

CutBank

Volume 1
Issue 12 *CutBank* 12

Article 8

Spring 1979

Checking In

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Recommended Citation

Dunning, Stephen (1979) "Checking In," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 12 , Article 8.

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CHECKING IN

i

When he checked in at Delta
he said he'd left his book in the car
so Barbara had to go for it
and Raoul made his phone call.
If the agent knew
Raoul's plane would blow two tires, skid
off the runway and burn
he never gave a sign. Three people

slid down the chute
scrambled from the pulsing flame,
oily black smoke folding like dough
back into itself, stretching out and
twisting into the morning sky.
We watched until a TV crew
began to film the crash, burning still
no one able to kill the flames inside.
Barb and I

drove home in Raoul's car
talking about what to do.
Ruth was painting an old bed frame
with dark brown Rustoleum.
They already called, she said. Just three
got off the goddam plane alive.
Barbara went to her, sinking her cheek into
Ruth's breast: It was so terrible!
Barb said. Raoul and all those others.

ii

The magazine
folded beneath your arm like
a secret signal; your eyes
roam the lobby, looking for a face.
The fog had settled
on Indianapolis, making people late.
In his call Raoul had said

he was worried about
his talk, the data he had.
Then out of the blue he said: I love you.
If you, standing around the Hilton lobby
knew Raoul was dead,
knew his plane had popped orange
like a burning ping pong ball
it never showed.

At the banquet we
bowed our heads. The master of ceremonies said
it was an honoring of Raoul. Later
we went to the roof. You and I danced.
Nobody else felt you
mourning for your lover.