he said loudly. Then he lifted a leg, turned and looked at Quinn and let out a long, loud fart.

Quinn took a step back. The room resounded with Sid's laughter. Jelly jumped and said something that Quinn couldn't hear. Sid pounded on the counter. The telephone rang.

Quinn knew he should have seen Sid preparing to become jolly. Sid did it all the time; Quinn hated it. Sid was always ready to drop everything for a bad joke or rude gesture shot in Quinn's direction. Sid could explode at any moment with precision-timed farts and laughter.

Quinn turned and left the shack. The Gulf highway was loud now with cars. Quinn jumped the short fence in front of the fifteenth hole and ran across the highway to the Kwik Stop, where he bought a pack of cigarettes. He jogged back across the highway and went to the tool shed, where he lit up and watched the progress of two plump college girls in tube tops on the back nine. Soon he took out his drawings and began to sketch out his plans

for the course.

In the back of the tool shed, Quinn had a stack of plans that Sid had never seen. He rarely planned new holes. Quinn was interested in trees. When they spoke of such things, Quinn told Sid, "This course has already got eighteen holes," or "What we need is trees."

Three years before they had planted two mock orange trees near the windmill hole. The year after that, a summer crab on the roundabout hole, a hoptree beside the shack and twin sweet gums near the fence by the road.

Sid moaned when Quinn brought up the subject of trees. "They block the sign," he said. "They block the goddamned sun. Who wants to play putt-putt in the shade?"

Quinn looked at Sid and said, "Golf, Sid. Miniature golf." The term *putt-putt* drove Quinn crazy.

Quinn could not be stopped from planting trees. Each time they turned a profit Quinn would order another one. There were now eleven trees on the course, not counting the row of big rhododendrons along the driveway. He had a three year old pawpaw that was already flowering, and he was sure he had the only paper birch growing south of Maryland.

About the pawpaw, Sid once commented, "Those flowers sure stink."

Quinn, who was picking gravel from beneath the turf on the sixth hole at the time, looked up and said, "Yeah, in some places they call it a fetidshrub."

Sid squinted and rolled his eyes.

\* \* \*

When it rained the tourists stayed away. Quinn and Sid tried to occupy themselves with busywork. Quinn, after taking in all the scoring stands, more often than not spent his time in the tool shed, cleaning the hand mower, stacking the rakes, hanging the clippers, painting the old benches, moving the ladders, smoking cigarettes, admiring his work. Sid sat at his desk in the shack and did the books. The course almost always turned a profit and for Sid, a man who had never had much money, this was a great pleasure.

Quinn considered Sid a fool with his money. With the first six hundred dollars he saved, Sid bought Jelly from Pet Heaven on lay-away. That was four years ago and now he owned a Seville and was part owner of his son's health food restaurant in Kansas City.

The shack was Sid's domain. It was always neat, save the old

color tv which was covered with dust in front and bird shit in back. In the mornings Quinn watched Sid line the clubs carefully, count the balls, sharpen the scoring pencils and stack the scoring sheets. Sid swept the shack once a day, cleaned the windows with Quinn twice a week and straightened and adjusted everything until it was just the way he wanted it. The one thing in the shack which Sid could not control was Jelly, who was to Quinn's mind a hellion, a terror, and as he often told Sid, "a complete bitch of a bird."

In the mornings she sat in her cage without moving. Sid had wired the cage door open, yet Jelly would never come out of the cage in the morning, no matter how he coaxed her. It was at eleven, when Quinn supposed the sun reached some strange point in the sky, that Jelly would come out and fly on top of the color tv.

Once there she was unpredictable. Some days she was playful, hopping from the tv to Sid's shoulder to the adding machine, eating corn chips from his fingers, drinking water from the palm of his hand. On these days Jelly sometimes sat on the counter and let the little girls who came in scratch her head.

Yet there were mornings when Jelly stared grimly at Sid and Quinn from the cage. Once out she would flutter and flounce on the old tv. Often she would leap from this perch, fly down, wings beating the air meanly as only a parrot's can, and land on some unlucky child's head. Jelly would squawk and claw at the child's scalp. The child would scream and Sid would shoo the bird, waving his hands in the air like some old lady. In four years Jelly had bitten six children and clawed four. Too often Sid found himself assuring anxious parents that Jelly's claws were not poisonous, although he was not at all sure this was true.

One afternoon in September, they closed the course up early because of rain and went out for a drink. They were both sitting, very drunk, in the lounge at the Surf and Tide Club, when Sid admitted to Quinn that Jelly was a disappointment to him.

"I wanted a novelty," he said, "A gimmick. Some entertainment."

Quinn laughed and drank. Sid had never talked about the bird this way before. Quinn fought back the urge to defend the bird in order to make conversation.

"I thought it made business sense to get a parrot," Sid said, turning to Quinn.

Quinn sighed and sipped his drink. "You ought to give that thing a ticket."

"A what?" Sid asked him.

"A ticket," Quinn repeated. "A ticket right out the goddamned window."

Sid stared at Quinn for a moment and then laughed. "Yeah," he said, "I ought to. Before I pay hospital bills, I ought to wax the bird."

They both laughed some more and listened to the bar music. In the middle of the next drink, Sid stood up and said, "Come on. Let's get it over with." Quinn was surprised, but willing to see what Sid was up to. He drove them in Sid's car back down the highway to the course.

Quinn was drunker than he thought, and when he got to Golf on the Gulf, he swung into the parking lot fast and skidded to a stop on the gravel there. They both lurched forward. Sid's head smashed into the dashboard. He held his head in his hands. "This is my car," he said softly.

"Sorry about that," Quinn said, looking for blood between Sid's fingers.

"This is my car," Sid said again, his hands still wrapped around his face. "That's my bird."

He straightened up and got out of the car. Quinn got out, ran around the car and followed Sid inside. Sid was screaming. "All right! Enough with the fun!" he yelled, picking up a club and smashing it on the counter. Quinn stood by the door. Jelly was on the ceiling fan, oblivious to the ruckus below. "Enough!" Sid smashed the counter again. A bin of blue golf balls tumbled forward and spilled on the floor at his feet. They rumbled and settled. Sid turned to Quinn.

"The gimmick has to answer up as an investment," he said. Quinn laughed. Sid reached behind his back with the club and lashed up at the fan. It hit a blade hard and spun the fan viciously. Jelly pulled up at the air, hit the ceiling just above the fan and dropped back down into the spinning blades. A blade smacked her and spun her in the air. She flipped and fell to the linoleum and the sea of golf balls there. Flapping wildly, she rose up and flew at Quinn. He put his arms up, but the bird was on him like a frantic insect. Her claws tore into his ear. He swung awkwardly. He heard Sid yell, "God damn it, I own you!"

