

# CutBank

---

Volume 1  
Issue 1 *CutBank 1*

Article 22

---

Spring 1973

## Two Poems

Raymond Carver

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

---

### Recommended Citation

Carver, Raymond (1973) "Two Poems," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 1 , Article 22.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss1/22>

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in CutBank by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@mso.umt.edu](mailto:scholarworks@mso.umt.edu).

## THE COUGAR

*For Keith Wilson and John Haines*

I stalked a cougar once in a lost box-canyon  
Off the Columbia River gorge near the town and river  
Of Klickitat. We were loaded for grouse. October,  
Gray sky reaching over into Oregon, and beyond,  
All the way to California. None of us had been there,  
To California, but we knew about that place—they had restaurants  
That let you fill your plate as many times as you wanted.

I stalked a cougar that day,  
If stalk is the right word, clumping and scraping along  
Upwind of the cougar, smoking cigarettes too,  
One after the other, a nervous, fat, sweating kid  
Under the best circumstances, but that day  
I stalked a cougar . . .

And then I was weaving drunk there in the living room,  
Fumbling to put it into words, smacked and scattered  
With the memory of it after you two had put *your* stories,  
Black bear stories, out on the table.  
Suddenly, I was back in that canyon, in that gone state.  
Something I hadn't thought of for years:  
How I stalked a cougar that day.

So I told it. Tried to anyway,  
Haines and I pretty drunk now, Wilson listening, listening,  
Then saying, You sure it wasn't a bobcat?  
Which I secretly took as a put-down, he from the Southwest  
And all, poet who had read that night,  
And any fool able to tell a bobcat from a cougar,  
Even a drunk fiction writer like me,  
Years later, at the smorgasbord, in California.

Hell. And then the cougar smooth-loped out of the brush  
Right in front of me—God, how big and beautiful he was—  
Jumped onto a rock and turned his head  
To look at me. To look at me! I looked back, forgetting to shoot.  
Then he jumped again, ran clean out of my life.

## YOUR DOG DIES

it gets run over by a van.  
you find it at the side of the road  
and bury it.  
you feel bad about it.  
you feel bad personally,  
but you feel bad for your daughter  
because it was her pet,  
and she loved it so.  
she used to croon to it  
and let it sleep in her bed.  
you write a poem about it.  
you call it a poem for your daughter,  
about the dog getting run over by a van  
and how you looked after the dog afterwards,  
took it out into the woods  
and buried it, deep, deep,  
and that poem turns out so good  
you're almost glad the little dog  
was run over, or else you'd never  
have written that good poem.  
then you sit down to write  
a poem about writing a poem  
about the death of that dog,  
but while you're writing you  
suddenly hear a woman scream  
your name, your first name,  
both syllables,  
and your heart stops.  
after a minute, you continue writing.  
she screams again.  
you wonder how long this can go on.