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CutBank

Fall/Winter 1981

Editors: Sandra Alcosser and Jack Heflin

Art Editor: Philip Maechling

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Cover photograph by Zuleyka Vargas Benitez
CHATEAU D'IF

At first there is nothing but rock and sunlight piercing the water.

Then the sleek, beautiful boys diving and warming themselves on the rocks just below me. A faint breath of stones rises from the core of the island.

I grow luminous in this naked light and my white dress falls away.

I remember the imprint their bodies left,

birds circling the stubborn tower, and the slow lapping of water.
HEAT WAVE

The killing sun is setting. We leave our withered horses, our windless, stone-dry wheat, to come to these lawns, these galleries, where Nick and Nora and stiff-legged Asta hang from the sky. Our children are slumped on the grass like empty jackets. A lung of cicadas rattles.

How green we are. How sun through the elm leaves greens us. How sun through the windows of celadon vases greens us. The saxes and trumpets are bleating, The clays of a thousand years tremble, regather.

Oh Nora. Oh Nick with your whiskey, your ascot, your eye swelling now like the moon from a hundred miles; give us your clear-headed glances. Skim over our bodies like rain.
AND NOW THE MILKCOW

And now the milkcow
at the end of her tether
has gone crazy,
heelflies in swarm after swarm
over and under and into
every soft spot on her body,
her eyes the eyes of an idiot,
now flat, now crossed, now rolling,
her tail switched down to a stub,
each nostril a flaring of thick mucus
flecked with foam.
An omen, Anna calls it,
the end of her wet dishtowel
like a bullwhip popping.

Yet in spite of the towel,
in spite of the soapweed pot
I set to smoking,
the flies keep coming on,
until untying the rope from the tether pin
I lead the mad-eyed Guernsey
to the deepest hole in the pond.
Blood from a hundred pinholes
clouds the water,
and the cow threshes blindly,
bawling, lunging, at last
falling on her side,
her udder on its way to sinking
leaking a pink to purple milk,
her large head following under,
as if content to drown.
Anna there to see it all.
This is an omen, Jacob, she says,
and like a marked man
looking to be clean
I throw the end of the rope
to the center of the spot
where the beast went down.
THE WILD DUCKS FLOATING

The wild ducks floating
in the river now,
now diving under,
are Karl and William,
there to wash the homestead topsoil
from their plow-weary skin.
Their shouts and laughter in the warm air of evening
are like no other sounds on earth I know of,
their bodies from a distance
dipping like the swift white fundamentals of birds.

They say the lark
has only five notes he can sing,
and thus for age on age has sung them,
no question asked, no spread of scale,
no rash improvisation.
And though the ground we work
goes always up one row and down another,
we have the boundless gift
of human sound. Just listen to it, Anna,
no two syllables ever quite the same:
release in the throats of our boys,
in the throats of Karl and of William,
washing themselves
to be more of themselves
downstream.
CANTER THE AWKWARD BODY

Dwarfish tents have begun to push from my daughter's tight chest. Her questions tail-off now, sullen. Borrowing from a genealogy of part-time fathers, good with our hands, but frozen to lies, I drum home swaggering recitals of myself at eleven, lopsided with respect. Fiddling at the buttons on my shirt, she nods.

At camp, horses are best. She claims to know their manes possess no nerves, her tugging cannot bruise them; not like that woman who screamed from my bed and wheeled away to an ambulance, leaving behind her knots of tightly braided blood. Or the samplers of moans, staccato whispers I carried home from the bars, the ones who pressed pills in my daughter's hand for school.

Yes, the horses, those lathered clocks, angling around burnt summer hills, past abandoned cars with weeds matted flat to rear seats, surging their roughest wind at the bite of my child's riding switch. Above such barrel an ointment pulls down her body, kissing their brown, slick hides. If she was just someone else, anyone else . . . The stable hand with his broken face places a boot on the rail.
WEDDING ANNIVERSARY WITH FISH

On the dais, above tuxedoes and orchids clutching shoulders, sounds grow thin. They escort you from a heavy curtain, nightgown still warm, sleep peeking from your mouth like mice. You have no plan, no notion of direction, there's only the microphone and light extracting into pureness of light.

Stories they expect begin in bed, cats on a satin coverlet, a husband motionless as grease on garage cement. He looks out from a print on the dresser holding a string of silver trout. Can you explain the freezing of that lake, the view from under the boat, how your lips shredded against his constant reeling—how he buried them after the photograph?

You want more sleep, light and its bunting hurts your eyes. This crowd wants to know more than you understand. Even as you squeeze the pistolgrip into five barks of marriage, his hand still tightens on your breast like an iron flower closing. If there was mud you would dig a hole for him, would brick these windows and vents until oxygen turned precious as dark water, bodies bloating to the surface, in love.
A LETTER

I have tried a dozen ways to say these things, and have failed: how the moon with its bruises climbs branch upon branch through the empty tree; how the cool November dusk, like a wind, has blown these old gray houses up against the darkness; and what these things have come to mean to me without you. I raked the yard this morning, and it rained this afternoon. Tonight, along the shiny street, the bags of leaves, wet-shouldered but warm in their skins, are huddled together, close, so close to life.
ENTERING THE GARDEN

As you are climbing the path between the two fields,
Threading your way upwards, among the yellow and red flowers,
You see her smiling, waving and urging you on

And suddenly you're afraid: entering the garden to be photographed,
Finally exposed, the secret of your true self
Revealed to everyone, nervous Narcissa caught

In the plain mirror of a sister's eye,
Of course you are uneasy: what if the camera should see
Something it should not see? Really, this is too naked

And too fast: the truth lies only between moments,
Or so you say to yourself, holding your breath, listening to it
In the wet cave of the lungs hover, hesitate,

In stillnesses only you have experienced:
Nevertheless you agreed to this, you try
To appear comfortable, you arrange yourself and sit down

As naturally as possible, giving her your brightest smile
You stare back at your accomplice, the young woman crouched behind the tripod
With the black sheaf of her hair trailing its loose fingers

Over the high cheekbones and around the glass eye
Of the camera she hides behind, strange five legged bird
Tap tapping at the pale window of a day

You look anxiously out of, aware only of your own
Possible reflection in the smooth platter of the lens
Opposite you, the dazzling twin countenance
You would not disturb for anything, you wait to be shown
Not only yourself, but the world trapped in your mind’s eye,
Imagining your own image in the concentric glass circles

Of the air that cages you, bewitched, sitting there like a lump
Still as a statue, unable to move
One inch for fear of losing the live face

You put on so carefully this morning, but what is this waxy trance,
This artificially still pallor? One slightest touch
Could utterly change the picture, could break you

And the camera too, into jittering jigsaw pieces,
And you know it, but this is not nature morte, the streaming
Corruscating surface of things moves constantly

And to catch it so must she, with her forehead like snow on the mountain,
Peacefully, draping her tall body nonchalantly
All over the camera like a bolt of fine cotton,

For though she is only human, though even those luminous cheeks
Can wrinkle themselves into the ugly cross hatches of the shadow
Of ordinary petulance, of everyday cranky complaints,

Right now she is willowy, the white sail of her smile
Swoops out over her supple frame as if she were a mast
Leaning and bending with you, over a genial sea,

And little by little you let go, slowly you begin
Not quite fogetting yourself, but at least
Noticing other things, sunlight coming and going like minnows

Flickering over the sparse grass, the gawky arthritic sticks
Of flowering mesquite, the fringed peppertrees swaying,
The little pungent blossoms shivering,
Sprinkling the whole valley with their white spiciness
Until you begin to move too, to speak to her at last,
Even, cautiously, to look outside the garden,

And instantly the spell is broken, in a shimmer of crystal,
That spell that was of death, the dead center, the I,
Is shattered now, in a hundred leaping prisms,

Suddenly you look at the far mountains
*With* her, the camera begins to click
Faster and faster, tap tapping at your head as if there were nobody at home

Which there probably isn’t, but even if you have fled
Eerily, to the bottom of the next river,
What may not happen, from moment to moment,

In the swift current speckled, among the fragmented forms flowing
Through ribbons of light and shadow, matter in waves like water,
The entire tight knot of your being may splinter

Into a thousand tiny freckles scattered
Over the shaggy marigolds, twigs from the trees, nasturtiums,
Seeds in the air, your friend’s feet, even the black ants on the ground,

So that now, finally, your held breath may relax,
Light as the chill breezes of morning coming and going
But painfully also, almost too transparent

And too excruciatingly fine for comfort,
Flashing in and out like the thin leaves of the peppertrees
Over the glass ladder of day, the scales that have fallen shining.
LIVING NORTH OF YACHATS, WEST OF FRIENDS

for Melinda

Days were lush with boring intensity
walking the sand after high tide
the one great driftwood hulk moving
further and further down the beach.
Sometimes I would leave the door
open all night, rain darkening
the concrete walkway, moistening
my carpet. I could only write letters
after midnight, same message in every one—
"I'm all too alone in this one, but don't write back."
Walking outside in my slippers
I parted the herd of rhododendrons
looking north then south for headlights
placed the envelopes in the wet metal box.
And jogging back inside I'd face
the bathroom mirror I'd covered
with my blue jacket where I learned
to brush my teeth, shave and live without it.
Zuleyka Vargas Benitez was born in the Panama Canal Zone in 1951. Her mother Amalia, an important influence in the artist’s life and work, was raised in the jungle of Panama, and is writing an autobiography. Zuleyka’s father, a native of Puerto Rico, is a retired Army officer. Her photographs, drawings, paintings and prints have been exhibited in more than twenty-five states. A book of her narrative drawings, *Trouble in Paradise*, was published in 1980 by Lost Roads.
A late steamy afternoon on the cramped beach behind Mendelssohn's Bathhouse. The squealing children have disappeared into hot station wagons or pedalled standing up over the hill on fat-tired bikes, and we are left with the buzz of a last water skier from the far end of this stale lake. Miss Whalom, the dwarf steamer, loiters at her moorings nearby. Alex watches the lovers who sit on a gummy picnic table at the edge of the canopy. The boy is older than we are, nineteen maybe, the girl our age but unlike the chilly tennis-playing types we've taken out this summer. Her hair is long and swept up into a lacquered swirl, which is only now beginning to release a few dark strands for her to brush away. Her suit is a green-striped two-piece that balloons in front as she leans forward, smoking, rubbing the boy's leg with her small white hand. It is nothing they do outright, only the intimacy of the touch, the way they seem to feel secluded by the corner of moist shade cast by the bathhouse. We are desperate for experience, but the desire and the patience in their look shrink us. We're stranded between the two chunks of time that make up our lives.

