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## The Teaching Assistant to His Second-Semester Composition Class

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## THE TEACHING ASSISTANT TO HIS SECOND- SEMESTER COMPOSITION CLASS

If you were to tell me  
about your first kiss  
or the first time you got drunk  
or the night you learned  
your oldest brother had been killed  
in Vietnam

and if you believed I really want to hear

you would remember her name  
was Sally Mae Rankin  
and you were fourteen  
the night you slipped  
out of the church social,  
and how standing on the back steps  
in the dark  
you took off her glasses,  
then had to hold them,  
closed your eyes,  
felt your heart  
trying to crawl out your ears,  
and brushed her lips

remember  
speeding down back roads near Anton,  
eyes peeled for red lights,  
hearing the brown bottles crash  
against rocks in the bar-ditch,  
feeling your eyes tilt thirty degrees,  
feet tight in your boots

or crying and throwing up,  
then dreaming about mosquitoes  
feasting through torn khaki

in a rice paddy  
brown with water-buffalo shit,  
and waking,  
the way June bugs  
crinkled blind  
into the porch light;  
how two weeks later  
riding on a bus past the downtown Penney's,  
you saw a display for winter clothes.

then we could sit over coffee or a beer  
and know what a crime it is  
to waste words  
like "Hollywood makes many movies each year,  
and not everyone will like every movie."