Sid swung at the bird, but clipped Quinn in the butt. Quinn, already off balance from the booze and the attack, felt his leg give out. He fell to the ground. Jelly let go of his head and flew straight and fast for the window. She smashed into it and tumbled downward landing once again on Quinn. "Damn!" Sid yelled as Jelly began to claw and scratch once again on Quinn. Quinn was

on his stomach. He could feel the golf ball on the floor digging into his ribs. He covered the back of his head. Jelly had hold of his shirt.

Sid reached down and pulled the bird off Quinn's back by its feet. "Leave him the hell alone!" he yelled. Quinn had given up. He lay on his stomach without moving. Sid fought the bird towards the door. She flapped and protested his hold on her.

"Enough!" Sid yelled as he fumbled for the door. Jelly began to squawk loudly. Sid grabbed the knob and pulled the bird towards the door.

Jelly bellowed, "Awwk! Pete Rose! Pete Rose! Pete Rose! Pete Rose!"

Sid stopped and let go of the bird in surprise. Jelly flew around the shack before landing on the tv. She opened her wings in anger and hissed.

Sid was shocked. His hand was bleeding, blue golf balls at his side, feeling forgotten and drained.

"Charley Hustle?" Sid asked, quietly.

"Pete Rose," said the bird.

\* \* \*

It was fine with Sid that after his battle with Jelly the only words she would utter were "Pete Rose," although he had no idea where she had picked it up. Quinn had to have stitches in his ear, and his back was covered with scratches and claw marks for weeks. He no longer went in the shack for any reason. He lost all touch with the everyday routine of the shack. If Sid wanted to speak to him, he had to come out to the tool shed, even if there were customers waiting. Sid still let Jelly roam the shack at will.

Within six months Sid had seven pictures of Pete Rose on the wall behind the door, along with a team picture of the Reds and a frame containing the first dollar collected at Golf on the Gulf. When Jelly said "Pete Rose," Sid would lean on the counter and say to the customers, "Yep, Good Ol' Charley Hustle," or "Oh, she's a big fan." The pictures, he told Quinn, were a nice gimmick. The bird finally worked.

\* \* \*

Early one morning in March, Quinn was crouched next to his newest tree, a three-foot tall shadblow. The shadblow was looking sickly, and Quinn was dropping earthworms gently around its base when the phone rang inside the shack. Quinn raised his head.

Sid was not in yet. Quinn decided to let the phone ring. He finished with the worms, and the phone stopped. A minute later he

was mixing some paint and the phone rang again. He let it ring for ten minutes as he cut up some two-by-twos for supports for the shadblow. Finally he went into the tool shed to get his keys.

When he opened the door of the shack, Jelly squawked from her cage. He eyed her for a moment and then reached for the phone. "What?" he said into the receiver.

"I'm in Clearwater. Why didn't you answer the phone?" a voice said. It was Sid.

"I did answer the phone," Quinn said. "We're not open yet."

"You still have to answer it. I knew you were there — that's why I let it ring."

"That's smart." Quinn said.

"Just answer the phone from now on," Sid said.

Quinn was quiet.

"Listen, I can't get up there until four. The Reds are down here playing the Mets, and I want Rose to sign the pictures."

Quinn looked at the wall and saw that all the frames except the first dollar were empty.

"So you'll open up then, right?" Sid said.

Quinn moaned and rolled his eyes.

"Right?" Sid said again.

"Okay," Quinn said.

"Good," Sid said, "You know where everything is, and you can watch tv while you do it."

"Right," said Quinn, looking out over the course towards the ocean. There were clouds there.

"Okay then," Sid said.

"Okay," said Quinn before he hung up. He lit a cigarette and stared at Jelly. Then he went to the windows and pulled down all the shades.

By 2:30 Quinn had painted and staked the supports for the young tree, swept the entire course down, spackled a crack in the dinosaur, put a new, stronger bulb in the lighthouse, and retied the vines to the fence by the Hawaiian idol. He stood by the tool shed in the sun and looked at the course. Two palms leaned over the high fence that bordered the parking lot. The dinosaur stood silently near the mock orange. The fairways were flat and clean. Every ramp was sloped just right. Even the highway was quiet just then.

A station wagon pulled into the parking lot and pulled up to the fence. It was full of children. A man got out of the car and made a motion for the children to stay put. Quinn began to walk

across the course towards him, following the many paths.

"Are you opening soon?" the man asked.

Quinn shook his head as he approached. "Sorry," he said, "not until four o'clock."

The man shaded his eyes and looked past Quinn to the shack. Quinn could see the front of his shirt was wet with sweat. Quinn asked him for a cigarette.

"Sorry," the man said. "Don't smoke."

Quinn reached in his pocket as the man turned back to the car. He wondered why the man didn't haggle with him more. "Do you have any change?" he yelled as the man was climbing into the car. "For cigarettes?"

The man shrugged as he dropped himself on the front seat. He leaned his head out of the window. "Nope," he shouted as he started the car.

As the car backed up, Quinn was glad the man didn't have the change since he realized as he asked that he didn't have a cent on him, let alone a dollar to change. The children in the car looked back at him as they drove off. One of them blew him a kiss. He waved back, and the kid flipped him the bird.

Quinn wanted cigarettes badly, so he went to the shack to get a couple of dollars from the till. Inside the shack it was hot, and Quinn found the cash drawer locked. He searched through Sid's desk for the keys. In the bottom drawer he found a beaten-up envelope with some polaroids of a naked woman inside. She was spread-eagled on a plaid bean bag chair in one of them. He looked for a name on the backs of the pictures, but found nothing. Quinn didn't recognize her. She was small and pale, and she didn't smile. He put the pictures back in the envelope as he found them and threw the envelope back in the drawer. "Lonely," he said.

"Pete Rose," Jelly said from the ceiling fan.

When he had searched the entire office for the keys without success, he stood and leaned against the counter. He still wanted a cigarette. A warm wind blew in the door, filling the dark shack with moist air from the Gulf. Quinn reached in his pocket and pulled out his jackknife.

He went around the counter and pulled the frame with the first dollar in it from the wall. He took his knife and ran it along the edges of the cardboard in back until he found a loose spot. Then he pushed it in and pried the back off. A photograph, one not visible from the front of the frame, fell out onto the desk. It was a picture of Quinn and Sid holding the first dollar between them.

Both of them were wearing suits and ties, standing in front of the first hole. In the background was the dinosaur, young and ready, and the lighthouse was unshaded by the paper birch. On the back of the photograph Sid had dated it. "Me and Q — The first dollar! 2-26-80."