In a month I'll take the train south for my last year of boarding school, and Alex, who has been away and come home, will enroll in our town's high school for his senior year and begin laboring through its offerings, after school running errands and hosing off cars in the back lot of the Ford dealership where his father manages to stay employed. Alex has worked at three jobs this summer, each one automotive. I'm accustomed to looking for him in cluttered backstreet garages—places like Lloyd's Radiator Shop—and I'm no longer surprised when men like Lloyd glance up darkly from their work and tell me Alex went out earlier and never came back. He has no particular talent for fixing things, even less for discerning what's wrong with them. He has yet to figure out that the bond between young men and cars is not absolute. His skin is pallid, chronically oil-stained in the pores of his hands. He drives a maroon Mustang with dealer plates—not ideal since the car can't be modified, but it's easy enough. His talk is laced with words like glasspacks, hemis, 427s. They excite him. This is a difference between us: he loves the car, I like the feel of
driving. Pointless solitary rides through back-country Massachusetts, the stone walls and fields whizzing by, the radio beating out harsh new songs by Eric Burden, the Stones, against which I sing almost fluently. But I have no keen interest in the artistry of engines or in pacing off the thick, still-warm tails of rubber on the road behind Alex's house.

We are not so different to look at, two nondescript seventeen-year-olds, limp brownish hair brushing the tops of our ears, shagging longer over our foreheads. Neither of us is unblemished or physical enough to pass for a lifeguard, or eccentric enough to draw an interested stare. We blend in all too easily. I am the one with black glasses (one bow wrapped in white athletic tape), Alex the one with the long, almost horsey face, the one who is slow to smile these days, who walks with his shoulders bunched and his hands balled in loose fists.

When it's time to leave the beach and enter Mendelssohn's yeasty changing rooms, Alex shuns the lovers. Beyond the bathhouse lies Whalom Park, an oasis of aging rides and attractions, part carny, part good family entertainment. From where we stand, the sun can be seen blasting through the roller coaster's webbing of white-washed struts and crossbeams. It's a big one, beautiful in its way, a kind of landmark. Every night a line straggles back from its ticket window, people holding pale blue sno-cones, joking and bragging, and a few staring up with something like awe as the gears tick the cars' ascent to the highest tier, followed by a cascade of screams as regular as breakers at the shore. Every few years we hear that someone has been thrown from it and killed, but they've broken the rules and they're nobody we know.

Then Alex stops abruptly and grabs my arm, waving his free hand in an arc that takes in the whole roller coaster.

"See that," he tells me in a voice both calm and riled. "I'm going to burn that thing down."

Every night after dark there were crowds, up on the bright midway and down on the street where the back of the park met the lake. In the distance a few white lights burned at camps on the far shore. Alex and I worked our way down the sidewalk through the clusters of girls perched on parked cars, on the railing, hunched on the curb. Down from a fried clam place on one end, past a
bar and an open-faced Skeeball palace, past Mama Castiglio’s, past the
dancehall called Roseland, past the last fluorescent-lit soft ice cream stands to
the dark area under the roller coaster protected by hurricane fence.

Then back.
The sidewalks were patrolled by local toughs, some alone in their
immaculate black leather, picking through the foot traffic, alert for something
to take issue with; others with the red lettering of the RYDERS club on their
denim jackets, gathering among the bikes outside the White Horse bar, then
scattering into the crowd. Alex knew a few, by name at least, and once as we
lingered with one called Angie, Alex said, Here, feel, and pressed my hand to
the back of Angie’s jacket where I felt a huge knife tucked into his belt. Angie
looked off above us and said there was going to be trouble later. If there was, I
never saw it and I never wanted to. Sometimes Alex wore his own leather
jacket (actually a kind of vinyl) but nobody mistook him for that breed of
roving anger.

I see myself in lock-step with Alex, drifting through snatches of music, yells
from passing cars, mad laughter carrying down from the park—some human,
some canned and broadcast from a tattered dummy outside the Fun House.
As he talked of other things, I dwelled secretly on the act he’d vowed to
perform. I measure who I was by what I didn’t think of. I had no thought of
what would happen afterward: I didn’t picture the police picking through the
charred wood, or the insurance adjusters, or the owners and their rage, or the
barricades families would drive past, slowly, pointing fingers. Nor did I
wonder why Alex had chosen the roller coaster—was it only that it was so
bright and visible? Nor do I remember saying to myself This is rotten, though I
must have had my doubts. I only imagined, as Alex must have, the flames
that would dart like excitement through the old wood, rising tier to tier, until
the night sky was blasted with a light he’d never forget, a light of his own
making.

We paused across from Roseland and drank Cokes in huge paper cups full
of crushed ice. Alex stopped a girl he thought he knew from the beach, or
maybe from the counter at Friendly’s, or maybe from another night along
here. She had long straight hair made white and lusterless by peroxide and
indolent hours in the sun. She wore a man’s blue button-down shirt, tails out,
and cut-off jeans dappled by Clorox.
“You want to go for a ride?” Alex said.

“Where to?” the girl said—or maybe she said she had a friend waiting, or maybe she was savvy enough to snap, “Whatcha got?”

Nothing would happen beyond this, we all knew it. A light hand on the shoulder, endless fractions of talk. My attention wandered uncontrollably to the dancehall across the street.

When my folks went out to dance, it was to the country club. I see them standing in the foyer, my father showered and suffused with witch hazel, his tux newly pressed, my mother in her long quiet dress trying aloud to persuade herself she’ll survive the evening’s clamor. They’ll return not long after midnight. Most likely I’ll have just gotten in and will be sitting on the edge of the bed, the lights out. My father’s voice will drift under the door, buoyant from Scotch and a few sociable hours among his equals. My mother will sound fatigued, resentful. Never again, I’ll hear her say, as I lie back, trapped a while longer in protective custody.

But there before me stood Roseland: a long frame building sheeted in painted tin on which there was a great furled rose and lettering in a script that said Roseland had survived from the park’s more genteel beginnings, into this present-day noise and gaudiness so strangely attractive to me. Downstairs was the bar, upstairs the dance floor. From the sidewalk I could see the dancers sweep by rows of windows, speckled with darts of colored light from the spinning mirror near the bandstand. Sometimes they stepped onto the balcony and looked for a moment over the lake or down at all of us, from whose ranks they had once come, then disappeared inside. They were beautiful in their bright tight clothes, in the sweaty flow of fast dancing and drinking and being so unashamedly in the prime of their lives.

I should say this about Alex: he lied. Not once, dramatically, but habitually, as if his life had come to depend on doses of it. I hated to admit it because he had been my friend and sometimes confidant since grade school, and because it was needless and transparent. He wasn’t one of those drifty kids who lies because he can’t keep anything straight in his mind, nor was he any more devious by nature than the rest of us; it was just that we couldn’t trust what he
said he did outside our circle of friends.

On summer evenings we played music in a built-over shed down behind Alex's house. We were joined by our friend Owen who played a Hofner base (left-handed, McCartney-style), and by Fritz, who hunched behind his partial set of drums, always ahead of the beat so that even slow songs scampered toward the end. And some nights Jody, Owen's lovely vulgar sixteen-year-old sister, would come too, jumping at a legitimate excuse to get out of the house. Were it not for the fact she'd always seemed more like a sister to me, I might have driven myself nuts lusting after her. It was the same way for Alex.

Alex was our leader, our director and arranger and singer. He got us an occasional job at somebody's barn party in Ashby or Townsend. His voice was fair enough when he relaxed, but his falsetto leaked air like a split reed, and he liked to sneer the words in a way I thought was corny. He favored three-chord songs like *Hang On Sloopy* or ones he'd written himself, which were thin on melody and rhymed only in the sense that most of the lines ended in . . . *girl*. But the quality of his voice ended up not mattering much because he played his guitar too loud. Owen and I would have to keep turning ours up, then Alex would nudge his up, and soon the songs were instrumentals.

One night after we'd stopped—our ears exhausted by the sheer weight of the noise we'd made, our fingers unable to come up with anything we hadn't played already twice over—Alex dug around in a drawer by the turntable and produced an unlabelled 45 record and held it up to us proudly.

"This just came in the mail," he said. "It's that group I was in up at school."

He hovered over it as it played, head cocked to the spinning disc as if it filled his mind with glamorous memories of the recording studio. Unfortunately, the song was old, one of those reverberating space-age numbers done by groups like The Ventures. In fact, it *was* The Ventures, no doubt about it. He must have found a remaindered copy and soaked the paper label off.

"That's you, huh?" Jody said.

"Sure," Alex said. "Me and others."

Jody made a face. I don't know what Owen thought, but we kept our mouths shut. Maybe I thought he was entitled to his illusions. From time to time there were stories about prodigious tender-hearted girls from the teachers' college, stories of high-speed chases late at night, Alex's ass saved at the last by his hot car, his cunning, his instinct for backwoods geography. As
truth, his tales were hard to swallow, given what we knew about Alex firsthand—unless somehow there was another Alex inside, who only came out in the world away from us. As fantasies, they were too tame and predictable to capture our awe. When we were in a group I let them blow by like a bad smell. When it was just the two of us—as it often was, since we had the long-time habit of killing time together—he was more restrained. Maybe I seemed less gullible by nature, but more likely he felt some unspoken respect for the allegiance we had made, and maybe a little fear that it would—would have to be—broken.

So what did I believe? Did I think he meant to send the roller coaster up in flames—not a boast or a figure of speech or an outright falsehood, but actual premeditated arson, something criminal and assinine? The more I thought about that recent afternoon at Mendelssohn's, remembering Alex's reddened eyes uplifted into the lowering sun that made the roller coaster look like it was already on fire, the more the answer was yes, passionately, despite the lying, despite everything. As we drove home one night I told him, “You know, you don't have to prove anything to me.”

“Sure, yeah, I know that,” he answered after a long pause. “I just wanted you to know about it. You're my guarantee.”

I worked on a framing crew that summer. Good experience, my father said, meaning (he elaborated often) that I would know how a house was put together and would not be cheated by a shoddy builder in later life, and meaning further (he did not say) that I would see what it was like to work with my hands since he had every intention of seeing to it that I would have a choice about it. I held the job that summer (and two more) though I neither loved the work nor hated its drudgery. It was only—especially that year—a passage, and if I ever thought of quitting it was only after a day when the wood and the sun and my own hands fought me, a passing thought, one I would scarcely recall in the subdued air of the next morning. And if I had yearned to quit, if I ever happened to think it was my right, I would not have given in to that urge, partly out of fear of not living up to my father's version of me, partly because I knew it was a passage and that stepping out of it would put me smack against a

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reality I wasn’t ready yet to face.

