Monday, The First Hour

Robert Sims Reid
I've been up an hour, startled awake by a nightmare of home, Garrison and Coon laughing at jokes as though I weren't there in the roadhouse, marking well your accurate moves on the dance floor, agile in stammering light. Without seeing, I snapped open my eyes, felt cornered and reached for your hand. Every moment passes before I get a chance to say what happened. Last winter I watched the cold cloud of our breath rhythmically ice the window. I curled in your heat, believing. There have been days when I could scream the dim sky to morning and rattle our silent house awake at dawn. I have this vision of a man who can only remember. He eats. He talks and figures. People think he's normal. He expects a man should be happy with a handful of rain, a voice calling out the location of broken loves. You couldn't know. I set my feet on the floor and feel the chill wood. Spring. Rainbows upriver before long. Fat, they'll lay on that granite shelf at the Rattlesnake's mouth and wait for floods to swim farther upstream, hunting deep holes and snags. I've watched them snap the calm surface after May flies at first light. Dew dried slowly on bear grass. Isn't something too embalmed, too perfect about that scene? Air photo-sharp. Fish biting. Water clean. Didn't we swim there once? Or was that in a lake, where moon warmed our backs, legs lost in the dark water, feet buried deep in mud. That was the night they caught Richard Speck, killer of nurses. We were afraid and kissed.

—for Gayle