Quinn put the photograph down and took the first dollar from the front of the frame. He looked at the photograph, then picked it up and put it in his pocket. He walked out the open door, across the course, and jumped the fence. He jogged across the highway during a lull in the traffic and went in the Kwik Shop on the other side. He went to the counter and asked for a pack of Luckys. The girl at the counter was a tall, skinny teenager whose shoulders looked hard and pointed. She looked a little like the naked girl on the bean bag, but she was younger and probably taller. He put his hand on the photograph in his pocket.

"Dollar-thirty-five," she said to him, smiling.

"You know me, right?" Quinn asked.

"I do?" said the girl. She squinted a little and put a piece of gum in her mouth.

"Yeah, I own the miniature golf place across the street," he said, pointing out the window.

The girl looked past him. "Oh yeah, I guess I've seen you there," she said. She looked at him. "You own it?"

"That's right," Quinn said. The girl nodded her head and chewed her gum absently.

"Look," Quinn said, "you know me, so do me a favor, okay? This is a special dollar. Will you put it aside until I get back with another one to replace it?"

The girl sighed. "I can't take hundreds you know. It's against the rules."

"It's not a hundred," Quinn said, showing her the bill. "But it's special. So just keep it as a deposit for me, okay?"

The girl stopped chewing and stared at Quinn. "Are you sure you own that place?"

Quinn took a deep breath. "Yes."

She took another look over his shoulder and then took the dollar from his hand. "What is this? One of those silver certificates?"

"No, but I need to get it back," Quinn said.

The girl shrugged and put the dollar on top of the cash register. "Okay, I guess. But you still owe me thirty-five cents."

"I'll bring that too," Quinn said, turning to leave. "When I come back. I'll give you some free game cards too."

"Okay, I guess," the girl said. "But nobody I know plays putt-putt anymore."

Quinn shouted, "Save it. I'll be back," as the door shut behind him.

\* \* \*

At 4:30 Quinn was sitting on a bench behind the tool shed smoking a cigarette. He had been sitting there since 3:00, rethinking the fifth hole which would have to be torn up and laid out north-south to make room for the roots of the pawpaw tree. The sun broke through the clouds and warmed his shoulders and face.

What would happen if the roots of the pawpaw broke open the cement of the maze hole from below? They weren't that strong, he thought. They were only wood. Maybe things could stay the way they were.

Sid's car rolled onto the driveway and pulled to a stop in front of the shack. Sid got out. He was wearing a loose white shirt that sloped outward over his big body. He had on baby blue pants and his white patent leather shoes. He had a Reds cap on his head and was wearing a pair of sunglasses that Quinn had never seen before. There was a swagger in his step. He looked formidable, like he owned the place.

Quinn pulled the picture of the two of them out. Sid looked older in the picture than he did now. He was pale and thinner then. His clothes looked dusty and heavy. Even his forearms looked smaller. When Quinn looked at himself, he realized he looked older now. His stomach was flatter in the picture. He put his hand on his belly and rubbed up to his shoulders. He felt soft. He rubbed his legs. They were sore and tingly.

He heard Sid opening the shades in the shack, but stayed where he was. He knew Sid would see that the dollar was missing right away and would be out soon to raise hell. He took out his pad and started sketching the fifth hole.

Soon Sid came around the corner of the shed. He stopped when he saw Quinn on the bench. Quinn looked up.

"Who won?" he said without lifting the pencil from the pad.

Sid was silent for a moment. He had taken off the cap and sunglasses. His shoulders were slumped. Finally he said, "You didn't open up."

Quinn sighed and put down the pad. He started to speak, "Yeah, I know. It rained a little, and I didn't know where the keys were . . . ."

Sid interrupted him. "You left the door open."

Quinn turned and looked at the shack. "Yeah, I guess I did. I was right here, though."

"You left the door open," Sid repeated. Now Quinn thought Sid looked exhausted and at least as soft as he himself felt. Sid was older too.

"If you're worried about the dollar . . . ."

"Money?" Sid said loudly. He threw his hands in the air. "Money?" He shook his head.

"Well it's over in the store," Quinn said, standing. "Right in the till, they're saving it for us."

Sid shook his head. He walked past Quinn and sat down on the bench. Quinn was confused. Sid leaned forward and looked at the ground.

"I've worked hard on this place," Sid said. "I know you think that what I do isn't work, but it is. I work." He looked up at Quinn, who was silent. He went on.

"I'm sick of hustling. You go in there and hustle now. I'll plant the goddamned trees from now on. I'll stay out here and read books. I'll quit this. I don't need this. I don't need much, and I sure don't need this."

Quinn stared at him. Sid put his head down. "What the hell is all this? All this for a dollar?"

"What dollar?" Sid asked. "What the hell are you talking about?"

"Or is this about those pictures? Because if it is, I don't care about that," Quinn said. "Jesus, Sid."

Sid looked up. "What are you? In my drawers too? What is this? A raid?" Sid rose and stood very close to Quinn, who could smell bourbon on his breath.

"I was looking for the keys to the cash drawer," Quinn said. He looked up into Sid's face. "What is this anyway?"

Sid tensed and then backed off. He turned from Quinn and walked towards the shack. "I don't need you," Quinn heard him say. "This is nothing now."

Unsure of what to do, Quinn lit a cigarette and stared at the shack. What had he done? Sid slammed the door of the shack. He was furious. Quinn shook his head. "Fickle son of a bitch," he said aloud. "What the hell did I do?" he said. He took another drag. "What the hell have I ever done?" he said louder so that Sid might hear him.

A flash of movement in the pawpaw tree caught his eye. Movement like a branch bending quickly, bending unreasonably.

An open and shut. A flutter, like leaves, but not that simple. The movement slowed as Quinn stopped.

Quinn approached the tree and shaded his eyes from the sun, which was shining in through the branches. The movement stopped. He came closer. Then he understood. It was wings he had seen. The movement was flight.