But Alex had quit or been fired three times in three months; I have no idea what his father had to say about it. Rex was a big, slope-shouldered Texan whose discomfort at being stranded in New England for twenty years was dulled by bourbon and by the long-term lethargy of a dulling job. He probably said very little. The fact was, Alex’s mother kept the family afloat. She ran a travel agency in Fitchburg and had a solid grip on the business-trip market, occasionally lapsing into guided tours she directed herself. She was not exactly a tiny woman, but the clarity of her features and the insistent Old Boston snap of her voice made the contrast with her husband all the more glaring. Divorce was still rare enough then to be considered evidence of some significant failure, so people like Alex’s folks mostly stayed together and let their fires smolder.

For a few days the previous spring, Alex and I had been home from school at the same time. Though it was called spring break, there were still islands of corn snow in the yards and the sky hung low over our heads with a terrific dreariness. His mother had taken a group of company wives to Mexico City (or maybe Martinique—someplace with sun), which left Rex nominally in command of the household. I was there late that Saturday, engrossed in serious talk with Alex. Rex appeared now and then in a worn path between the door to the room he called his office and the bar at the end of the kitchen counter, looking up from his slouch as he passed by, ready it seemed to share some drinking man’s wisdom with us, but settling for a soft nod of the head, acknowledgment of how far our downbeat presence was from any true sons of his, red-blooded Texas boys he could throw his arms around and bullshit with all night long.

The reason for our conference was that Alex had dropped out of school and needed my help in explaining it. The truth was that he just couldn’t cope with it anymore but the truth didn’t sound like an explanation. Though he might have just gone in that night and said it plainly to his father—who surely would have recognized a kindred outlook in his son—there was no tradition of such talk in that family; besides, Rex’s sympathy would have carried no weight.

We were huddled on the couch near the kitchen’s open fireplace, talking the problem around in circles, when the night took a new turn. The door slammed open and Alex’s mother appeared, American Tourister in hand, her gray-
flecked ringlets drooping and wet, a pained yet eager look on her face. Without a word to us she marched into the office where Rex had whiled away a major chunk of his married life lost in *Shotgun News*. I remember perfectly what she called him: *You slug*. She elaborated in detail, her voice prodding him like a sharp stick. He had failed to leave a car for her at the airport as specified in careful arrangements. He had no doubt let it slip his mind. Alex watched the sputtering fire, head on knees. From the other room Rex offered no defense.

"Listen," I told Alex, lamely, "you'll come up with something."

Alex kept his mouth shut and I left wondering what he'd say when he couldn't put it off any longer, how he could make it look like something he had no responsibility for. I envied him neither his mother's angry attention, nor his father's sloppy charade of surprise and disappointment, nor the understanding, surely taking shape in his mind, that he was—in one rattled embodiment—*both* of them. In the end, he returned to school that spring, finished the year and waited for the counselor to do the dirty work.

You might imagine Alex asking me into his plans, the corner of his mouth squeezing into a look that's less than a smile, the look of a card player who can no longer quite hide his estimation of the night's luck. Or picture us as we circle the park discussing in the privacy of the Mustang such details as timing, gaining access to the understructure, whether gasoline or kerosene would do the better job. Or hear Alex sharing his misgivings with me. It would be wrong: Alex said nothing.

In fact, for several weeks I hardly saw him. Then one night Owen and I drove out to Alex's, accompanied by Jody, who sprawled in back, filling the car with her mentholated smoke and her obscenely comic commentary on what she saw beyond the window.

Alex was down in the shed, his guitar so loud he didn't hear us come. Jody stopped at the door, which had a sort of porthole window, and waved to us. "Look, look!" she said.

Alex was alone, the guitar slung below his belt where he beat at it, stiff-armed, savage. He'd taken off his shirt and we could see the sores on his back as he humped and shook in front of the wavy mirror on the wall. His left hand had stopped making chords and was gripping the guitar as if it were a wild hose.
Jody started laughing her coarse husky laugh, the braids flopping across her chest like two weathered rope ends. She made her face long and serious and shook her hips like Alex. Owen and I couldn’t help laughing too, though in a moment I turned away and walked to the car, halfway ashamed of myself.

It was several summers later (at a party before her wedding, both of us lit by champagne and the pleasure of the occasion) that I learned what had given Jody’s mockery of Alex its edge. Of all of us, Jody—at fifteen, then sixteen—was the only one who took her sexuality with anything like an open mind, the only one who really enjoyed it. Unlike her brother who was habitually cautious, ever-aware of his role as the oldest male in the family, she dealt with her appetites and curiosities with a bright willfulness, which had once, earlier that summer, brought her into an encounter with Alex, a walk on the ridge overlooking town, which in turn had progressed from two near-siblings shooting the breeze on a warm summer night, to Jody’s sudden desire to lie down with him in the long grass. Alex had failed her. He had fidgeted atop her, half-dressed, antic and humorless for a long time, then red-faced and groaning (in fact, an exact replica of the act he was staging for the benefit of the shed’s mirror, so that Jody’s imitation of him was not as he was in the shed, but as he had been, up there in the grass with her). He’d stood abruptly then, crying, and run from her, down the hill toward the lights of the houses, leaving Jody to pick up his shirt and one of his boots and walk slowly after him—though not for a while, she said, because it was a nice starry night and she was in no particular hurry.

Then it was Labor Day weekend, the end of summer, though that year it came in the midst of a fierce hot spell. For days there had been no trace of the wind that came in from the Atlantic, moderating the afternoons, cooling the evenings. Saturday was my last day of work. I said my simple farewells, came home, showered, letting the water run cold on my sunburn, changed into fresh jeans and sat on the back porch with my father listening to the Red Sox game on his transistor radio. He had taken to offering me a Ballantine Ale now and then, so I drank with him, the long branches of the willow hanging still, a fragile dusty feeling in the light around us. It was the second game of a twi-
nighter and the Sox were already falling behind.

"They'll pull it out," I said.

"Those heartbreakers," my father said.

All summer I had worked and cleaned up and gone out, and for once, at the end of it, I felt no restlessness. It was a happy moment, the kind you wish you could seed your life with, but which is instead an extract, something distilled and rare.

Into that soft hour Alex appeared around the corner of the garage, hands in pockets.

"Well, Alex," my father said. "How's the world treating you?" his irony subdued by the time of day to a point below Alex's threshold. Actually, my father had never cared for Alex, often referring to him as *that jerk*.

"OK, I guess," Alex said, standing awkwardly between us.

My father nodded. A burst of cheering rose from the radio then died away but he seemed to pay no attention.

"You boys have hot dates tonight?" my father asked.

"There's a dance down at the Park," Alex said.

I looked at my father. "I better go," I said, though I could have stayed there easily enough, and in a way I wish I had.

My father nodded again as I stood. He touched my arm and said, "Have a good time," then added, "Use your smarts."

Alex did have a hot date. Once we were on the road his excitement began to show. He drove slower than he had to, the Mustang cruising along in restrained bursts as he talked, not at me but toward the windshield. We climbed the hill that separated our town from Whalom, and from its sloping ridge we saw the last color of sunset smeared across the horizon, and below it in a bowl, the park's flashy neon, reflections of each trapped together on the surface of the lake.

Her name was Fran and she was a secretary at the Ford dealership. Twice in the last week, Alex proclaimed, he had aced out all the salesmen for her attention. He'd taken her to the drive-in movie.

"She know how old you are?" I asked him.

"Sure, hell," Alex said. Then in a minute he said, "What difference does it make?"

He downshifted past the driving range and rounded the corner that brought
us to the park, slowed at the traffic circle by the roller coaster, holding his hands together at the top of the wheel, peering up at the string of cars rattling by above us.

He said something like, "This could be the night." It was the kind of statement he often made, vague enough in its promise to mean everything or nothing. Or maybe he didn't say anything just then and what I remember is the peculiar expectant way he seemed: cool on the outside, jazzed up inside.

We drove past the park to the house where Alex’s date lived with another girl. Cars were pulled up on the lawn and music poured through the screen door. We waded into the middle of a party, a few couples dancing in the pastel beaverboard living room, others straggling into the kitchen drinking beer from plastic mugs. I trailed Alex through the house as he searched for a familiar face, then out the back door where he found Fran's roommate talking with a guy straddling a big, low-slung motorcycle he had cranked up to a high whine.

"Where's Fran?" Alex said.
The girl looked at him distantly, trying to hear.
"Fran?" Alex said.
"She isn't here?" the girl said. "She was here before."
The bike's owner eased off the handle. He seemed to be listening for something and paid us no attention.
"She was going to the dance with me," Alex said.
"Yeah," the girl said. "She went to the dance."
"She was going with me," he said. "I was going to pick her up."
"Oh," Fran's roommate said. "I don't know then. Maybe she was going to meet you."
"Sure, yeah," Alex said.
The girl smiled. "There's a keg in the sink," she said.
Alex walked off, not back through the house but around the outside, scraping through some dark bushes to where the Mustang was parked. He got in and sat behind the wheel as if that was the place to do his best thinking. He smoked one of his Luckies and said nothing for a minute, then flicked the burning cigarette out into the darkness and revved up his engine. As we pulled out to go looking for Fran, the roommate shot past on the back of the motorcycle, her bare arms clutched around the man's body, her hair
streaming out behind her in our headlights like a vapor trail.

They had blocked off the street, above the clam bar on one end, at the traffic circle by the roller coaster at the other. The band played from a flat bed parked outside Roseland, a group from Boston who'd made it big enough to have a hit record everyone remembers, but not so big as to escape playing fairs and street dances. They were bored and buried their boredom under volume, which made it so they couldn't hear each other, but nobody seemed to mind. A ring of people stood in front of the stage, two or three deep. Dancers spilled out into the road in either direction and behind them others milled along the sidewalk at the edge of the lights.

Roseland was dark upstairs. A bouncer stood in the doorway of the bar below, and you could see past him to a few of the regular Saturday night patrons holding their beer cans at their bellies as they checked the action outside for a moment, then drifted back to the dark interior.

Alex went about looking for his date.

"So what's she look like?" I asked.

Alex became very serious. "Real good-looking," he said. "Sort of dark red hair. Looks kind of like Ann-Margret only with glasses."

We split off through the crowd. I worked my way to the back, hoping I wouldn't see anyone of that description. The last thing I wanted was to tell him I'd seen his hot date being led away by one of the RYDERS, or to pretend I'd seen nothing and watch Alex go on making a fool of himself. The crowd was mostly strangers, dotted by a few faces I knew, people I saw that summer along the edge of the park and never again. No Fran.

