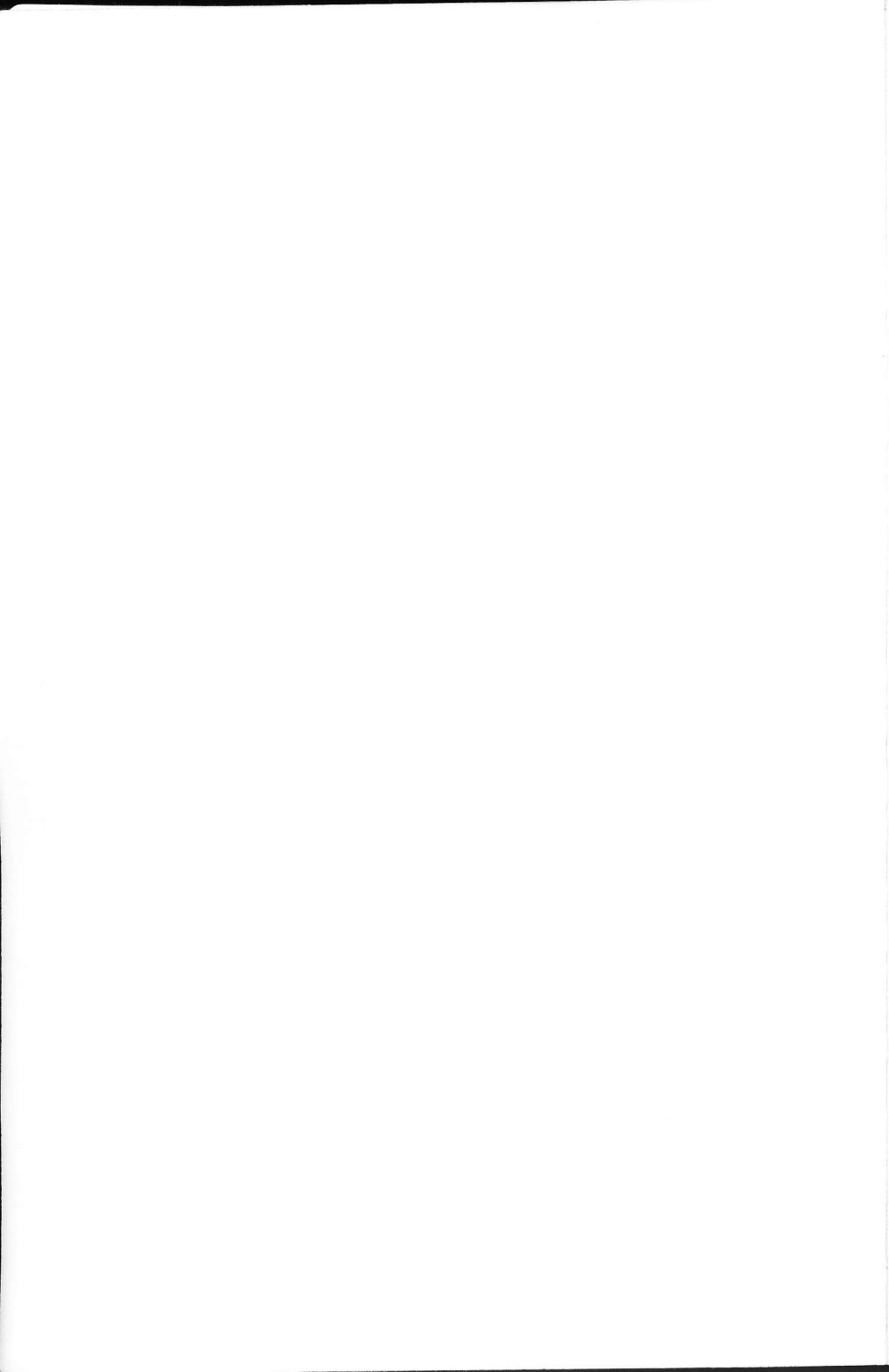


Wither

you said. you were afraid
to live in the real world
now the real world

lives in you.





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Cover Poem:

WITH CHILD

You said.

you were afraid
to live in the real world

now the real world
lives in you.

EYES

Lee Chapman, 26-35

by Kenneth Irving

Write to:
Cottonwood - room 118, Kansas Union - Lawrence, Kansas 66044

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by David Wilson



red clay baseball diamond. diminutive shamrock field with bees in the clover grass and blackberry bushes beyond the right field chicken wire fence. a new day, and the spring sun on the unoccupied clap board hot dog stand. echoes of balls on bats, jeers and mitt slaps cheers and bubble gum popping. he stood in the batter's box, sweating hands and face in fear of the pitcher. closing his eyes at the ball coming down, pleading heaven for a walk, sliding into first base on a dropped third strike.

...