## The Greeks Are Blinding Polyphemus

Because he's one-eyed  
because he prefers a different snack for lunch  
because he takes an unknown path  
because he's a shepherd though born a locksmith  
because he hasn't heard a phalakrokorax in days  
because he listens to the singing present  
because he builds nothing squats in his cave  
because he builds a cave garnished with laurel curtains  
legs knees falling in line  
they lug a fiery pole  
like stepping a mast into its socket  
they pierce and bore into his eye  
because its hole is the house of death

But novelty lives in him too  
every living eye shines like the sun  
and the death that renders rigid  
his rock-ripping muscles  
lives in everybody  
the form of the present is as clear  
as somebody rowing barehanded  
and though tomorrow's melody enchants  
it rains down enamelled flakes

Many men will sail from here  
amazement will never end  
the dialogue of but and because  
how long will you listen  
o lord of eternal waters

*Translated from the Hungarian by  
Jascha Kessler with Maria Körösy*

# A Preface To Dying

*Plato accepted death far differently.  
He thanked his Daemon and his  
good fortune for having been born  
a man and not a dumb brute, a  
Hellene and not a barbarian, and  
most of all for having lived when  
Socrates was alive.*

— Plutarch

I have heard about the Indian  
who went back twice  
to the rolling hills  
peeled away the dawn's mist  
and like a starling cracked with just a tap  
the green husk of the almond that had opened for him  
once before  
then he rolled about like a happy pup  
tailwagging shouting yes or no as he pleased  
to the black-and-white world

I'm dying happy with my one life  
thanking my star  
I was born no barbarian but a free soul  
the sun of Hellas and cloudless truth shining in my heart  
I lived with human wits and not as a dumb brute  
I knew that even salt turns sweet on the tongue  
and familiar bitterness milder  
Wonderful to soar on youth's wide wings  
in the skies of upwelling life  
wonderful to find in that panorama the source of the  
reed-marsh  
the cold water of life amongst slippery stones  
Its book opened to me every morning  
a pair of swallows chivvying the hawk

a forgotten old appletree carrying luscious fruit  
wonderful having each day dawn  
witnesses to the wisdom of my bones dropped behind  
in clearings the years made  
I thank my star  
I lived when Socrates was alive  
but my name's at the summit my pure name  
it is given to none but me  
to reach it  
and what my life has held apart  
alpha and omega  
crash closed behind me there

*Translated from the Hungarian by  
Jascha Kessler with Maria Körösy*

## Bait

We are seining  
still waters,  
watching the  
shimmer of minnows

fold and double  
over a seine  
rising around them  
like dawn.

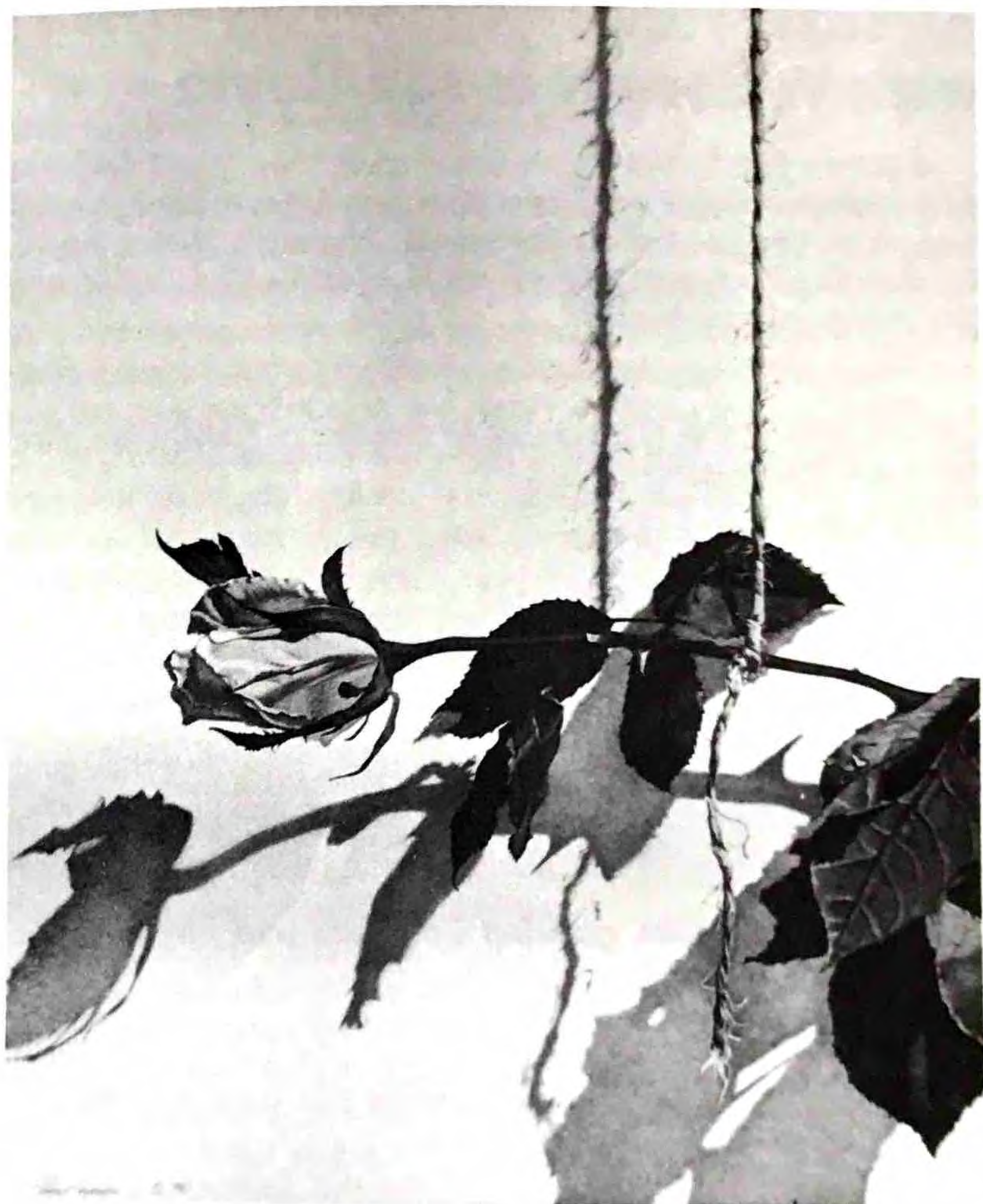
Darting,  
they try to dive  
through the net  
which lifts

hissing  
and flipping  
into air and suddenly  
hollow light.

## Tintype With White Rosebank

She wasn't my Aunt  
But I called her that  
The first day she ran loose  
Out of the screenhouse. One  
Slipper off and a head of white  
Hair under a clear blue sky,  
My Roman collie's bark  
Like rain swept into the hedges,  
The red berries dropping  
On her shoulders and inside  
Her dress — All of that,  
Just her way of having  
To touch the prettiest  
Beast she had ever seen. His head  
And collar under her hand were as  
A meeting in shade after battle,  
An unwritten law, and she,  
In her eyes, younger  
Than anyone ever was. I told her  
His name but instead, she said  
Her own: Aunt Maudie, Aunt Maudie . . .  
That's all she said, stroke  
After stroke. My mother had said  
She lost her tongue to old age,  
Lost the words that belong to things.

I wanted her to  
Listen, maybe with a friend  
She could collect her words  
As if they were shoes and hats  
Strewn across the lawn,  
Waiting to be claimed . . . But then  
Like the clouds, her eyes had changed,  
Filling her head, the ends of her hair,  
My hair and my heart lost  
For some time with her.



