Spring 1976

Letter to John from Missoula

David Griffith
LETTER TO JOHN FROM MISSOULA

for Peterson

There is bread in the oven, John; its smell has eased itself completely through this room, rich as the soup you described once, a year ago, in a poem. For three days last week, the air was white with snow & no one could see the mountains. Today it could almost be spring. Our dogs, in the yard, are playing. From a window behind us, the crippled girl has been watching them. She hasn’t been out for days. I can hear chain saws, the big rigs lugging down pine. I can hear gunshots far off in the mountains.

How long has it been, not since beginning with words, but the time you dropped a pheasant twenty odd years from your eye? A damn good shot: that bright fat cock did not even let out a cry. Who’s taken over the white farmhouse in Tiffin? It matters that it’s all been behind us; that we’re writing, always, hunched within our dying & alive. Tomorrow it’s supposed to get cold, so someone wheeled out the girl.

John, this is the worst of the news: It’s warm. She cannot feel weather in her legs. Her mouth is hanging open. Her mouth is always motionless & open.