Once in a while I could see Alex skirting the ring of dancers, stopping and squinting then moving off against the grain. More than ever the night seemed like a maze, and I marvel now that we could go into it each time with our hope unblunted, believing we'd suddenly see its design and make it through to the far side.

Just before the band broke, I ran into Jody who had shed a blind date, and we danced. She looked wonderful and I had a strong pang of wishing we weren't so much like family. Still, it was nice holding her in the midst of the noise and the drifting salty smells. I realized that the longing I had felt so often that summer was quiet; a peace came over me, a return to the feeling I'd sensed earlier that night sitting with my father (in the gloaming, as he called it), amid
the clipped grass and the soft straining of the lawn chairs and the quick lacework of the swallows above us. Even if the night had not turned out as it did—under the spell of another mood entirely—I might have remembered it anyway.

When the music stopped I could no longer see Alex. Jody took my arm and walked with me up the blacktop to the midway and sat on a bench opposite the shooting gallery. The families were mostly gone at that hour, the crowd reduced to packs of boys in jeans and T-shirts, to couples drifting from one attraction to the next, to a few older men wandering wherever there seemed to be something going on.

Jody told me what a cretin her date had been. I sympathized. Then she stood puckishly and said, "Aren't you going to take me on the roller coaster?" I didn't want to. For one thing, just the mention of it made me think of Alex again and with that came a shot of dread. I would've liked to have pulled Jody back to the bench and told her about him, but telling it would have conjured an image of him I knew would be wrong. For another thing, I didn't want to admit to her that in all my seventeen years, I'd never been on the roller coaster and was honestly reluctant to do so now.

"Come on," Jody said. "Don't be an old fart."

As we stood in line I heard the band start up again. I hoped Alex had given up his search and had gravitated to the front of the flatbed where he could study the guitar player's hands. It was a reassuring thought. But as we moved onto the raised platform I caught sight of him darting across the midway. He ran from ride to ride, lurking at the exit gates, shading his eyes as he scanned the seats for Fran, his date, who was surely not in any of them.

Jody pulled my arm and we locked ourselves behind the bar and began to move up the long measured ascent away from Alex. Those moments remain an emblem of that night: the slow tick of the gears, the fading of heat and noise as we climbed, and the sight of Alex, seen over my shoulder. He'd come to rest on the blacktop below, arms dangling at his sides, the people from the last ride drifting clear of him so he stood alone, numb-looking, at the base of the roller coaster as we pulled steadily away. And then the corner, the tilt, the beginning of the momentum that made everything run together.

I didn't see him later. Jody and I danced, our feet scuffing lazily across the sandy tar until it was late, the crowd thinned to a few dozen. The park began to
close. I offered Jody a ride home, then remembered I didn’t have a car. We walked along the lakefront, past the barricades to the parking area outside Mendelssohn’s where Alex had left the Mustang. I halfway expected to find it gone, but it was there, in the shadows, and no sign of Alex—except the trunk was standing open.

So we waited a few minutes, talking lightly, leaning against the car, only a few feet from where Alex and I had watched the lovers that day. The air hung perfectly dead. Jody moved in front of me and reached her hands in back of my neck and rubbed gently. The music had finished as we’d walked, supplanted by the tinny echo of loudspeakers within the park, and now they cut off and there were only a few distant car horns and the sporadic clap of doors and the ringing of gates shutting for the night. She kissed me. After what went on between Jody and Alex on the hill, you might think she was trying to stir me into action, but it was not that at all—only a wonderful, time-filling kiss that meant nothing.

Then there were shouts and we broke from one another and looked back along the curved shore of the lake and saw a plume of smoke rising into the lights.

“Something’s burning!” Jody said, pulling away from Alex’s car. She ran ahead, but I hesitated, confused for a moment as I stared across the road at the roller coaster. It loomed up like a huge bulwark, its white struts glowing with a dull luminance. The fire was elsewhere, two hundred yards further down.

I caught up with Jody and we ran together to where the dance had been and saw that it was Roseland burning. Already flames had eaten a hole in the roof and were leaping out in jagged bursts. Park employees ran down the blacktop runway and gathered in the street, joining the stunned beer drinkers who had hurried out of the bar and others like us who had not quite left. The upstairs windows filled with color as a section of ceiling caved in, then the glass suddenly blackened and imploded violently. In the distance now we could hear the whine of approaching sirens.

Quickly the rest of the roof was burning. As the heat grew, we backed away and waited against the railing by the water. Jody was transfixed, her mouth open but soundless for once. All around us people were shaking their heads. No wonder, they said. What a firetrap. Deprived of its dancers and twirling mirrors it did seem rickety, more a decrepit warehouse than a place to
celebrate.

I left her and tried to find my friend among the assembled faces, and having no luck there, backed farther away and made for the car. It was only then I saw him, collapsed against the hurricane fence, head down as if he'd been in a fight.

"Alex?" I said.

I expected to see blood streaming from his nose and lips, but when he looked up I saw he was sobbing. As I knelt I was overpowered by the smell of gasoline on him. I didn’t know what to think. It seemed for a moment that he might actually be responsible for what had happened. But it made no sense to me. I drew back, shaken. His face was ugly as he cried, barely recognizable.

"What did you do?" I said. "Tell me."

His shoulders shook, then were still. The streaks on his face shone in the fire's quivering light.

"I didn't do it," Alex said. "I didn't do anything."

The fire trucks came to a gritty squalling stop in front of Roseland.

"Alex," I said, touching him. "Tell me the truth."

He looked into my eyes for a second, miserably, then past me at the halo of flames.

"Go away," he said.

And I did.

A year later we barely knew each other. I have no good sense of the grown man Alex became, about whom only rumors reach me, and none of them decent. I remember him as he was that night, at seventeen: freshly brutalized by a glimpse at what his plans would come to. He had given me the truth: he'd done nothing at all. The dancehall had burned to the ground, but not by his hand, instead a victim of tattered wiring and neglect.

So I see how the fire mocked him that night. I see him crouched in the hot, litter-strewn crawl space under the roller coaster, one hour, then two, waiting for his moment to come to him. The two tartan Thermos jugs (hidden earlier in the Mustang's trunk) lay empty beside him, the gasoline splashed on the undersides of the old supports, and some on his jeans. I see how he took the new butane lighter from his breast pocket, where it said Alex in red script, and flipped it from hand to hand. He could hear the timbers straining overhead, the last cars roaring through the maze of track and wood, the screams bursting into the night, and then the silence, in which he could feel his heart beating right up in his throat as it finally dawned on him that either way, he couldn't win.
FEET

for all the others

Where I lived they painted footprints on the sidewalks. Where people had been hit jaywalking, a line of white shoes would take a few steps and suddenly stagger into the street and stop at the single white X.

Where does everyone go when they leave and forget to say a conventional goodbye? It doesn’t take a genius to know you bury a big dressed-up piece of meat and later on you can look and see dirty clothes and a few bones.

This was the lesson for all of us to be careful and follow the rules. I never wanted my name signed with footprints and an X. Now, these new ones show up. They walk around all night looking for people they left behind.

Last spring, on a picnic supposed to renew what had gotten old and hateful, we saw a single print, a big one, in the center of a pasture. It was as if someone had taken a giant one-legged hop and landed once in the middle. Then we realized it was one of those soft spots in the earth where people go when they are tired and don’t like each other anymore.
We tried remembering
about roots, mushrooms—all over
the place, but which ones?—
leaves, feces, fire

made from damp wood.
We breathed that smoke
as if it would bring back the dead.
Left emptied, our hands

fumbled for the braille
on runes chiseled on rocks
wedged like markers
in crevices high above the water line.

You came for me in sleep
prodding me with your stories:
listen for crows
when they reel from the branches

of crowned birch. Their calls
lead you to hidden fields
of berries just ripe. Cross
with salamanders the long breast

of road in darkness. Gold stripes
rippling down their backs
turn incandescent, smouldering
with the force of birth.

It may take everything you have
to reach for that.—
Though I knew next morning
we would not make it through.
The time for castrating young boar pigs was very noisy. All the squealing and pushing by the young pigs as they tried to get away from the men who were catching them. And then the louder squealing when the testicles were being cut out.

Even though the squealing was terrible, the dog always stood by to eat the testicles as the men threw them away.

When the castrating was getting started, the boys stayed away because the loud squealing got on their nerves. But they knew the dog was in the hoghouse eating testicles, and this made them so curious that after a while they would go and watch.

The dog stood next to the pen waiting for a flying testicle that the men threw to him. He never missed. He made it look as easy as someone who is good at catching popcorn in his mouth.

Later when the castrating was over and the squealing had stopped, the boys tried to get the dog to catch dog biscuits the way he caught testicles. But the dog missed the dog biscuits most of the time.

Dinner music! shouted the oldest boy, and all the boys started squealing like pigs. The dog looked at them as if they were crazy, but he did start catching the dog biscuits. Certainly not because he was hungry, but probably just to go along with the boys' game.
THE REST OF MY LIFE

This photo carries sound or at least one sound. Ernesto's set his raccoon overcoat down by the liquor cart, and Jasmine's got her foot on top like a big game hunter. Her own left hand's another kill—draped like a stole over Mrs. Visconti's shoulder. Even Randolph's smiling, as if he doesn't mind or doesn't notice or enjoys being riddled by light bounced off the cocktail glasses as solid as artillery ricochet. And you remember how infrequently Randolph smiled. But here he's smiling. We were all so happy—the trophy, of course, and the first green April lacework, and more, though even then it was inexpressible. Anyway, maybe Randolph's not smiling—the light pretty much eats everything. We'd never meet as a group again. The clearest thing's the corner. I don't even know the man in the corner. Everyone's actually blurry but him. It might have been Veronica's overcoat—you remember Veronica's overcoat? Everybody's smeared, like white noise. I think I'll live the rest of my life with that man in the corner, his fist so sharp as it pounds on the table—a gavel, its sound.
Angels never wept, but rose
quickly back to their places, afraid of being damned,
and feeling too guilty to say much about it.
I was with them then, starting a prayer,
but they were tired of being beautiful at the time
and hung still like so many stars. The earth
repeated our quiet to itself a few times,
then suddenly went on dancing, like a speck in the eye.
There was no pity, and no doubt,
and when the dying came to us, in thousands, we turned them back.