Saturday morning crept into the tiny room on the second floor. It was a bedroom, wherein two small boys lived. There were two bunk beds, one against a wall and one under twin windows on the other side of the room. The little boy under the windows turned on his side and opened his eyes. Across the room, in the other bed, his younger brother slept on. The boy looked around without raising his head from the pillow. He noticed a book on his bed table--Buddy and the Old Pro. He jerked upright in bed and rubbed his eyes. Frantically, he lept out of bed and charged the bookcase that stood between the two beds. He grabbed the alarm clock that sat on the bookcase corner and read the time. 8 o'clock! Half the day was over! He dashed into the bathroom that adjoined the bedroom and hurriedly washed his face. He ran back into the room and threw his closet open. Blue jeans, shirt, tennis shoes. He began to shed his pajamas. He glanced at his sleeping brother and pulled hid tee shirt over his crew-cut head. He walked to his bed table and picked up a pair of glasses. He picked up the brown-covered book that lay there and sat down on the bed. Half-clothed, he sat reading the story of the old pro and the boy named Buddy and how the old pro molded a team out of kids that went on to win the championship. Buddy played centerfield. A feeling which the boy did not try to understand crept upward to his throat and he felt like crying out with joy. He remembered a similar feeling when he read a "good" book. He was in love with books and enjoyed rubbing the cover of those he especially enjoyed. It made him feel good to squeeze books and to murmur soft screams about them.

The boy sat reading for some time, oblivious to his own existence.

Soon, though, his brother awoke and stumbled to the bathroom. He heard activity in the kitchen, below the bedroom. He blocked all disturbance from his mind and read til he finished the volume. Then he replaced the book on the bed table and lay back in the bed. He closed his eyes and dreamed of a red dirt ball diamond. He was playing shortstop and there was a large crowd looking on. For a brief time, he actually saw himself; walking around his position; kicking all the infield dirt; spitting toward home plate and slapping the glove.

His brother returned from the bathroom and began dressing also.

"Aintcha gonna get dressed, Ira?" the little boy said as he buttoned his shirt. "Where's your pants?"

The boy on the bed, in the ball game, opened his eyes once more and looke at his brother. The younger boy stood, hand on hip, at the foot of Ira's bed. He held a pair of blue jeans in his other hand.

"Give 'em here," said Ira.

His brother threw them onto Ira's bed and left the room. Ira got up and climbed into the blue jeans. He followed his brother's path from the room and downstairs to the kitchen.

"Mornin' Ira," said his mother as he walked into the kitchen. She was busy at the stove, frying eggs.

"Mother, Billy woke me up!"

The woman turned, but before she could speak, little Billy screamed, "No I didn't, Mother! Ira was laying on the bed with his shirt and tennis shoes on! He wasn't asleep! He was just daydreamin' about that toady book he got!"

The woman looked at Ira. He was staring at the floor.

"Breakfast's almost ready. Did you wash your face, Billy?"

"What? Ira told the story, not me! He was awake. He. . . ."

"That's enough, both of you. Breakfast's almost ready."

Ira avoided Billy's scowl and walked to the back door. He opened the door and went outside. He sat diwn in the wooden steps that led down from the kitchen. It was a cool Saturday, but the sun was warm enough to make Ira sweat under his flannel shirt. He sat on the steps and looked at the

brown leaves that covered the ground. He sighed, closing his eyes and heard, distinctly, the crack of a bat striking a ball through still autumn air.

...

In the brown house; in the kitchen he was eating cereal from a bowl, with young thin wrist in flannel, plaid sleeves--and soft face with ridges from his eyes and on his cheeks. autumn breeze pushed the screen back door. cool breeze sliding the gentle hills behind and tossing the brown leaves. and his grandmother sat, old, on the short wooden steps from the back door and shelled lady peas with shiny fingers. the quilt-warm sun on the rear of the brown house. he sat, eating cereal from a bowl and the maid ironed old clothes in the dining room.

HARMONICA PLAYER

He played a tune that came out
not a tune but jumble jagged sharp
grate edge of sound that was noise.
But he had the tune in his head and
he played and blew and the tune got
put in and what came out was not
a tune. It was him, set to sound.

David Wilson

THE MARRIAGE

In brown, dust-lit old room
Again under ancient crucifix
Their knees touched
Under table.

Too many mornings
Had climbed past
Bread and coffee here.

She,
They had always
hoped things would turn out.

He,
They had always talked quietly
About missed rides.

They knew but never said
Now is Now.

With no eyes she looked away.
And he clung to the sound
Of her departure.

David Wilson

BARSTOW BLUES

My back door is knockin', but I cant let nobody in.
My back door is knockin', but I can't let nobody in.
Only thing comin' round me her is that hot southern
California wind.

I'm goin' up the mountain, goin' down to Barstow.
Said, I'm goin' up the mountain, goin' down to Barstow.
In my 1950 Chevy panel truck, goin' sho is slow.

I had to leave my baby rabbit in a pet shop in Bakersfield.
I had to leave my baby rabbit in a pet shop in Bakersfield.
He look like he's about to die and I figure that just bout
the way he feel.

Oh, his little red eyes get cloudy and he began to cry.
His little red eyes get cloudy and he began to cry.
If he go on much more like this, I'm 'fraid
that little ol rabbit gon' die.

When I get to Kansas, I'm gon' plant me some wheat.
Yes, when I get to Kansas, I'm gon' plant me some wheat.
Right next to them golden stalks, I'm gon' plant
my burnin' feet.

Oh, I said my back door is knockin', but I can't let nobody in.
Y'know, my back door is knockin', I ain't gon' let nobody in.
My one and only partner now is that hot southern California
wind.

