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## At the Carnival

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*At the Carnival*

By the glare of naked bulbs rowed up  
to throw the eyes  
away from the soiled hands  
of the man at the ring toss game,  
I saw at the age of twelve my father  
by a different light.  
Strangely, as if in a dream, he fished  
dollars from his worn wallet  
chasing a portable radio  
while my mother stood  
quivering in angry tears  
till the sheriff came and the carnie  
raised his grimy fingers  
glittering with thick false diamonds  
above the counter.  
The next ring plopped over a peg  
with a pocketknife.  
I have it still with its almost mother-of-pearl  
handle and its two dull blades.  
I saw at the age of twelve my father  
shrug his shoulders at the clattering carnival  
while his hardware store  
quietly went under back in town,  
and my mother complained the last thing  
we needed was a portable radio,  
and my father calmly explained  
we all have our limits.

*Ron McFarland*