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## Poem in Two Parts

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*Poem in Two Parts*

THE SKETCH THING

When he sketched  
It wasn't like the world disappeared  
It was more like the thing inside  
That made him want to  
Stab the goldfishes' eyes with the tooth-market pencil  
And watch them bleed tiny flopping deaths  
Across the tabletop

Instead

Crawled out onto his page  
Quirking the corners of the Blackfeet woman's mouth  
Hooking the bull-elk's antler tips  
Content then, smirking up at him.

The thing had even squirmed onto  
The Jesus-picture his mother had cooed over  
And crucified on the refrigerator door with magnet-nails.

She startled once, after a few minutes'  
Deep study of the Jesus-picture.  
He'd drawn the eyes unopened  
And the something that snickered between the closed lids  
Peeked after you'd stared awhile.

He knew that.

But he didn't tell her that sometimes,  
When the Jesus-eyes opened to him  
They narrowed  
Searching for the tooth-pocked pencil  
He held tight behind his back.

ACTIVITIES: NONE

Screwing the old woman was like  
Doing it with a box of dusty Kleenex  
I was high on incredibly good shit  
And her house looked good from  
Outside in the dog-pissed drifts.

They found her blood  
Trailed it to me  
So I spent some time in the cell next to Vern  
Underneath the whole fucking courthouse  
Of Conrad, Montana  
Had my sketch-book and a chewed-up pencil.  
They all scrambled above me,  
Fat white grubs.

Third or fourth day  
Vern's girlfriend pulls a .357 Magnum  
On the dispatcher and that fat-ass deputy and  
Vern says "You comin'?"  
So I picked up my sketches and went  
Laughing, ready for a road-trip.

Her beat-up Datsun leaked air at eighty  
Vern drove, I rode shotgun  
Just like some fucking F.B.I. show.  
she crawled small in a corner  
Didn't say much, looked scared  
Like the dispatcher when the Mag. was up her snout.

The Datsun got us to the reservation that night,  
Pulled over five miles south of Babb.  
Under the nosy bastard moon  
I got a good tight grip on her throat  
Bandanna-gagged her

And she spread her legs for me then  
While Vern slept in the front seat  
Cradling the Magnum instead of her.

She screamed like I'd killed her  
When I took off the gag  
Vern woke up and I made it out the door and  
One  
Two-three  
Lurchy steps  
Before the bullet gnawed  
My ribs  
Sat back  
While five more followed.

Sprawled out now, face-down  
So cold  
The snow's sucking mouthfuls of my blood  
Red on white  
Red on red, and  
It isn't funny anymore

Until  
I think about all those dumb  
White kids who'll be amazed  
they walked the same halls with  
a genuine bad-ass Injun.

And the girls' faces, pale  
Like when they're swimming  
In five feet of water at Tiber Dam  
And a rattler curves past their thighs  
Yeah, that's me

can't even see the goddamn stars

But  
White boy on the sand  
Pitches a rock, pegging  
my back    my head

and the rattler sinks  
slowly into dark

Snow-cold water

And touches bottom  
But doesn't  
Know it