*"Shadow."*  
*Prisma-Color, 30" x 22"*

## **An Interview with T. Coraghessan Boyle**

*T. Coraghessan Boyle's books include two collections of stories: *Descent of Man and Greasy Lake*; and two novels: *Water Music* and *Budding Prospects*. A new novel, *World's End*, is due out from Viking in October 1987.*

**You teach at the University of Southern California. Are you from California?**

New York.

**New York State or the city?**

Born and raised in Peekskill, Westchester County.

**Is that a small town?**

Yeah, I suppose. Pretty much. About thirty, thirty-five thousand people. In Westchester County. I don't know if you know the city, but it's right there, a suburb of New York City.

**Do you think that growing up there had any specific effect on your work?**

Yes. Very much so. I grew up very close to . . . within a two-minute walk of a Jewish communist anarchist community called the Mohican Colony. Most of my good friends grew up there. By the time I came around it was not so much a colony as it had once been but there were still a lot of the old Russian Jews and anarchists there and so on.

The community had a good education system and was very liberal, to the point of being radical, almost. And I think that that influenced me as a kid.

The book I've just finished, *World's End*, deals with that area, and with the Robeson Riots of 1949 which came out of the whole communist thing.

Westchester is an upper middle class area; although I was not from an upper middle class family, I was influenced by it.

I was raised, actually, to be a punk. That's what my parents raised

me to be, and my friends, too. We were all punks, and we felt we were superior intellectually and politically to anyone else in the world. We laughed at bourgeois conventions and so on, even though I suppose we were informed by them in some deep way.

**Do you ever have any difficulty reconciling the fact that you are both a writer and a teacher?**

I don't think that I have the problem with it that perhaps the writers of our parents' generation might've had, you know, where writers weren't necessarily educated, didn't have to be educated. There was a sense that a writer had to go out and make it in the world as a writer. Some of those writers are proud of the fact that they've never taught, and they've made their way doing journalism and this and that. I think it was quite natural for me and the people of my generation to go and become educated. From the time of being an undergraduate on — although I was quite a bum at the time — I thought in the back of my head that a pretty nice profession would be being a college professor. Now as far as keeping that separate from my work, maybe less than others, I have very little problem with it because my deal with USC is that I only come in two afternoons a week. I don't participate in any of the campus activities or department meetings or voting for this or that. I could if I wanted to, but I don't want to and don't choose to. I don't think there's any danger that I'll become an academic, really. It doesn't interest me and USC has been understanding in that regard and has left me alone.

**You mentioned to me when we last talked that you had an MFA from Iowa and also a Ph.D. As a fiction writer, what compelled you to pursue the doctorate?**

Well, I went to Iowa when I was about twenty-three or twenty-four. I was in New York at the time, being a hippie and hanging around with a bunch of people and shooting dope, and, ah, doing all sorts of things that I don't do anymore but that were potentially fatal. I had gotten an undergraduate degree but I was very immature and trying to grow up at the same time I was going to college. And again, you know I had this sort of punk attitude that I grew up with. I didn't learn anything, didn't know anything, didn't give a flying shit about anything.

A few years later I decided I wanted to be a writer and realized it would certainly help me if I knew something about my literature and the English language, which I didn't know. My idea in going

to Iowa was twofold from the beginning: to go to a workshop, not so much . . . I didn't believe then, as I don't believe now, that personally for me a workshop would really teach me much about writing, which it didn't. I had already published by the time I got there and already knew how to write. I did need the time to sort of grow up a bit, and that was good. But from the beginning, from the day I got there, I began to take Ph.D. courses. Now this was a boon for me because the Iowa Workshop accepted people on the basis of the work only. As far as my undergraduate record was concerned, there's no program in the country that would've accepted me for a Ph.D. But after two years in the workshop I had concurrently taken twenty-four hours in the English department or maybe even thirty, impressed the professors, and sort of slid in the back door. I never took the GRE's. I had a grade point in undergraduate school of around 2.0, I think.

**So, it wasn't a particular period of literature that —**

No, I just wanted to go and immerse myself in it. The first semester I took a course in Nineteenth Century British — actually the period was from 1890 to 1945, but we concentrated a lot on Oscar Wilde and the Decadents, and that really appealed to me and was what I ultimately pursued.

**Where do your stories come from?**

I just jot down little ideas. I'm going through a story-writing phase right now. I've just finished a long novel and just finished the first story after it. It's about a restaurant critic and I'd long wanted to do a story about a restaurant critic because I felt it would be a way of addressing criticism in general. I know the critics have been very kind to me, country-wide and, in fact, in Europe too. So far. (laughter) I understand that they're very arbitrary and that they're not necessarily of the caliber of the people they assume to criticize. So I wrote a story that addresses that question, in a very funny way, through the medium of a restaurant reviewer.

One of my close friends out here is the chief restaurant reviewer for the *Los Angeles Times*, and I've been to restaurants with her once or twice. Those experts who say: "We tasted this and we found it dry," or whatever. Well you know who that was? That was me. (laughter) And what the hell do I know about it?

I just got an article from some little quarterly. Some guy had written about my work, in a kind of incomprehensible way I felt, but I think his thesis was that a lot of my stories come from current

topics, like the surrogate mother in “Cavier,” or the survivalists in “On the Long Haul.” I’ll take things from the news that interest me and use them for stories. I’ll take things from past literature like “The Overcoat II —”

**You also take things from movies and television.**

— yes, from movies and television, and science, as well. *Descent of Man* had a lot of stories with a scientific basis, like “The Extinction Tales,” and the title story, “The Descent of Man,” which derived from my amazement over the fact that chimps could use language. Actually, that’s been repudiated now, but then I thought: well, gee, this is marvelous. Here we’ve been so anthropocentric all these years and we’re the only ones that can use language, and we’re so vastly superior to our fellow animals, well, what about this proposition? I do a lot of “what if” stories, I guess, too. You know, what if this happened or what if that happened.

I do very few stories that rely on my own experience. Very few autobiographical stories like maybe Updike might write. I just don’t feel comfortable with those. Although I do some, I think the autobiographical elements are hidden deep. For instance, “Greasy Lake” is a story that has a lot of autobiographical elements, but again, it’s purely fiction.

**A lot of the fiction that appears in literary quarterlies and reviews today is concerned with familial relationships, especially some sort of eighties-style estrangement. You don’t seem to write too much about that.**

I don’t usually write about relationships. In fact, characters to me have always been secondary to an idea or a design for a story. Although, you know, I’ve had to learn how to do characters since I began to write novels. You just can’t sustain something of five hundred pages without building characters. So I think I have a wider palette now than I once had. But to me, stories are joyous; they are works of the imagination, and they deal with ideas, with things more than people. And I’m not saying that characters are not a big element. If there are two major elements in a story, a character and an idea, probably the idea is the starting point for me and the character comes next. I guess I’m just not that interested in the soap opera kind of quality of some of the current fiction. It seems to me repetitive and dull.