I have never spoken of how the angels
dropped their gowns and disappeared like snow,
sick of their mourning. Breathing, holding their breaths,
they went down by themselves this time, looking for a man,
came back alone and would not speak.
I knew them well enough, but never asked
if the stories were all true. They left soon, acting sorrowful.
I know anyway that that day nothing shook:
only a few leaves, as usual, left the branch.
AMEN

The clothes of a scarecrow
shake in a wind and are lifted.
Dryer than sunset, scattered and lost in a field.
Likewise, I'm shook up by the wind, and walk into it,
street after street in this rain. Like a prayer,
I follow someone I've never met, a few glances back.
But I just spit in the street and keep walking,
my raincoat stuck to my skin.
And the blocks fall by me like flowers in a parade,
and the windows fog up and the faces of old women vanish.
Nothing but me, singing the saddest song I can think of.
Amen to the wind and the cracked cup of my hands.
Amen to the rooms and the rented women,
amen also to the angels, fluffing their wings.
ON HER FIRST TRIP, AN AIRLINE STEWARDESS STEPS OUT ON A BALCONY

She stands in her slip,  
a white figure cleaving the dark.  
Washed stockings swim from her fingers  
loose on the muscles of breeze.  
Broad and so clear, her face bends its stare  
to the light-fringed coiling of palms;  
looks away, dizzy, over streetlamps  
blinding as mirrors before the wild growth  
that mimes the wind, trying to talk.  
The grey sliver might be a beach,  
its chime regular as the crickets.  
But not having an ocean's sound to compare,  
she hears the ocean and longs to go swimming,  
longs to go out. She's arrived in the dark,  
knows no one who lives in these houses  
smeared and grey by the lamps  
they burn to keep away thieves;  
nor that the ocean is two rivers meeting,  
the muddy port at the end of the streets.  
She stares at the lamps that float over the water,  
beyond the white furls that keep coming,  
without coming close. Wonders what could float.  
The silky trees churn,  
hump over each other on the floodlit lawn.  
She goes inside, washes her face.  
Tomorrow, she promises the perfect mirror,  
she will go to the beach. While all night  
worn men lean against the blazing stores,  
ever more than half asleep.
"PERFECT LANDSCAPES, RICH BRANCHES OF BLOSSOM"

It is your world to make and you choose to fill rooms with necessary objects: a Chinese vase, a painting of a woman arranging flowers by moonlight, a book of poetry by Basho.

A rose leans, revealing its moist stamen within a halo of fragrance. Why not a Spanish guitar leaning in a sunny corner? Why not music: Villa Lobos or Rampal and his sentimental flute?

Your women are French, Oriental, your men: artists, dancers, poets. Don't you see? Even love is a luxury. And now you have cactus blooming in the sun room, an oriole chirping from the flowering plum.

Someone is quoting Garcia Lorca. A man wearing white silk, a woman in a dress of pale cotton: they sit at a wicker table, on wicker chairs, looking away, thinking in image, not word.

In this luxury of sun they hold crystal goblets filled with a glittering rose or thin blood. They kiss,
the nature of their desire revealed
by his restraint, her surrender.

Later, when they make love,
she recalls Nijinsky, turning,
his eyes, his shoulders, softening.
He thinks of Degas: his girlish ballerina
practicing: imagining each smooth stroke
along the flushed inner thigh.
TAKING WHAT IS MINE

From my mother
I take the long bandages
empty of sleep. From my father
the shotgun and calendar
to sit with the different moons
rising behind the barn. From my twin brother
I take a knife and from my little sister
a flashlight to look down the throat
of a cow, bawling
on the dark highway.

When it is cold
and I am the only witness
to the murder of crows,
I take their black feathers, bury them
deeper under the snow.
At night I return home
without knocking
and the whole family is hunched over,
single file. They are sneaking outside
in their warm slippers,
not one of them waving good-bye.
CADILLAC

We kept a rabbit named for a car
and a car named for an old woman
while the old woman down the road
kept thirty horses under the cedar trees.
We gave her squash, she gave us manure;
the squash grew thick, honeybees
staggering from the blossom tongues
pollen-covered and a little drunk.
The rabbit sprawled white and drowsy
in the dusky light of the grass,
and the year passed flower
to flower. Trees grew close
together, the blossoms closed by dark.
All things were fragile with us then.
On the shaggy trunk we loved
there was a wound in the wood
that bark closed over and concealed.
In a small window  
at the soft lip of the prairie,  
Vachel Lindsay in a torn undershirt  
looks out on the long brown grass  
of Emporia Kansas,  
his beautiful head bowed.  
The knotted legs that bore him  
from Illinois to New Mexico  
in that scorcher of 1912,  
hang like two eels  
from a frayed line.

That afternoon he read  
from the gymnasium floor,  
rows of future teachers  
bobbing to every line,  
booming out the choruses  
of populism and pentecost.  
The portentous words  
swaying through stalks  
of their youthful crop.

Sitting on the edge of the bed,  
Vachel Lindsay holds out his hands  
toward the faint light of a field  
harvesting some five miles away.  
He can not sleep  
for the gathering of locusts outside,  
but waits for their wings  
to bear him away  
through the dark whistling air.
SANTA ELENA CROSSING

Señor Luna, the language has failed me.
I cannot tell you how you carried me those mornings
to the front of your leaky rowboat,
my seven-year-old’s hands clinging to your shirt.
When we appeared in the shade of these cliffs,
you’d call to my father, el Pientor,
then laugh your deep laugh as you set me in the boat
and pulled us across the muddy river
past the dark line on your trousers.

The pictures he drew of your children
as you made them sit still on the rotted bench
must still lie in your dark, square house
from the day your wife placed them
between the folds of a blanket.
On our way to see crazy Jesús
she warned us he was evil, stole goats at night,
hung the skulls in his house. All day
he rocked in the shade of an ocotillo
and spat in the sand. She never talked to us again.

Sometimes we brought oranges.
Now I bring news I cannot say
to you, that my father, el Pientor,
has not painted in years. In Santa Elena
crazy Jesús is dead, burned out of his house
so long ago, black soot around his door
is almost worn away by wind.
In front of your house, your wife
sits in his chair skinning rabbits.
And you, Gilberto Luna, pulling me in your rowboat,
you don’t know that I have come back
to see the places my father painted,
to ride in your leaky boat.
But once he painted you from memory:
bent over this boat in your wide hat,
bailing water with a rusted can, the wind
lifting the tails of your yellow shirt.
YES,

the white estrellas at Las Casas were magnificent;  
red meadow  
and noon-time stars, and the wild, blood-  
streaked mums  
waiting in silence; the short-stemmed sun  
was fat  
with shade; a common cardinal whirred up up up  
from the  
crimson cover along the border of the red-  
haired corn.  

Did you signal, beckon me as we picked the wild-  
flowers?  
Was I slow? What could I give you? Listen, it is  
better  
without touch, better to just sit in each other’s  
hearts,  
fragrant, vased fresh. Sun kisses estrella and  
moves on.  

The planned furrow’s dark and wormful, dull with  
love of  
rusting vegetables. Far love is much better; we can  
be like  
two blood-red birds racing up up up to burst  
together  
into that thin air crammed with figs and fat  
promises  
chameleons search for endlessly, gorge them-  
selves on.
PRESLEY PILGRIMS

R.C.A.'s mascot, Nipper, in the corner of the Elvis room at the American Sound Studio, where Elvis made many recordings. In 1961 Elvis sang "Hound Dog" to Nipper in the Hawaii Charity Show. The Presley Pilgrims come from all over the country to visit with Elvis, and his memorials. Nipper is one of the many stops on their tours.
A California fan holding the gun Elvis used in the movie Charro
"As the owner of a TCB* thunder bolt pendant, you have a kinship with those who proudly claim to be a friend of Elvis Presley."

*Taking Care of Business
A regular at the Hickory Log, a restaurant across from Graceland where Elvis fans gather.
A woman wearing an Elvis pendant and belt buckle at the gates of Graceland
Large man and small dog reading the inscription on Elvis' grave
Family group waiting for the gates of Graceland to open
"How are the friends back home going to know we were really here unless you take a picture of me by the pool?"
We didn’t know anybody. I was waiting to start a new teaching job in Seabrook, Texas. Right outside of Houston, near NASA. Doris had taken a job at Grumman, in personnel. She had personnel experience. In Michigan, she had worked at Chrysler.

We had been in Texas for five weeks. It was August and hot. Every weekend the freeway to the beaches in Galveston was packed.

I wasn't doing anything. Browsing through textbooks, mainly just waiting. I was going to be teaching eighth and ninth graders American Civilization. I had been to the school: it was clean and new, with large playing fields behind. I was very excited. Seabrook was booming and there was lots of room for advancement.

Then one Saturday I saw Doris walking out of a record store with another man. He was a big, beefy guy with a mustache that drooped over the ends of his mouth and made him look sort of like a Mexican bandit, or a disc jockey. They were walking slowly and he had his arm around her.

This had happened before. Just once, right after we had moved to Michigan, six years ago. For a while things were real bad between us, but we got over it, with time. I think, in the long run, it even made us closer. It’s funny how things like that will draw you closer together.

I have to admit, Doris is an attractive woman. Not flashy, just nice. Athletic. She likes to swim and run and bowl, and she was glad to come to Texas, because of the weather. Her body’s trim, and she likes to wear clothes that show it. Pull-over shirts, slacks, things like that. She’s always watched her weight.

I knew what was going on, but I didn’t say anything about it all week. The last time, in Michigan, I had handled the situation the wrong way. There had been a lot of resentment and hidden anger. This time, I wanted to do it differently. I wanted to get it all out in the open.

I was hoping nobody’s feelings would get hurt.

The next Saturday I followed them. It wasn’t hard. Doris left her car in a crowded shopping center parking lot and got in with him. He was driving a Rabbit, with California license plates.
They drove straight to his place, a brand-new condominium on a street called Sunshine Terrace. There was no grass in front of them, just rectangles of red clay between the driveways, and metal signs that said “For Sale,” and “Now Leasing.” In front of some of them were little trees braced with wires and wooden supports. Not all of the units were finished. In a few of them I could see carpenters and painters putting on the finishing details.

I parked at the end of the street and watched them walk up the drive to the front door. They didn’t look around or anything. They weren’t nervous at all. Funny how people can do something like that and not be nervous about it.

I sat in my car, with the air-conditioner running. I knew this was bad for the car, but it was hot as hell and I was nervous and sweating a lot. I didn’t know what to do. I kept changing the radio stations and bouncing my heels on the floorboard. I never took my eyes off the front door. I don’t know what I was thinking about. I guess I was wondering what they were doing in there, wondering if he had a water bed or something like that, and if they were doing all those things you read about in dirty magazines. I know how some people are really weird about sex, how they like things that they can’t tell their husbands about. I was wondering if Doris was like that. It seemed to me that we had a decent enough sex life, it wasn’t anything great, but it was all right.