David Wilson

TIME

OUT OF

MIND

C. H. Hejinian

1. an introduction to family and friends

with whom I've been in love
this is
its beauntingbeating heart
and solar butterflies, not true Lepidopterae
but true love winged with sand caressed
and wounded on the rough
grassing the dunes
in all the impurities of heart no more
miraculously sprung than flies, from maggots.
with whom I dream a roseamance that moves
as though to China through the sea
from the midway hearthpoint to the beach we've come between
two coastal childhoods; Santa Cruz where the horses
run the camarague and Ipswich
parce qu'I whence know as Laura'd say a poite,
that one remembers.
than in those days, by virtue of the seaint,
convinced the specific elm at night
despite specific seasons held it
and affirmation the spirit with taken.
outstretched a lover's form like faces
in the formclouds.

o gus
my aunt may, n'uncles, eh? so close
to my heart these names

to my blunt milkedown sopeyed sight
an indiscriminate lover undiscerning.
lovers too sorely often love, alltact
and selfefacing. do you mind my being
here?

I ask

those virgin hearts
adrift on that family tree I've drawn let's do a little pruning,
says Pap, smiling a smile that not to come seems
easily and all the more sincere, beauntuous. there's one man
I refuse to claim, much harm it long dead does him,
not fortunately bloodkin. Bodkin Spear I named him
before I cut him off. here, he was challenged
to a duel in San Francisco and fled instead to Boston
or to the Whipple House in Ipswich with the seashell lanes about,
and our ancestral graves, the graves
before his ancestors had fled. of these tides
are the pendula of history
and the time. Pap had sat, my father told me (I wish
he'd follow Gauguin to Tahiti with his hands),
one day long with rifle
aimed beside his books across the square and oaken hall
upon his lap from the seaward door, to shoot
the postman who to show my aunt had sought
more than she had ever seen before.

gurgle your r's

I told him. if you can say la crepuscule
sur laemer you're fluent. take me to the pal
less roy yell, he insisted to the cabby. not my grandmother,
no more, no she still in her senility says, content
in her travels to sit with Ree and wait in the Tate
before the doctor, boys,
I'm having a foggy day. ye gods, that she says. horns
in the bay. have you heard about szee kie sarr
vit vun harm georter san szee utter?

in the rose of a lookinglasshell
may would be only blown sand,
the froth embodying the wind's lank ivory
offwhite beard.

Doug's has come out
rather barbarossa

midst the nescient bathers

I can't remember
any more, she says, except Gesundheit ist besser als Kronkheit
and Happy Birthday I want a piece of Cake.

how old are you, Gram?

near forty. well, Gram, Dad is fortyseven. surely
you're older than he is. o yes, she says, I must be.
I guess I'm about fifty now. what child is this, she asks, now?
Bill? no his grandson, Gram, Lyn and John's son Paull.
can't we carry your bed right out sitting in the dunes
onto the sand where we all are and Doug's wading
right out to the buoy.
on the rocks Dad has figured clay, call him
Poseidon, Bernal Diaz longing for home,
Galileo, into a deity. the sea will come up
leaving only the floating head of the child
uncle killed in the living room.

my aunt may
hide in the white dunes from uncle
who's naked. she played bridge on the beach
through the war she hasn't ever stopped, said Gram,
and was always angry at me when I came by in my RedCross Coat
and couldn't stay a rubber.

my brother
like John wears the Crusader's pin against arms.
how old are you, Gram, he asks. is it time yet
for the sandwiches, and eggs, with salt?
water, lemonade, and a thermos of martinis.

welcome
to the ghetto, the Freeds said to Addy,
handing her the bread and salt. what happened
to Kitty Genovese will never happen here. at the corners
with conchells the blanket is weighted, and Pap
has built a lean to windward of drift wood.

only the Jews
have any humanity, said John.

it takes twelve Christians
to outwit a Greek, his father answered, twelve Greeks
to outwit a Jew, and twelve Jews to outwit
an Armenian.

motionless
in, a faded frame, the picnicking family
and friends at the winewhite sea. those sandpipers
printing their search and hunger sated out of a full tide.
then sex if not love attends the tides. and thereof
the body's female soul, chatelaines
of sand castles, the daughters. yesterday when Paull
came out and lay his head on my lap, I thought my mother
was and all but turned him to her his mother

before I recalled him here, Paull, gathered again.
into my as many as serpents arms are mother to those
of and in with love, sighed, and sent
across the ocean.