But again, each person has a different way into fiction and the concerns of others are valid, too. I’m not negating that, although

I think we've got our imitators *ad nauseam* of the realists/minimalists. I just have a different approach, that's all. My literary models are people like Calvino and Garcia Marquez and Robert Coover and the early Donald Barthelme, John Barth, John Gardner. I think that fiction can be a great deal bigger than it has been reduced to in recent years in our magazines.

**Again, I refer to our conversation last year when you mentioned the term: "catatonic realism" —**

(laughter)

**— to refer to the fiction being published today.**

Yeah, I've coined that term, that very disparaging term.

**Do you consider yourself a novelist or a short story writer?**

Both. And I hope always to be both. I love the form of the story. I began as a story writer, exclusively. I think that was my apprenticeship. I started *Water Music* to see if I could do it, and five hundred and forty pages later I had done it with a vengeance. Then, I didn't want to do it again for a while, and I went back to stories for six months or eight months. Then I did *Budding Prospects*. After another period of stories, which resulted in the collection *Greasy Lake*, I have now done a novel that has taken me two-and-a-half or three years. I've relievedly come back to stories, although the idea for the next novel is in my head. I hope to begin the novel, a short one, of course, but like *Budding Prospects*, a sort of contemporary one, by the summer, perhaps.

**Various reviewers have mentioned the humor in your work, specifically black humor. Where does that humor come from?**

I suppose it's just that my way of conversation and my way of dealing with the world is to tell stories and to say the offhand or odd thing. That's just my way of approaching life in conversation with my fellow human beings. Like most humorists, like good humorists, like the early Kingsley Amis, I just can't stand self-righteousness, and pomposity, and all of that shit. I guess that I'm meant to deflate it and that's where my humor comes from.

Black humor is part of my upbringing. We talked about my education, and it was wanting until I did my Ph.D., but in my early years instead of being burdened with Dickens and all the rest of

it — which by the way I came to later love — my classical literature was Ionesco and Samuel Beckett and the absurdist playwrights. What was happening on the page then in the late sixties. There was also Joseph Heller and Barth, Berger's first book. There was a lot of black humor, and that suited me just fine. It was just the way I saw things.

**Most of the things I read, and this may fall under your term "catatonic realism," in quarterlies and reviews seem to be mostly humorless. Do you think that contemporary editors discriminate against humor?**

I think that humor has always been regarded as less serious than a non-comic piece, which is false. But I do think it's regarded in that way. To be merely a humorist, I think, is to be less than a short story writer or a novelist, period.

I don't know if editors discriminate against humorous pieces. It seems that during the late sixties and early seventies, in a time of formal experimentation, a time when you saw more humorous writing published — I don't mean humorous in a disparaging sense, I mean comic writing in the best sense, like Thomas Pynchon — the editors then, the old hard line editors, the guys who are still in power in the literary world, who are maybe sixty now, gritted their teeth through that time and they didn't know what that stuff was all about and they didn't like it. And now, thank God, it's behind them. Now they're happy to publish more and more stories about three people sitting in the trailer court, talking folksy about Joe's drinking problem. They're happier than ever to do that.

You know, Raymond Carver, who's the best story writer in this country, easily, is such a powerful force, his stories are so brilliant and so gripping and powerful. He — and there's Ann Beattie, to a lesser extent — has spawned a host of imitators. I think that's natural, and that's fine. But I think we come to the end of it eventually. The ninth-string Carver people aren't very good.

There are some people, well-known, who have gotten a great deal of praise, and I'm not going to mention names because I don't want to disparage anyone specifically, but are playing the same record for us but at a slower speed. I get tired of the fact that the magazines are just dominated by these people.

I suppose I've spun out my own imitators now, but at this point in my career I don't think that I'm nearly as well-known as some of these realists and think that I should be better known than many

of them and think that I will be. (laughter)

I hear a lot of rumbling in the press lately about this whole school of realists and minimalists. Everyone's jumped on the bandwagon. I think that fiction is looking for somewhere new to turn. They can turn to me.

I think I've been influenced by this period of the last ten years, to an extent, but I think I still haven't lost the love I have for other types of fiction, for the kind of magic that fiction can give you. In my new book, I mean, I have bizarre coincidence, four hundred years of family history, ghosts and imps, a man with no feet. It's got it all. (laughter)

**When is that book expected out?**

October. From Viking. It's called *World's End*.

**You started publishing in the early seventies, didn't you?**

My first story came out in nineteen . . . ah, the fall of 1972 in the *North American Review*.

**Do you think it was easier then, in any way, for a young, serious writer to get published?**

No. I think actually it was probably a little harder than it is right now. The rap on first books of stories — my first book of stories came out in 1979 — was that they didn't sell. It was very rare for a first book of stories to come out. Now, I think the public has accepted stories more, and that's a positive trend. I don't think it's too much different today to get published in a magazine. I think it's easier now to get a first collection published, though, and get some attention for it, like David Leavett and Peter Cameron and other young writers who've come out with first collections.

**To go back for a moment to your answer to an earlier question, you think that this trend in realism is coming to an end?**

Well (laughter), I don't know. I *hope* so. I hear rumblings. Yeah, I hope that we'll open up a bit. Barth wrote a little article on this in the *New York Times Book Review* a few weeks ago. Very funny, very witty, very learned — marvelous. Ecumenical, too. Not a total attack but saying that people reading these minimalists should not forsake the joys of maximalists, like himself.

I think we can do more. People may feel that the American public's attention span is short and that they don't want to see a

bag of tricks or that they're not that sophisticated. Well, that may be the case. Of a population of 250 million, I think there are only about, oh, fifty or sixty people left in the country who know how to read, but addressing those fifty or sixty, they might get a little bored with this *shit* and might want to have something that opens it up for them a little more.

Charles Dickens is a good model. He was everything to everybody. He was funny. He was wild. He was imaginative. He was at times realistic. He did it all.

### **What contemporary writers do you read and enjoy?**

Don DeLillo's *White Noise*, Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine*, and Denis Johnson's *Fiskadoro* are about the best novels I've read recently. Just fantastic books. Rich, full of imagination, great characters.

### **In creative terms, what is different for you during the period when you're writing a novel and a period of short stories?**

With the novel you have the difficulty of keeping focused and keeping the tone steady, and sometimes you get bored. I can only do one project at once. I would never consider putting something down and doing something else. Only one thing at once. You do get bored. You have ideas; things come up that you would like to express — and some of it does work its way into the novel, of course — but generally they're things you feel you have to shunt aside. On the other hand, the reward of the novel is that it is a sustained effort, and it is something that you're doing each day.