I sat in that car and got more and more nervous. After about fifteen minutes, I couldn’t take it anymore. I was going mad, sitting in that car, thinking about what my wife and that man were doing in that place. I got out of the car and walked up to the front door. I still didn’t know what I was going to do.

Like I said, it was hot, and I was real nervous, and by the time I got there, I was really sweating. My shirt was stuck to my stomach, and against my back, and I was wet beneath each arm. There were pine trees across the street, but the ones that would have cast shade over the condominiums had been cut down. You could still see the stumps in the clay, flat circular discs that looked out of place and sick.

There was music coming from behind the door. I waited for a while before I rang the bell. It sounded like Frank Sinatra, somebody like that. For a minute, I thought about just turning around and going home. But then, when she walked in, what would there be to say? I couldn’t think of any other way to
do it. I've always been a person to get right to the point, to not put things off. You know what I mean?

I like to think that I run my own life.

I decided to get it over with. I rang the bell. If it meant the end of my marriage, then I figured I would just have to deal with that when it happened.

It's hard to think clearly about the end of your marriage. These days, marriage is a calculated risk, that's about the only way to look at it. You just waste time worrying about it. At least, that's the way I see it. And after all, who ever heard of a perfect marriage? They all have their ups and downs, right? Everybody knows that.

No one came to the door. I could still hear the music. I thought I saw a curtain move, but I wasn't too sure. I was very anxious and I could have been seeing a lot of things that weren't happening. What I really wanted was to talk to somebody. Go to a bar, have some drinks, and talk. See what a friend would do in the same spot. But I didn't know anyone. I didn't even know any good bars.

A red Oldsmobile slowed down at the curb. There was a man driving, and he leaned over and began pointing at the condominiums. A woman with dark glasses sat beside him. She was nodding her head. They stopped and got out. On the side of the car was a plastic sign held to the car with magnets. It said, "Town and Country Realtors."

The man had a white name plate on his coat. They went up the walk in front of the next unit.

"How ya' doing?" he asked. He had a key in his hand with a big, yellow key ring.

"Fine," I said. "Just fine."

What else was I supposed to say?

When they went in the next apartment, I rang the bell again. The music was still going. Then someone turned it off and I heard voices.

I thought one of them was Doris's, but actually I wasn't sure. For a second I thought that maybe there were more than just the two of them in there. That was really bad. It's strange, after seven years of marriage, hearing a woman's voice on the other side of a locked door, and thinking it's your wife's, and not being sure. I was hoping that it wasn't hers, that it wasn't her that I had seen walking up the drive, that this was all some kind of joke, me standing on the
porch of some condominium in a strange town, with pine trees at my back and five yacht brokers not half a mile away, ringing a door bell to talk to my wife about what? About something. Hell, I didn't even know what I was going to say. It wasn't like I was going to punch the guy out or anything. I wasn't going to drag her from the house. I figured if she wanted to stay with the guy, okay. I guess.

Some things you just can't figure out. You can think about them forever, and it won't do any good.

The door opened. The guy with the mustache was standing there with his hand on the knob. His shirt was opened partway and I could see all this chest hair. There was a bracelet on his wrist, made of silver and turquoise, a big heavy thing, like you see in Arizona and New Mexico.

I could feel the cold air pouring out the front door.

"Why don't we talk?" I asked. I shrugged, palms up, I suppose to show him that I wasn't interested in violence.

At first he didn't say anything. He was a big guy: I could see where his thighs strained against his pants, and his stomach bulged over his belt.

"Okay," he said, finally, after looking at me. He was nervous, too. I could tell by the way he kept blinking. But I was glad he wasn't going to play any games, like what do you want and who are you, that sort of thing. I guess he knew he was caught.

He motioned me into the living room. Doris was sitting on a couch in the center of the room. She was eating potato chips. There was a drink in her hand.

"I'll get you a drink," the man said. He went into the kitchen and left us alone.

Doris wouldn't look at me. She kept staring at the green curtains which were drawn across the front window. Every now and then she leaned forward and put a potato chip in her mouth.

"Don't be mad," she said. She was still looking at the curtains. She had picked up a video cassette tape from the coffee table and was turning it over and over in her hands. There was a picture of Paul Newman on it.

"I'm sorry, Wayne."

I could see her throat vibrating. Her skin had turned pale and chalky, and her mouth hung open slightly.
I felt awful, like I shouldn't have come, like I had made a terrible mistake. I wondered if maybe there was some other way.

Things change when something like this happens.

I sat down in a canvas chair. I could hear him making my drink in the kitchen. The room was cold and there wasn't much furniture in it. There were three boxes from Bekins under a chandelier in the dining area, and in the living area, where we were, there was just a couch and two chairs. That and all sorts of electronic stuff. One wall was lined with machines, all of them on the floor. There was a big Sony TV, a video tape recorder, a stereo set, and a home computer from Radio Shack. Cassette tapes and records were stacked in a corner. Wires ran all over the place.

The man came back in with my drink. "Rum and Tab," he said. "That okay? . . . it's all I've got."

"Sure."

We were all nervous, drinking fast. I reached over and took a handful of potato chips.

"Well," he said. He was standing in front of the TV, with one hand in his pocket, the other holding his drink. There were two pens in his shirt pocket. He wore black loafers, with rubber soles.

"Just move in?" I asked. I felt like I had to say something.

"Transferred. From California."

"NASA?"

"Grumman."

"Yeah. What kind of thing do you do?"

"Research chemist . . . work with lubrication systems. Solid lubricants."

Doris finished her drink.

"How about another?" he asked.

I finished off mine and held up my glass. "Thanks."

He went back into the kitchen, and we heard the refrigerator door open, and ice cubes dropping into the glasses.

"Well, what about it?" I asked.

"I met him in the cafeteria. He has two children, Wayne. His wife wouldn't come with him. She wouldn't leave San Jose." Doris looked tired, confused. She had a potato chip in her hand and she was tapping against the table with it.

"Doris, this has happened before."
"I know. I just..."
"I need to know, Doris. I guess I shouldn't have come in here like this, but I need to know. We need some kind of understanding. There should be more... more openness."
She kept looking at the table, tapping on it. The potato chip crumbled.
"I need to know," I said.
"What?"
"I mean, what now? Is this going to go on? What?"
"You mean where do we stand?" Her eyes were red. It was the rum. She usually doesn't drink anything but wine.

It was cold in there. The air-conditioner must have been set on sixty, and it was blowing right on me. He came back and handed us our drinks.
"I'm sorry," he said. "Let me tell you, I'm sorry. I don't know what happened. I got here and... you see, I've got a family. In California, San Jose. I never expected this. I didn't plan it. I didn't plan it at all."
"I'm sorry too," I said. "About all of this. I just had to know. Come to some sort of understanding. I can't put things off."
"My wife wouldn't come here. She lived in Houston once, when she was married before. She said it was awful. The heat. But it was more than that. I know."
"It wasn't anything, was it Ray?" Doris asked. "I mean, it wasn't serious, was it?"
"No. I guess... it wasn't serious."
"It was like we were scared or something, Wayne. Honest."
"But that's what I'm for, Doris. That's what I'm for. I'm your husband."
"I'm sorry."
Ray walked to the curtains and looked out. Then he walked back to where he had been standing, against the wall with all the equipment. "I don't want this to end your marriage. That would be terrible."
He had one hand on the TV set. Nobody spoke for awhile. I looked at him and I could see that if he shaved off his mustache he would look like a pudgy kid.
"No," I said. "It would be."
I finished my drink. Doris held her glass against her forehead with both hands.
"Why don't we go home?" I suggested.
Ray coughed. "Why don't you stay? I could get some more rum. There's a liquor store in the shopping center. We could talk, watch HBO."
Doris knocked a video cassette tape off the coffee table with her knee. I picked it up and put it back. It was the one with Paul Newman on it.
"No. Thanks, but we'd better go." I helped Doris up and we started for the door.
"Are you sure?"
We went out into the bright afternoon sun. "Thanks for the drinks."
"Anytime."
I drove north, toward La Porte. I didn't feel like going home. Our apartment was a small place, and the window looked over a K-Mart parking lot. The air-conditioner didn't work right and it was always either too hot or too cold. I wanted another drink, or something to eat. All of a sudden I was hungry. Doris didn't talk. She just stared out the window at the refineries and chemical plants. Every now and then, we could see tankers out in Galveston Bay.
The sun was low and behind some clouds. The sky was a beautiful, hazy pink. "Pretty sky," I said.
"They say it's like this a lot," Doris said. "It's all the junk in the air."
"I'm hungry," I said. "How about Burger King?"
From the cold woodshop where we had run for safety, I watched the hillside glow orange from flames. The babies played with shavings on the floor. My mouth said don't eat that, while in the distance our house burned.

In this country where wheat hisses in the fields everything holds its breath and waits. William McCoulough, slammed off his tractor by a treelimb, fell into the bush hog blades. The women swooped down over William’s family like kind white doves. Now they open their good wings for us.

They clean us and feed us, bed us down in a warm place away from the rubble and the smell. I lay my head on someone’s old pillow. Rose sachet. Fragrance of cedar. I close my eyes to the flames and see a silver thimble, my best cup. I keep thinking of foolish things. The lemon geranium, all that sheet music.

Put this story along with William McCoulough, along with the calf’s neck wrenched by a cyclone through the crook of a tree. Put this along with the whispered list of things found at harvest: hair and bones and scraps of a red shirt rotting. Be sure to say how fast the flames lurched.
across the roof.

In the next bedroom, a woman reads to my daughters. It is not me, though it scarcely matters. I have my own story. To the simple darkness here, I say:

*See the hedgerows and the furrows and the deep squares of green. At the center of each is a tidy barnlot and a white house. And in each white house is a bed. That's where we are. Blackbirds watch while we sleep. When they fly, no one is there to see the brief red of their wings.*
The iris that were arranged in the baby’s breath are in the compost. The inconspicuous talents we have: arranging bouquets, recognizing rock & roll tunes, remembering birthdays.

If we were flowers perhaps the sticky yellow dots clinging to our stamens, maybe the rigid air we rest our stems against as we lean into living rooms, would be marvels.

We are concerned with our desires. One after another intense blue flame burns us up. We don’t admire the modest gifts as we do the fire red poppies absolutely red in a field in Greece. We are like Henry James as he wrote from Europe — how much more the States mean now.