Gail's uncle
crossed first class in the war when the seas and decks
were almost cleared but for Caruso
with whom he played to the sweets of an accompanying distraction
chess each and all day when Uncle B's with every turn
of pawn or queen, before the ivory horse
could fly, Enrico *dulcissimo* leaned back
spreading the deck robes about his knees
and sang out the pursuing gulls *Cielo E Mar*.

among these bathers fixed against the backdrop
of their orange towels and a blue beachblanket the frieze
of family and friends, we, my limbs and I, my ears
and spider-envying eyes, cavernous nostrils of aromatic beaches,
found a game of apperception. rather than to be engulfed
by their romantic riches and to the exclusion of all but
I attend a single sense, say, the touches over my body
sea requiting, and both with the wind, beach, of wet,
the feverless waters undulating at my calves a shore
of eels, the drag after burrowing crabs and clams at the balls
of my feet safe under a mounting tide, that leaves
the firmest pressure at the arch sinking more slowly.
my knees are cold in the wet wind wet and stung
from a rash the cut shells made kneeling to pat
the sand still on my palms of a wall, and between
my legs. at my waist each breath encounters
the chill of cloth. only the wind makes me feel my skin.
I cannot that my nose juts from my face
without my hands but on an oath
by my hands it does.

the smells
behind the dunes are of the heat
of steaming seaweed, out of the wind, and a fisheating
hot dead gull, dropped from the asthmatic smell of the sea,
clear but for the motes of salt, and sand
composed of seaground glass and shells.

the gulls gaw
and wheel, breaking the silence, in which my mother
with just one oar has rowed ashore
with the tide

the sofest breath

that ever touched this shore, the sea in its infancy.
Addy, Joh, watch Paull; doesn't he just like a turtle
crawling, look, right through the cold white tongue
of the flattened wave.

 he turns back spluttering
and we dare not laugh
to discourage him. just like fish playing Marco
Polo in the swimming pool. Jerry dives, Dick dives
and we three follow from the side while my father
wades in from the shallow end keeping his hair
above water.

 god love them,
said the woman passing my son and my friend's son today.
god love us, said my friend, and we'll love them.
aye, said the old woman in the market,
that's the most beautiful baby in the world.
god bless him.

 says it's easy now,
my friend, to be a good mother
and all but later impossible. she says after fourteen.
to prepare herself for the necessary future patience,
I imagine him home from Harvard
with a gold hoop hooping through one pierced ear.
I imagine him with curls to his shoulders
bleachedwhite those curls
shoulderlength

 with so many spent energies
pursuing the waves. what was't'e said (someone
a postman there's always a phrasemaker)
to the mundane and menial, easy maternity,
breeding of lies. but on an oath by my breasts
and my heart between, it's there, what, otherwise,
unshared human solely soulless purposeless
purpose-seeking presumption. bare biological simplicity
provides. why the elfen self else, even,
and its blue bladed, jaded, jagged blood.
the waves come in under the gulls, move back
the towels and your blue sweater.

I imagine him going to West Point to become a general,
and his room hung upstairs with lifesize portraits
of MacArthur, Maxwell Taylor, and Patton. now,
there, I'll never surely hurt him by his hurting
me, she says. and a bust of McNamara cast in bronze.

mothermocking times
we'll suffer for, having mocked and loved
no less. my words gull in the wind
clacks heart, like beak, gapes hard. breast
at the bow guides. she is wearing seashells on green
over the earth, her heart, the hearth (my room was once
a borning room). I would like to be reborn, lest the dress
wear out, leaving me as her mother left her with a photograph
my daughter will think is real.

I am is likened

to descension or relation,
they tell me,

possession, emulation, coveteases us, o (the layered barnacles
cut feet, noise with us), children, she chides, lovesmother,
this will only end in tears, it always does, and did holding the string
spin upon the given spot tied to the tennisball
with both hands until Doug's aim and swing
breaks the string and Ree obeys his shout Home Run,
the symbol of a variety of real or desired achievements,
and means I have, I wish, I wish I were, I am like.
and all to be singular tenses of the firstperson,
in the godeep godown bell, the clear as D. B. Tristia.
aswoon

like a silent waterbird with sleep
that lets dreams fill the room with words, faces,
composed figures, the mind and bodies of love,
but a silent, cygnus olor, the dolorous
redundancy of the captive swan, its neck
a gorgon's appendage to a bird.

when the worthy Mrs.

Silus Saxton, who was coming out anyway for a week,
drove down with a mate in a crate in her car
for the beautiful belicose Mute swan at the Wildlife Preserve,
that we remember with eucalyptine nostalgia, there
is the cutest deer up there, and it's so shy,
John's father said, when I walked the perimeter today,
he said, seven point two five on one pedometer and seven
point five on the other, but I think they're a little fast,
I tried to give it a lump of sugar, but it ran away, it's
the one that was in the pen last year.

n'uncles, may,
they all divorced my aunts, or died at forty. a surfeit
of aunts overcharged them.

but each before his disappearance engendered a son
in the various forms of failure, soldier, a pimp,

and an idiot savant. and yet, though they are often ugly,
and dull-witted, I like my aunts.

but no more, far less,
than I like my friends, Turk and Jew. Gail, Mister Borden,
he says with emphasis.

with that,
o ye my gods, but all is caro, cara. always in love,
exceedingly rendered vulnerable, fankled in the pain
a thousand of slights from friends to whom sworn in secret
she had undying love and fealty. my service whispered
to thy honor.

your relationships
are adolescent, you can't embrace life
like a jealous lover. no, I know, at times my ardor
cools, and that is how I play it, then. at any rate,
I finally sigh, it makes life interesting, fankled
in hearms, the field
for the fox the prince tamed.

behind
the eye lies
the solar plexus is Paul said the body's
largest ganglia and you think if before you
there's that of which, you speak, there's whence
the word will come. sun, he said, said, sun,
as though he meant it and were Galileo
or an Arab magi having seen the conjunction
of three planets in the house of the Jews

ophiomorphic, a gift of words,
enantiodromina, generations, where the west is abreast
and leg to leg with the orient west again
of San Francisco and the manner in which certain joys
mount sorrows, after all, and ride them home,
which brings them, in love.