With the stories, you have a flash of inspiration, any idea, anything that hits you, any day, any time. You can read anybody; you can be influenced by them. Their voices can squeak through for a minute or two. It doesn't matter. It's fine. It's only a story and it's done in a couple of weeks and in the mail. The downside of stories is that in between you waste some time fooling around looking for an idea. When I'm really clicking with stories, though, which I'm not right now, I already know what the next one is going to be when I'm about half way through the one I'm writing.

I find lately, though, since I've begun writing novels, that I'm only good for six or eight months of writing stories and then I kind of get itchy to do something longer. But I think that's good. I think it's good, for me personally, to work in cycles. So far it has been, anyway.

**What are you happiest about in your own work?**

I'm happy if it comes together, if it works, if it's good. It's a hard question to answer because each story and each novel is different and has different aims. I suppose, you know, if I'm satisfied that I've met the aims of the story, I'm happy.

# CONTRIBUTORS NOTES

**Kathleen Atkins** is the author of *A Physics Problem*, published by Blackwells Press. She is also a 1984 winner of an Academy of American Poets First Prize and has published work in *The Atlantic*, *Poetry*, *The Slackwater Review*, and many other journals.

**Joseph Edward Bolton's** work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Black Warrior Review*, *Crazyhorse*, *Cumberland Poetry Review*, *Gulf Coast*, *The Missouri Review*, *Plainsong*, *Quarterly West*, *Southern Poetry Review*, and *Yellow Silk*. He is currently working on an MA in Creative Writing at the University of Florida at Gainesville.

**Ron Carlson's** most recent book is *The News Of The World*.

**Michael Carrino** has an MFA from Norwich University. He currently teaches writing courses in the community college system of South Burlington, Vermont. His work has appeared in *New Letters*, *Poetry Miscellany*, and *Glen Falls Review*.

**Tom Chiarella** is an instructor at the University of Alabama. "Jelly in the Pawpaw Tree" is part of a collection called *Berard's Story*. He has published fiction in *Mid-American Review*, *Florida Review*, and other magazines.

**Peter Cooley's** most recent book is *Nightseasons*, published by Carnegie-Mellon in 1983, and his new book, *The Van Gogh Notebook*, will be available this spring from the same publisher. His work has appeared in two anthologies, *New American Poets Of The 80s* and *The Morrow Anthology Of Younger American Poets*.

**Yasu Eguchi**, a student of the Bunka Gakuin and Horie Art Academies in Japan, became the youngest artist ever to receive the Selective Artist Award at the Yokohama Art Museum in 1965. His work has been exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Tokyo; Santa Barbara Museum of Art; and Austin Gallery in Santa Barbara and Scottsdale. He is listed in *Who's Who In American Art*.

**Benjamin Goluboff** was born in Philadelphia and is an Assistant Professor of English at Lake Forest College. This is his first national publication.

**Rob Hall** is an MFA candidate at Arizona State University and a former fiction editor of *Hayden's Ferry Review*. His fiction and poetry have appeared in *The Fiction Review*, *The Traveler*, and other journals. He is currently at work on a novel.

**Hilary Heyman** received her MFA from Arizona State University and has taught in the Phoenix area. She has exhibited her art at the Austin Gallery in Scottsdale, the Leslie Levy Gallery, the Arizona Print Show, the 18th Southwestern Invitational, and the Arizona Biennial Exhibition at the Tucson Museum of Art.

**Michael Hogan** lives in Tucson, Arizona, and is a consultant on writing programs in correctional institutions. His latest book, *The Terrace, St. Tropez*, is scheduled to appear soon from the Greenfield Review Press.

**K.B. Hwang** was born in Korea in 1932. He studied intaglio printmaking in Paris and moved to New York in 1970. He has been honored with more than forty one-man and group shows over the last fifteen years and his prints are featured in such museum collections as the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris; the British Museum, London; and the Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

**Michael Johnson** is a Professor of English and Chair of the Department at the University of Kansas. He has published poetry and poetic translations in many journals and little magazines; his most recent book of translations is *Familiar Stranger*.

**Rolly Kent** directs several special projects for the Tucson Public Library: the Writers' Project; the annual Tucson Writers' Conference; and a new NEH program, America: A Reading. His first full-length collection, *Spirit, Hurry*, was published in 1985.

**Jascha Kessler** was born in New York and has been Professor of English and Modern Literature at UCLA since 1961. His many prizes include two Senior Fulbright Awards to Italy. He has published four collections of stories, three books of poetry, and several works of translation, including *The Face Of Creation: 26 Contemporary Hungarian Poets*, which will be published by the Coffee House Press, Minneapolis, in 1987. He has also written several plays produced in Los Angeles and New York, and the libretto for a full-length opera.

**Robert Kipness** received his MFA in Painting and Art History from the University of Iowa. In 1980 he was elected to the National Academy of Design, and he has been the recipient of numerous other awards. His publications include twenty-six

drawings for *Poems Of Emily Dickinson*, published by Thomas Y. Crowell, and the cover painting for *Collected Poems Of Robert Graves*, published by Doubleday/Anchor. His work is included in many public and corporate collections, selected one-man shows, and group shows.

**Marla Körösy** has prepared the literal versions of many Hungarian poets. She has an MA in English from the University of Budapest and is the English Secretary of the Hungariam PEN Club.

**Edward C. Lynskey's** work has appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly*, *American Poetry Review*, *Georgia Review*, *College English*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Arizona Quarterly*, and *New Mexico Humanities Review*. He is the author of *Wrought Iron* (Manassas Press, 1980) and *Teeth Of The Hydra* (Crop Dust Press, 1986). He lives in Warrenton, Virginia.

**Walter McDonald's** first book, *The Flying Dutchman*, won the University of Cincinnati's George Elliston Poetry Prize and will be published by Ohio State University Press this spring. He has published poems in *Poetry*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and *Kenyon Review* and is currently teaching Creative Writing at Texas Tech University.

**Thomas M. McNally** is an MFA candidate at Arizona State University.

**Pauline Mortensen** has won awards from the Rocky Mountain Collegiate Press Association, Ann Doty Fiction Contest, Mayhew Contest, and *Sunstone Magazine* contest. She is working on a Ph.D. in Creative Writing at the University of Utah.

**D. Nurkse** has recently received an NEA fellowship. He resides in Brooklyn, N.Y.

**Allan Peterson's** poems have appeared in *Black Bear Review*, *Parnassus*, *Webster Review*, and others. He is Chairman of the Art Department at Pensacola Junior College.