The same I suppose with our own blood. Seeing my Viennese father at 67 sitting under the wisteria, here, in California I am ready to listen to our long list of minor royalty, as the ebony bees fly up.
David Long’s first book of poems, *Early Returns*, contains some of the most beautiful lyrics I’ve read in a long time. I hesitate to write beautiful because Frost once said that a writer can only use that word twice. I’ve just filled the quota. Most of the poems here are autobiographical, but their sentiment is never pushed too far. They are held together by Long’s commitment to the landscape, by his ear and by his use of craft. Marvin Bell in a recent issue of *Poetry* praises those contemporary poems which are “reeking of the human and the physical.” Long’s work deserves that same praise. Indeed, the first poem of the book, “Northeast,” sets this tone.

I was ten & lonesome
at the end of summer when storms
came out of there
failed hurricanes doubling back
in the North Atlantic
driving across Newfoundland.
Suddenly my father was home.

We went in our mac coats
into the rain, strung guy wires
softened with rubber hose
on the young maples. I could
stand leaning into the wind
nothing holding me up.

That day our fields turned blue
we wedged the 2 x 4s hard
against the bedroom windows
while a seam under the eaves
cought the fury of air
again & again, moaning
like our town's civil defense.

Then a big hardwood
we had no idea was hollow
worked loose & splayed across the road
roots twitching like field mice
in the northeast wind. Later

the storm's mauled eye
paused over us
& before the volunteers
with chainsaws came
before the sky moved again
we stood together on the soaking earth
new quiet rising
in the country between us.

His careful, exact eye, like the eye of the best snooker player I know, seldom
misses. "Roots twitching like field mice" is a tremendous focusing detail that
mimes the storm's fury. The poem ends with a solitude similar to that with
which it began: "new quiet rising/ in the country between us." But we know
the experience has changed the young boy, and the space separating the father
and son is where the poet will establish his own voice.

"To Danny," the strongest poem in the first section, addresses a friend at
one time important in the poet's life. I say at one time because the poem ends,
"Today I breathe you, I dream you,/ you fill me like my own leaving/ I'm not
afraid to let you go." For Long to sound this confident, he has had to learn
who he is, and this self-definition is painful. I quote from the middle stanzas:

Why would I tell you: go easy?

Why is any change dry heaves?
That winter you & I hiked
through snow up to our cold crotches
& you showed me the crater
on the shadow side of Mt. Watatic
you'd dug for a tipi

for spreading out the bundle of your life.
I saw the nicked arms
of the blue juniper unfolding in dusk.

I wanted to shout & kiss your beard
but I did a worse thing.
I gave you advice. I could die.

Not a poem easily written, it demonstrates the necessity of change, solitude,
and the certain amount of "leaving" the poet must go through to write: themes
that run throughout the book. Long constantly moves between a wilderness of
self and the important lives he must share. "What a man sees alone should be
returned/to the ring of light where the families sing/ & smoke rises to the stars
in a single glowing/braid."

Long is a political poet in the sense that Levine notes in his interview with
Studs Turkel: "... a political poet is one who doesn't necessarily tell people
how to vote or how to think and what specific attitudes they should have, but
... who deals with the political facts of our lives, ..." Long writes in the
poem whose title quotes José Hierro, "To Work Because What Remains Of
You Tomorrow May Be Fire Instead Of Wood."

I come home distrusting the placid
sheen on our streets. Even the defenseless
drunk duck-stepping from the VFW has nothing
to fear.

Though the poet goes on to recall how he watched with friends the draft
lottery on television and how he accepted the easy rhetoric of the sixties, he ends by looking hard at his solitary response to the political climate, a response molded from honesty and experience.

From my open doorway I smell the coming storm. I know it never ended. My house tomorrow

must be as clean & ready as cordwood
and I must honor the fiery vocabulary of example.

I admire in a first book a poet's recognition of literary forms. Included in this collection are a sonnet with four stanzas of terza rima and a couplet, and poems written in octaves, quatrains, unrhymed tercets and couplets. The sestina titled "You Don't Know Who To Thank" is altered in the sixth stanza by adding a seventh line, and the envoy also has one extra line. I think he earns the right to change this form, in the way that each new generation of poets must find in the old forms, its new forms.

David Long's book is no small achievement. Throughout, the poems appear to have been written effortlessly, a testament to the poet's craft. And though a full third of the poems are written in more or less conventional forms their craft rarely upstages the poet's work of exploring his soul — his most important task. His letter poem to Ed Harkness concludes, "The ears are blessed/ & twist in & in forever. Don't you forget it./ Love, David."

Jack Heflin
Many contemporary poets write about animals as a way of talking about the loss of wilderness in their lives, or as a way of avoiding self-consciousness. Rich Ives is comfortable in writing about this other landscape, and when he comes back into his personal reality he knows he will have been something else. Larry Levis in his essay “Notes On The Gazer Within” thinks that “the muteness or silence of the animal equals that of the poet. Perhaps there is some secret similarity between the species.” Whether Ives is writing about animals, distant ancestors, or the woodcarver, he wants to lessen the distance that separates him from the landscape of wilderness.

With the opening image in the first poem “Inheritance,” the division which exists between man and nature begins to break down: “Early each morning/ the last loyal farm animal/ comes in through the kitchen window.” Like Whitman, like Snyder, Ives is able to sympathize with all living things, and, throughout the book, he tries to articulate that sympathy which resides at the border of consciousness. His journey is both outward into nature and inward into the mythical realms of the interior self. “I turn, but I am not where I should be . . . Only the barn is where it belongs,/ whistling in the dry wind,/ and the farmhouse, waiting.”

One of the best poems in the book illustrates how myth is restored when consciousness and wilderness come together. I quote the last five stanzas from “Songs Of The New Body.”

There is a song of fire
that frees the breath of plants,
a death song of animals
that brings their bodies back again
remembering sunlight and substance
and how they came to be held
in their own stomachs.

There is a song of air
sitting quietly on the bed of the tongue,
listening to the wind, waiting
and planning the one good thing
it will say in the lives of the blood.

There is a song of earth
that fills the distances with *Here, Here*
and *Remember this*, a steady chant, a hum
in the delicate wires of wheat.

*The rocks I open with slow fingers*
*become dark loam calling to roots.*
*I begin by palming the seeds.*
*I have a handshake that grows*
*its own neighbors. I have a foot*
*that steadies the other side of footprints.*

There is a song of change
that has lost its memory.
Everything will be living differently.
Everything will be living.

One of the major themes in the book is that the real loss of the 20th century is a loss of feeling. For the poet to write, he must restore his senses. Ives moves intuitively back to the primitive, back to wilderness. The following piece is taken from “Spain, 1961.”

I have seen things floating
to which I was once attached.
I have hoisted the flag
of the legions of lost sheep.

I have kept nothing but my body’s reason,
simple as breath,
and it answers no other questions.

As if fatigued with rational discord, Ives greets the supreme freedom of the body's senses.

Always the striking image derives its power not from rational thought but from the distance between the two objects or ideas described. Ives does this wonderfully throughout the book as in "an old man with a lantern/ digs up the darkness/ and drops its sleeping eyes/ in an old leather pouch," or "A window opens at the end of my hands." The effect of these images is often hermetic, they do not allow themselves to be discussed rationally. They exist. Their use supports the lost connection between man and nature.

Stylistically, Ives combines this surreal imagery with a prosaic language, playing the unusualness or excitement of the former off the ordinary quality of the latter. When this technique works the reader shares the mystery of the forgotten lives or selves that the poet recreates. At times the poet's ear falters, lessening the impact of the poetry. The heavy-handed sound patterns in "A small turbulence of terns/ hovers," detract from the powerful image that follows, "skimming the changing surface for the small/ survivals it carries like breathing coins."

*Notes From The Water Journals* is an intelligent, mysterious book. Throughout, I'm impressed by the ease with which Ives enters other realities: "Still there are times I come upon them alone/ and the circling hunger moves in a single animal./ Standing deep in my human tracks I take aim and fire,/ falling in the snow as the bullet enters . . . and a part of me moves out from the change,/ turning four-footed to the hills in search of family."

*Jack Heflin*
Maxine Kumin has stated that some people people “act as morticians of all life and hold private burying rituals in their hearts.” They “practice well all their lives to die well.” In this book of poems that won the Montana Arts Council First Book Award in 1979, Nancy Schoenberger manipulates her fantasies to work out a kind of salvation and the book documents that journey. Each poem is a private burying ritual. The final poem, “In the Earth’s New Dark,” is about death as a form of change. Change does not come unless a part of us dies. I feel that essentially this book is about the transitions made in order for change to be possible.

The book begins with a poem, entitled “Move On,” about the death of the poet’s brother. Schoenberger’s quiet, controlled voice presents a photograph or a movie still. “He tries/ but cannot step out/ of the car,/ of the April/ night, as all else/ ages and moves on.” The rest of the movie continues, but this frame has stopped and we with it. Which is what the poem is about: to die is not to move on, if we are to live we must move on.

The first section of the book, “Beasts and Children,” shows us scenes from childhood. The poem, “Near Philly,” deals with loss of innocence and faith. It tells of the dark underside of life where innocence is shadowed by its twin sister depravity. The poem contrasts a pastoral town and a town where smoke “rolled/from the black stacks and towers, glowed orange/as the sun came on.” The poet ends declaring “it was our home.” Both these towns are one town, living inside us; we are made up of contradictions.

“Taxidermist’s Daughter” is perhaps the best poem of the book.

Always long afternoons shadows began
leaking from tame leaves
near the plot of sunflowers, the valuable
statuary, chickens restless
as the best game cocks paired off
and started their dance,
father his work

restoring the draggled animals
that had gathered all morning
in the pine loft above the house
from the wild Atchafalaya—
Arkansas turkeys,
their Indian headdresses
limp and smeared and asking
for new life. The squirrel
that one day would fly again

in the showcase, and again
in my dreams, in dream-walks
through the glass house, fly
next to the lynx
and the rare white fox.

And the tame dogs eyeing their masters,
and the fighting wild rooster,
my sunflower drifting over the gravel
marking the day's path. I wanted to help:

carry blood in a bucket,
order the glass eyes
from the warehouse of missing parts.
I wanted to help in your dark
private work in the loft.

Nights the gray squirrel rattles the roof,
robs the glass where his stuffed mate swoons
in the final leap. I can still see you
bent over your work, shucking and stitching,
fur stuck to your apron. Choose me,
father. All these years I wanted to say
choose me, as you bent down
to put the last touch to the beautiful wood duck.

When I read a poem I look for something beyond words and setting,
beyond music and rhythm. I look for something elusive that arouses a sympathetic response. "The Taxidermist's Daughter" has it. The love of the speaker for her father is particularly moving.