(Madham speaks of that.)
eye is not solely what meets
the and which one sees, on the mirror. this one's
moreover my imperfect features and warping, rippling
the blue pen in my hand as a wand though it were
of ink, amused upon my own reflection
and eye them, as timidly one eyes the breakers
one is walking whither before the pelican
dives into the blue they are, the color of my mother's eyes,
and more the color of her mother's eyes. as a child
I that she since Nellie was dead
thought looked through them. perhaps at an eel

simulating currents, the line of waves, or the cliffline
at the edge of the continental shelf. scene
beneath a pale whitsuntide of lie
beside and by mute fog, about the feathered bodies
reach and circle silently presenting Ida's picnic, the aqua
seasuits, red, and yellow, and his in khaki tennishorts
my father. Laura wears her leopardskins beneath the pink
umbrella sits and Paull crawls naked toward the sea.
in the silence we should wait one hour after eating,
wrap in an eidolon to rest.

and the backacre, beloved,
from bearing Paull, first upon the left hip
and then upon the right like a pair of chestnut horses,
beneath the brazen and beautiful son. whole bodies
as tender as lips, nothing more brilliantly blatantly flesh.
nothing more Greek than Bellerophon and Pegasus
with gorgonblood whose frogs still glow.
it's taken me months, said John, to find one quarter inch
of my wife's skin as soft as my infant son's callused thumb.
our first loves are, surely, tactile, ignorant of red mottling
with blue flagging and divided agony
between birth and remaining behind

like a silent waterbird
with sleep.

but what they say
and do, and how I read them into life,
with not the reading lamp but the reading
that illuminates distorted faces, quote by quote,
a reader's reciprocity with life. stately, with plump
Buck Mulligan, Hans Castorp lends to John's cigars,
and the later Annie somewhat Albertine. one is not required
to be polite at the parties about which one reads
moved as John by Sir Thomas Browne
almost to breath's cessation.

both a figure family, John,
and friend.

your life is this, that you're doing this
what with. and whom. these the people
know you are, you do. the mind boggles. the human mind
boggles mine. of friends nextdoor, friends past the door.
he calls on gods as though he knew them, metempsychotic
contemporary friends, and family of the Black Douglas,
a Newburyport witch, six swans, riders of the hippokamp,
in the blood un peau pas pratique.

my father's father
was of eleven one, revered familial above all loyalties,

there was so much of it. his diffidence
bore him few friends, and they're now dead.
three boys and five girls of whom Halls lived
more years than four, he and his sisters more
than forty, more than seventyfour. only the Hall women
have longevity, he says, because I'm the only man
that could survive them. "Chaffee of Roaring Gulch,
too tough to kill too mean to die," with gray lint
between the yellow pages which we presented my gentle father
most angered by anger and most nothing else he let him.
Whipple to Emma, Channing to May, Ruth to Martin,
Charlotte to Robert, Priscilla to George and then to L. J.,
Natalie to Frank, and Alice to Rapp. Chaffee, Pap,
married Emmy, Gram, in 1915, their son Chaffee jr.
was born in 1916 and their daughter Marie in 1920.
my mother's parents were cousins, both Erskines,
entwining relations, a common father shared
of fathers, but by a difference of generation he was grandfather
to one and great grandfather to the other,
is both buried in Roundpond Maine
my mother's great and greatgreatgrandfather, unholy twin.
care for fond of fond one, tender, tender car.

you will find,
my mother told me,
that you have become unbearably vulnerable for your efforts.
writing or loving, apprivoisee, loving
and bearing children, it's all the same,
headed foxred, like my mother's, the color
of a brass bedstead. now it is the name of that commitment
drawn out by sentiment, the gulls, say, lest on the bay
are by a leg frozen and Paull to watch
the ducks dive for the bread loves loaves
I've brought, or gulls drop shells, on the coldest days.
I am is lichen to
the bay, was, frozen over, and the navy had to stay
all winter. that it doesn't matter
in the spring, they all you must learn
love loves' pains are half the staff. the boats
sailed, figurehead on prow, and were from never
heard again. if there's a purity, this is not it,
a gallimaufry of lovelives. the pogostick uphops
the wide white stairs the ring rounds, rosefingered,
the rose, and breaks a branch
by accident.

born into the heart of things, words
tendered, tendered. lit with brilliant loyal fires.

NATURE'S CREATION
BY
EDWARD ENGLISH
SELMA, ALABAMA

I want to tell you a little something about myself.
how I actually got started
in reading my work at university and college campuses,
that I campaigned

for the chapter
of the student movement in Selma, Alabama
for funds for those people
that was sharecropper
that registered and voted
and was kicked off of the land
And by being a humanitarian
I raised enough money
through the United States and Canada
by being on television and radio
and all of the newspapers
that I raised enough money to buy three plots of land
and the government built three houses for these people
and these people are now living in these houses
and they have enough land

to raise
whatever they want to raise
to pay the notes on the house built by the United States government

With all the publicity that I got by doin' for them
I got letters from different universities
asking me to come

with a guarantee
and to read my work.
And some of them didn't even know that I didn't have over two
poems, that's all they ever heard, was two.

