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The Town and Its Religion

Jacob Kahn

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THE TOWN AND ITS RELIGION

I ask God for some peanuts and he gives me salted air.

Between lovers, there is no hesitation
and I wish for once there was.

Later, I find God in a Pepsi can or crushed
Pepsi can outside the Asian grocer's
sliding door. On Tuesdays, I buy trinkets
for my sister, who's got a cakey
"epidermal layer," some lime-
colored, yet mild form of
leprosy. All that means is
her skin's like litmus. It wicks
just a little—if any. And we have no father.
It doesn't dry completely. She croaks instead of
crying. She's younger.

I buy paddy bracelets for her,
and green kimono fans.
If that's what you call them.

If we assume she's a virgin
then she's simply at the mall
or school. And we also have no mother.
Small as they are, someone must keep track of these things.
Other mornings, I ask God for the bald
truth as it stands apart from our brine-white
elbows, as it travels mile upon mile
away from this hilly, funereal
town. Sunrise here

is the only thing we have.
Clotheslines cross the gravel which is the color
of fennel. God formally tickles the inside
of my ear with tobacco sounds; I ask Jimmy Blaine for a ride
to work, but he's rubbing my newest girlfriend's hand. Late-

morning and we're all still looking
 for Jane's friend's car, a paisley-stained Honda,
 a Civic I believe, with one rim defected
 into the shape of a furry mollusk or cigar. The church choir
 is performing a few selections by the bridge
 for Easter this afternoon. And my sister's excited.
 She won't shrug. Rightly so.
 We can't all. Just yesterday

I donated five dollars to some cause in South America.

When no one's watching, I tune the radio
 on. I enjoy a pear and take part in the world,

and if you ask me how I feel, I'd say I feel alright,
 then good about a certain few physical laws. Around nine

PM I ask God for a new job and he points me to the shower
 which is running. I watch my sister sleeping
 from a ream of peeling carpet in the hall.
 After a minute I'd say I feel like puking,
 but not anything large or important because

the halls of my life are low and,
 like an eyelid, or fingernail, green. I am knock-kneed.

I don't want to wake her. My sister. Some days

I go downstairs just to throw an extra penny against
 the small coffee table which is a dinner tray
 until it bounds eventually into some ashtray
 full of peanut shells from a few nights ago.

I ask God for directions and the clanking sounds quiet down.

Some time passes then.