While the first section of the book is about the poet's childhood or origin, the next section, entitled, "Widow," is about an awareness of a need for change.

So I have
given you up. It is September. Soon
the world goes underground,
deep in her hood.
("Failure")

To change, a person must pass from awareness to understanding to acceptance of the situation. In the next section, "Mussellshell Woman," this process becomes more apparent. "After Camille," the first poem, is about what remains after a deluge: memories and remnants. There is an awareness of loss.

They say catfish
comb those rooms where we once slept. Launched,
I come to waterways to drink the dark. Those
trees just bend, the rain says I win.
What remains the river didn't want.

The rain says "I win." All that is known is swept away. In the next poem, "Cedar," there is more rain, but of a different kind.

Now
that rain is my neighbor I want
to unfold down the slow
comfortable path. The bud
at the base of my brain
begins to open.

It perhaps is not so much that the rain has changed, but that the speaker's attitude toward it has changed. She has accepted it.
Already
we have left each other. The rain
has let up. A few drops disturb the pools
which have begun to darken
as evening sets in and smoke
drifts through the wood.

With the acceptance of loss, the rain disappears and life returns to its calm. From here the book shifts in focus. It is not so much what the poet has lost, but what she must do now to survive.

"At Boar's Head" begins "There's a door that opens both ways." With this poem, though aware of the past, the poet moves through it towards a new life. "A door closes/on her mother's voice." Past models no longer work.

In "Near Painted Rock," the poet's need to turn to other sources becomes more urgent.

You're emptyhanded now.

No lake, no dream, no home.
The sky shuts down.

If we could find out what the earth wants.

She asks and then demands: "Give me a dream I can use." She is ready to admit errors she has made and the risks involved in change: "We amit/ the theft, admit the land's mysterious. It may/ kill us." The speaker is ready for change.

Change does come in the title poem of this section, "Musselshell Woman." It tells of the invincible spirit we carry inside. "One wind gives back when we're broke, when spirit/grows legs and starts walking." How we can give up or lose all we have and still go on and change and live. "That woman,/ one with moon and wind, beyond all human ways/ won back her life."

With the last poem, "In the Earth's New Dark," the poet accepts her state of being, no matter what state that might be.
I mark these changes: how the seed
in her furred home nudges
soil, her green
unscarred and gleaming;
how pale wheat gives up and utters
take us, as though I'd come
to lie in earth's new dark
rejoicing, with any lover.

Through awareness and finally acceptance of her loss, she has come to terms
with her surroundings. The book begins and ends with death. But in death, the
poet has discovered rebirth and the transition is complete.

Elizabeth Weber
CONTRIBUTORS

BRUCE BEASLEY, an M.F.A. candidate at Columbia University, has published poems recently in *Quarterly West* and *The Southern Poetry Review*.

LINDA BIERDS works for Washington’s Poets-in-the-Schools Program. She has new work in the *Hudson Review, Black Warrior Review* and *Poetry Now*.

DINA COE lives and works in Roosevelt, New Jersey.

JON DAVIS won the Connecticut Poetry Circuit Competition in 1979. He lives in Missoula and attends the University of Montana.

STEVEN DOLMATZ teaches English on Lopez Island in Washington. He received the Leslie Hunt Award for poetry from Western Washington University.

DENNIS M. DORNEY works as a cameraperson in Los Angeles. He also teaches a writing workshop at Chino Prison. His poems are forthcoming in *Pequod* and *Abraxas*.


QUINTON DUVAL has poems coming out soon in *Quarterly West, Montana Review* and *TriQuarterly*. He teaches creative writing and English at Solano College in Fairfield, California.

PATRICIA GOEDICKE is the Visiting-Poet-in-Residence at the University of Montana. She published two books in 1980: *The Dog that was Barking Yesterday* (Lynx House Press), and *Crossing the Same River* (University of Massachusetts Press).


JIM HEYNEN is the Writer-in-Residence at the University of Idaho this year. His latest book is *A Suitable Church*.

CYNTHIA HOGUE has translations from Icelandic and Swedish forthcoming in *Inland Boat* (PORCH) and *APR*. A chapbook of her own poems is out from the University of Reading Press. She writes that she is weathering her third winter in Reykjavik, Iceland.
WILLIAM KLOEKFORN's poems are from *Platte Valley Homestead*, a manuscript written beside the Platte River while he was on sabbatical from Nebraska Wesleyan University.

TED KOOSER's collection of poems, *Sure Signs*, is published by the University of Pittsburgh Press. He works for an insurance company in Lincoln, Nebraska.


DAVID LONG co-founded CutBank in 1973. His fiction appears in recent issues of *Carolina Quarterly* and *Fiction International*.

STEFANIE MARLIS is a partner in a photography business. This year she received California's Joseph Henry Jackson Award for poetry.


EMILY RANSDELL's a graduate student in creative writing at the University of Montana. She received the Academy of American Poet's Prize from Indiana University.

PAMELA RICE completed an M.F.A. at the University of Montana in 1980. She lives and writes in Texas.


ELIZABETH WEBER received an M.F.A. from the University of Montana. Her poems appeared recently in *Columbia*.

JOHN WORKS, a native Texan, studies in the M.F.A. Program at Columbia. He has previously published fiction in *The Cottonwood Review*, *The New Mexico Humanities Review* and *Fiction Texas*.

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BOOKS RECEIVED

A Raccoon Monograph, Alane Rollings, poems, St. Lukes Press, $1.50.
A Sort of Triumph, Robert Chasen, poems, Thomson/Shore, $12.50.
At Home in the World, Sam Hamill, essays, Jawbone Press, $6.00.
Call Me Lucky, Paul Zarzyski, poems, Confluence Press, $4.00.
Early Returns, David Long, poems, Jawbone Press.
Emplumada, Lorna Dee Cervantes, poems, University of Pittsburgh Press, $4.50.
Gone Fishing, Mark Sanders, poems, Nebraska Review Chapbook, $1.00.
I Stammer It to Angels, David Lee Castleman, poems, $4.00.
Lock & Key, Kenneth Denberg, ed., A Review of Poems from South Carolina Prisons, South Carolina Arts Commission.
My Hat Flies on Again, James Crenner, poems, L'Epervier Press, $4.25.
Northern Spy, Chase Twichell, poems, University of Pittsburgh Press, $4.50.
Notes From the Unconscious, Steven Ford Brown, poems, Nebraska Review Chapbook, $1.50.
Sleeping on Fists, Alberto Rios, poems, Dooryard Press, $5.00.
Snoqualmie Falls Apocalypse, Nelson Bentley, poems, Confluence Press, $3.50.
Though Silence: The Ling Wei Texts, Christopher Howell, poems, L'Epervier Press, $4.25.
To the End of Time, William Pillin, poems, Papa Bach Editions, $7.95.
Trying to Surprise God, Peter Meinke, poems, University of Pittsburgh Press, $4.50.
Where I Lived, and What I Lived For, Joe David Bellamy, poems, Nebraska Review Chapbook, $1.00.

MAGAZINES RECEIVED

The Beloit Poetry Journal (Spring/Summer/Fall 81) Marion Kingston Stocking, ed., Box 2, Beloit, WI 53551, $1.50/copy.
Carolina Quarterly (Summer 81) University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Greenlaw Hall, 066A, Chapel Hill, NC 27514, $4/copy.
The Chariton Review (Spring 81) Jim Barnes, ed., Northeast Missouri State University, Kirksville, MO 63501, $2/copy.
Colorado-North Review (Spring 81) Catherine Hite, Debra Menken, eds., University Center, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, CO 80631, $2/copy.
Fiction (Vol. 6, No. 3) Mark Joy Mirsky, ed., Dept. of English, City College of New York, NY 10031, $5/copy.


The Iowa Review (Spring/Summer 81) Marvin Bell guest poetry ed., David Hamilton, Fredrick Woodard, eds., University of Iowa, 308 E. P. B., Iowa City, IA 52242.

Kayak (Nos. 56 & 57) George Hitchcock, ed., 325 Ocean View Ave., Santa Cruz, CA 95062, $1/copy.

Kudzu (Winter 80) Stephen Bardner, Andy Williams, eds., 166 Cokesdale Rd., Columbia, SC 29210, $2/copy.

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New Pages (Summer 81) Grant Burns, ed., 4426 S. Belsay Rd., Grand Blanc, MI 48439, $2/copy.


Nimrod (Spring/Summer 81) Francine Rinegold, ed., Arts and Humanities Council, 2210 S. Main, Tulsa, OK 74114, $3/copy.


Poetry Now (Nos. 30, 31) E. V. Griffith, ed., 3118 K St., Eureka, CA 95501, $1.50/copy.

Quarterly West (No. 12) Michael Boberstein, ed., 312 Olpin Union, University of Utah, Salt Lake, Utah 84112, $2.50/copy.


Salt Lick (Vol. 3, nos. 1, 2) James Haining, ed., Box 1064, Quincy, IL 62301.

Santa Fe Poetry (Fall 81) P. S. Alberhasky, ed., 115 Delgado St., Santa Fe, NM 87501, $1/copy.


The Small Press Review (Vol. 13, Nos. 5-10) Len Fulton, ed., Dust Books, Box 100, Paradise, CA 95969, 50¢/copy.

Sou'wester (Fall/Winter 80, Spring/Summer 81) Diesel-Hamm, Hayes, Hillner, eds., Dept. of English, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville, IL 62026, $1.50/copy.

Stand (Vol. 22, nos. 3, 4) John Silkin, ed., 19 Haldane Terrace, New Castle upon Tyne, NE2 3AN, England, $2.50/copy.
Stony Hills (No. 10) Weeks Hills, New Sharon, Maine, 04955, $1.50/copy.
Tar River Poetry (Spring 81) Peter Makuck, ed., Austin Bldg., East Carolina University, Greenville, NC 27834, $2/copy.
Western Humanities Review (Spring 81, Summer 81) Jack Garlington, ed., Dept. of English, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah, 84112, $2.50/copy.
Whetstone (Spring 81) Michael Bowden, ed., R. R. 1, Box 221, St. David, AZ 85630, $2.50/copy.
Willow Springs (Spring 81) Bill O’Daley, ed., Box 1063, Eastern Washington University, Cheney, WA 99004, $3/copy.
Yakima (No. 5) Jim Bodeen, ed., 621 S. 30th Ave., Yakima, WA 98902.
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POETRY

KIM R. STAFFORD
LINDA BIERDS
PATRICIA GOEDICKE
TED KOOSER
ALBERT GOLDBARTH

FICTION

DAVID LONG
JOHN WORKS

PHOTOGRAPHY

ZULEYKA VARGAS BENITEZ

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