**S. Denys Pogue's** work has appeared in *Crosscurrents*, *Pulpsmith*, and *New Times*, as well as *Mallife* and other underground magazines. She recently completed a collection of short fiction and is now writing a novel entitled *Hot Sauce*.

**György Rába** is an expert in Italian and French literature and has translated several books of poetry. He was a member of the

Institute for Literature of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences until he retired in 1984.

**Umberto Saba** was born in Trieste in 1883 and died in 1957. In many ways he was a traditionalist, especially in poetic style; even in a poem as seemingly modern as "Cinders," the reader experiences the dominance of the traditional Italian hendecasyllabic line. Although he was not as experimental as contemporaries like Eugenio Montale, he had a considerable critical and popular following. He is now revered both as a great modern poet and as a consummate stylist.

**Catherine Sasanov** lives in Massachusetts and is Assistant Editor of the *Boston Literary Review*. Her work has recently been published in the *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Connecticut Poetry Review*, and *Hubbub*.

**Jeannine Savard** won the 1986 *American Poetry Review* Shestack Prize and has recently published poems in *North American Review*, *Cutbank*, *Quarterly West*, *Antioch Review*, and *Poetry Northwest*.

**Dennis Schmitz** is the author of *String*, *Goodwill, Inc.*, and *Singing*, all published by Echo Press. He has won Guggenheim and NEA fellowships, and he teaches at California State University, Sacramento.

**Arthur Secunda** studied in New York and Paris. At over 100 shows internationally, Secunda's exhibits at galleries, museums, and other public institutions have been distinguished in the mediums of painting, collage, and printmaking. He works and lives in Los Angeles and Paris.

**Peggy Shumaker** is the author of *Esperanza's Hair* (University of Alabama Press, 1985). She teaches at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia.

**Paul Shuttleworth's** latest chapbook, *Living And Sinning For Them*, won the Signpost Press chapbook competition and has been recently published. His poems have appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *Cutbank*, and other journals, and he is currently a visiting writer at Drake University.

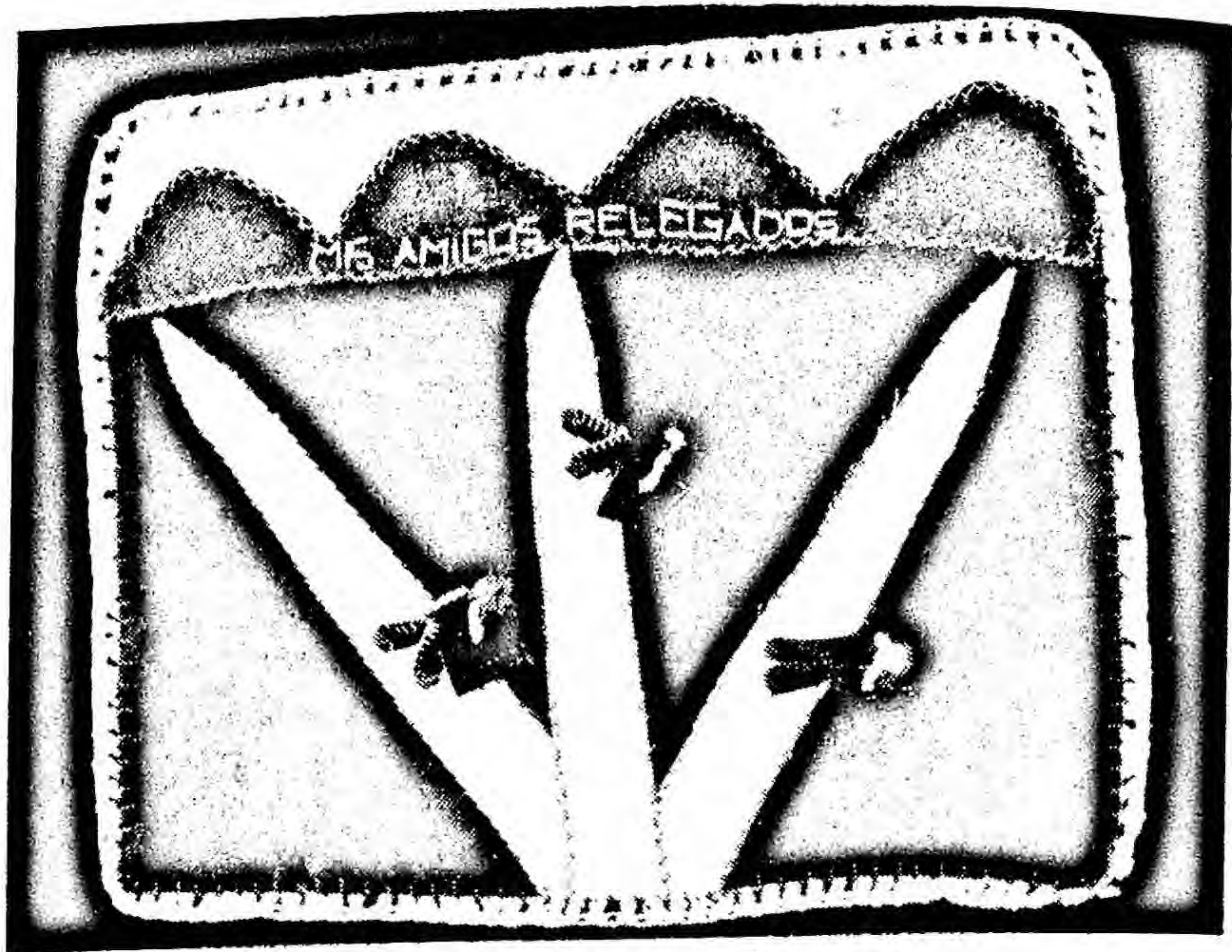
**Bruce Taylor's** poems have appeared in many small quarterlies and reviews. He edited *Eating The Menu—A Con-*

*temporary American Poetry 1970-74* and is the author of *The Darling Poems*. He lives and teaches in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

**Richard Terrill** has recently won a Wisconsin Arts Board Literary Fellowship and has published his work in *Ironwood* and *North American Review*, among others.

**Barry Thomson's** photographs are found in the collection "From Out of the Desert," a portfolio of photographs taken in the Desert Botanical Gardens in Phoenix, Arizona.

**Naomi Wallace** is a former MFA candidate in the Writer's Workshop at the University of Iowa. Her poems have appeared in *New Letters* and *Winters*. She lives in Amsterdam, Holland.



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The Master of Fine Arts degree in Creative Writing is offered jointly by the English and Theatre Departments. Poets, screenwriters, fiction and creative nonfiction writers work with faculty in the English Department. Playwrights study with the playwright-in-residence.

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