So

they found out that I had more . . .
the first poem here I'm goin' to read, is:

"This
is the Truth
about Life"

THE GAME IS THE SAME.
NOTHING HAS CHANGED BUT THE NAME.
THE GREATER YOU DO FOR PEOPLE
THE GREATER YOUR RETURNS ARE.
THIS IS A HOLY WAY OF LIFE.
DO YOU KNOW EVERYTHING LIVING IS
GOD?
YOU CAN DO RIGHT OR YOU CAN DO WRONG.
IN TIME YOU WILL GET YOUR
RETURNS.
YOU GET YOUR PAY FOR WORK YOU DO.
RIGHT OR WRONG
THIS IS LIFE
IN THE NAME OF
LOVE
CHARITY
AND HOPE.
IT IS GIVING TIME NOW.
GOD BLESS YOU.

Here is a poem.
that when I'd written this poem,
to me, this poem was so bad
to me
I wouldn't even let anybody see this poem.

So I finally was in Ottawa Canada
and they wanted me to read this poem.
They said this is the most beautiful
piece of vulgar
they ever heard
in their whole life.

So that's how I read this poem,
and when I'd read this poem,
I had a professor take out his checkbook and give me
as a gift for gift
a check for twenty-five dollars

just for a copy of it.

The title of this poem is "Peacock
Bird" . . .

HERE IS A GROUND BIRD THEY CALL PEACOCK
MAN HAVE YOU EVER SEEN
A PEACOCK STRUT ACROSS THE STREET
THIS BIRD IS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL BIRD IN THE WORLD
THAT WALK ON THE GROUND
GOD IS HERE

MAN HAVE YOU EVER SEEN THE BIRD
THAT THEY CALL HER MISS PEACOCK
I WAS STANDING ON THE STREET ONE DAY
AND I SAW THE BIRD MISS PEACOCK
GO IN THE A AND P
YOU THINK THAT AIN'T TUFF
THIS IS OUT OF SITE
NOW THIS GROUND BIRD THEY CALL MISS PEACOCK
SHE IS BEAUTIFUL

EVERYWHERE YOU LOOK AT HER
FROM HER HEAD TO HER TOE
BUT THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PART OF THIS GROUND BIRD
THEY CALL MISS PEACOCK IS HER TAIL
SHE DON'T SPREAD HER FEATHER ON HER TAIL
UNTIL SHE MEET A MALE PEACOCK
THAT GET CLOSE TO HER
THAT IS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THING TO SEE
WHEN THIS GROUND BIRD THAT THEY CALL MISS PEACOCK
SPREAD HER TAIL REAL WIDE
EVERY LIVING THING IS GOD
GOD IS LOVE

IN EVERY FLOCK OF PEACOCK WITH ALL THE FEMALE BIRDS
THEY ONLY HAVE ONE MALE PEACOCK IN THE FLOCK
YOU THINK THAT AIN'T TUFF
MAN THAT IS TUFF ENOUGH
IF YOU HAVE NEVER SEEN THAT BIRD
THAT THEY CALL PEACOCKS MALE AND FEMALE
GO TO THE ZOO
YOU SEE ALL KIND OF BIRD
LITTLE BIRD BIG BIRDS AND ALL COLOR OF BIRDS
THEY ARE ALL BEAUTIFUL TO LOOK AT IN ZOO
HERE ON THIS EARTH

CHRISTMAS IS HERE NOW, IN NAME OF LOVE CHARITY AND HOPE

(at the end of his reading he answered questions from the audience)

Q. How long have you been travelling? Where've you been?

Well, I've been from one end of Canada to the other
I've been around the United States several times

I spent six months down in Central America
I actually went down to Central America to stabilize the fact of
my work at the University of Mexico.
When you do that in Central America and South America, that's it
as far as your work.
They let everybody know that it was there . . .

Q. What next?

I plan to go to Europe Asia and Africa . . .

Q. How did you start writing?

Well, how I managed to start writing is
that I quit smoking marijuana and drinking alcohol
I lost all my friends and I was lonely

I was in Los Angeles,
The people that I knew
they would just say hi they didn't have time for me
because I didn't do those things no more.
So I took to the beach, Started picking up driftwood and seashells
So

one morning I was out there early
and it looked like the waves
was telling me something
and I wrote it down.
And from that

I've been writing ever since. . . .

'Broken Thumbs'

Berkowitz
ropst
Williams

SEQUEL TO A LOVE POEM NEVER WRITTEN:

you were here ten minutes ago
now you aren't here
i have to get up at six
in the morning
but i'd rather go to bed at five any old time

(FOR RIC ATKINSON)

my brother and
his friend made
a pact to kill
themselves so they
could know what
death is like.
his friend took
a shotgun and
blasted a hole in his chest.
he's dead.
my brother cried a lot.
he doesn't know
any more then he used to.

the rainy day fell about my feet
as i walked across 42nd street.
i heard the sirens but i didn't dare turn around.
the subway had been empty this morning,
the holiday of independence.
all the people forgot their jobs at macys.
i wrote down all the numbers that i had lost.
luckily or whatever i saw your name
and address--i wondered if you were still living there.
just wondered that's all.
i thought of eating and realized that
it was too early in the morning
to eat my only meal of the day.
wondered about my sister.
the water is getting deep
my old man lost his teeth when i was six;
scared me for only **two years** after that.
playground is deserted--shoe shine parlor closed.
harold is a junkie the prick.
walking on water just like jesus.
said i would never get anywhere
and here i am on 59th street.
got all those wheres in one afternoon.
my mother shouldn't have died yesterday.
if she hadn't i could say that i still didn't give a fuck.
frank with sauerkraut-- george sells and eats reefers.
got busted last fall for stealing watermelons
and rolling them off roofs.
lettuce and potatoes--home is where
all good things end soon enough.
the king and i was the first time i was on broadway.
lemonade stands closed for the winter--it's school time.
mother why did you die--why do i live.
the train is crowded now.
it must be the train to the stadium for the doubleheader.
pregnant too early old too young.
lost last spring
when i asked a few questions.

--Wayne S. Propst, Jr.

NEW YORK 1968

they were lined up stacked
bodies pushing
N. Y. streets alleys
bars, places, home, dives they're all dives
a city with soul heart for its chosen ones
passed on the street
little man looking for
butts--
central park fine children pruned
into perfect shape while
screaming mother wipes chocolate
from white sailor suit--
poor tormented dirty city
dirt covered ram a million hands pet your back
into scores
the ram can no longer stand--
see the navy nurse
beautiful lost smile with fresh-faced lad
eating popcorn while the
seals hopefully watch--
oversized sweatshirts
attempt to disguise
youth breasts with giggles of relief--
hot sun hidden
monkey house intent
woman girl reads
looking up
through smoked Italian lenses caring
alone desire powerful
thrust wanton lips--
aged tired tension man man in
vested pipe mouthed suspended
grin at young women
back as thousand memories
of love past--
the street rolls royce silver
shadow waits for master
women in silk dress fur gaudy costume ball
fitz gerald days hotel meeting
fine wine wrapped in white cloth
funeral arrangements have been made--

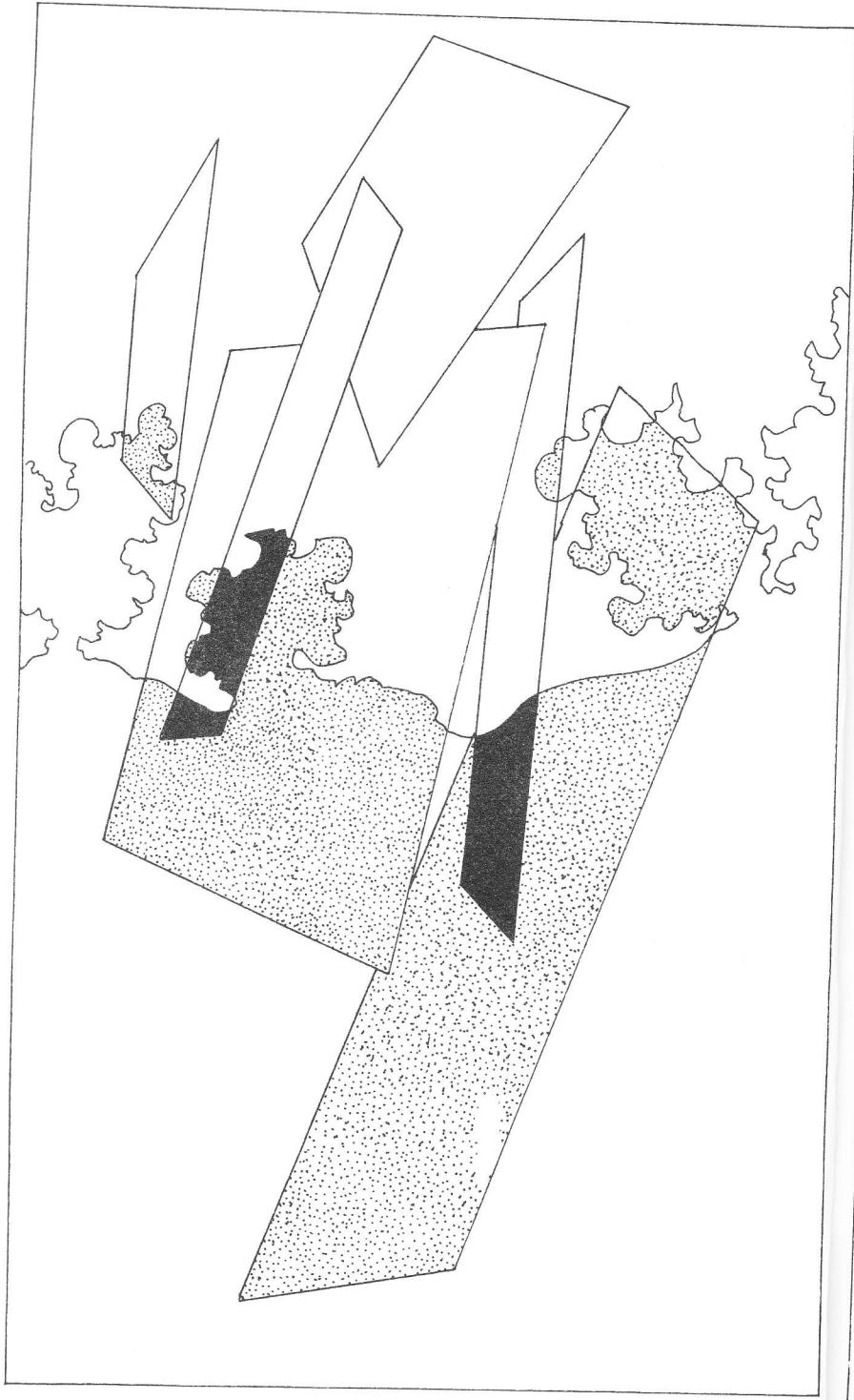
--Wayne S. Propst, Jr.

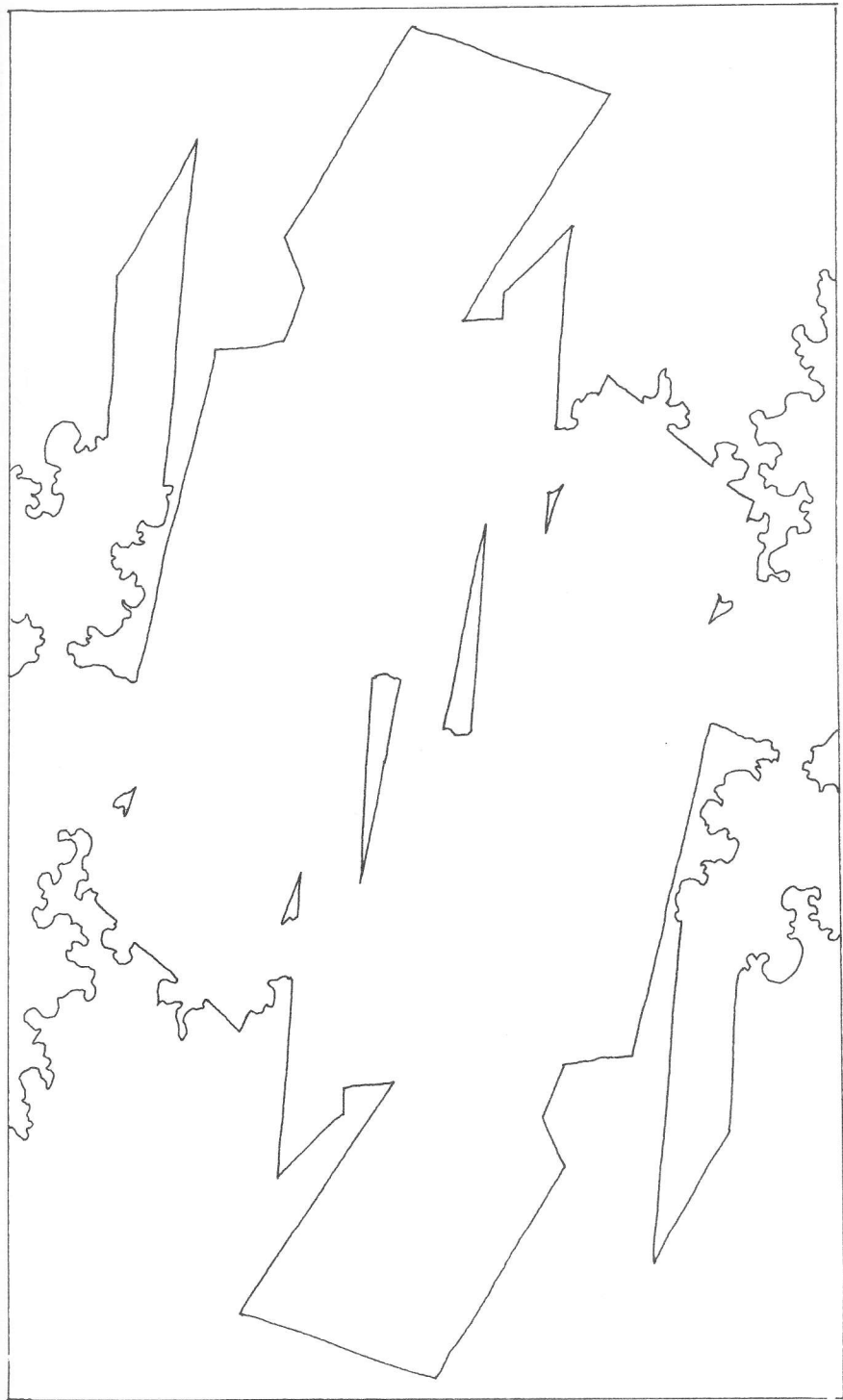
All the city is awake only two trains
not running on speed
blackness subterranean hope for clear beach saturday
city waiting friday liberation
own time they all remember
he was sent bellview the next day
and she had no lips
slit of a mouth pushed
over itself
frigid jello jiggle on flat wheels--
last sight of day slide into
the belly of New York

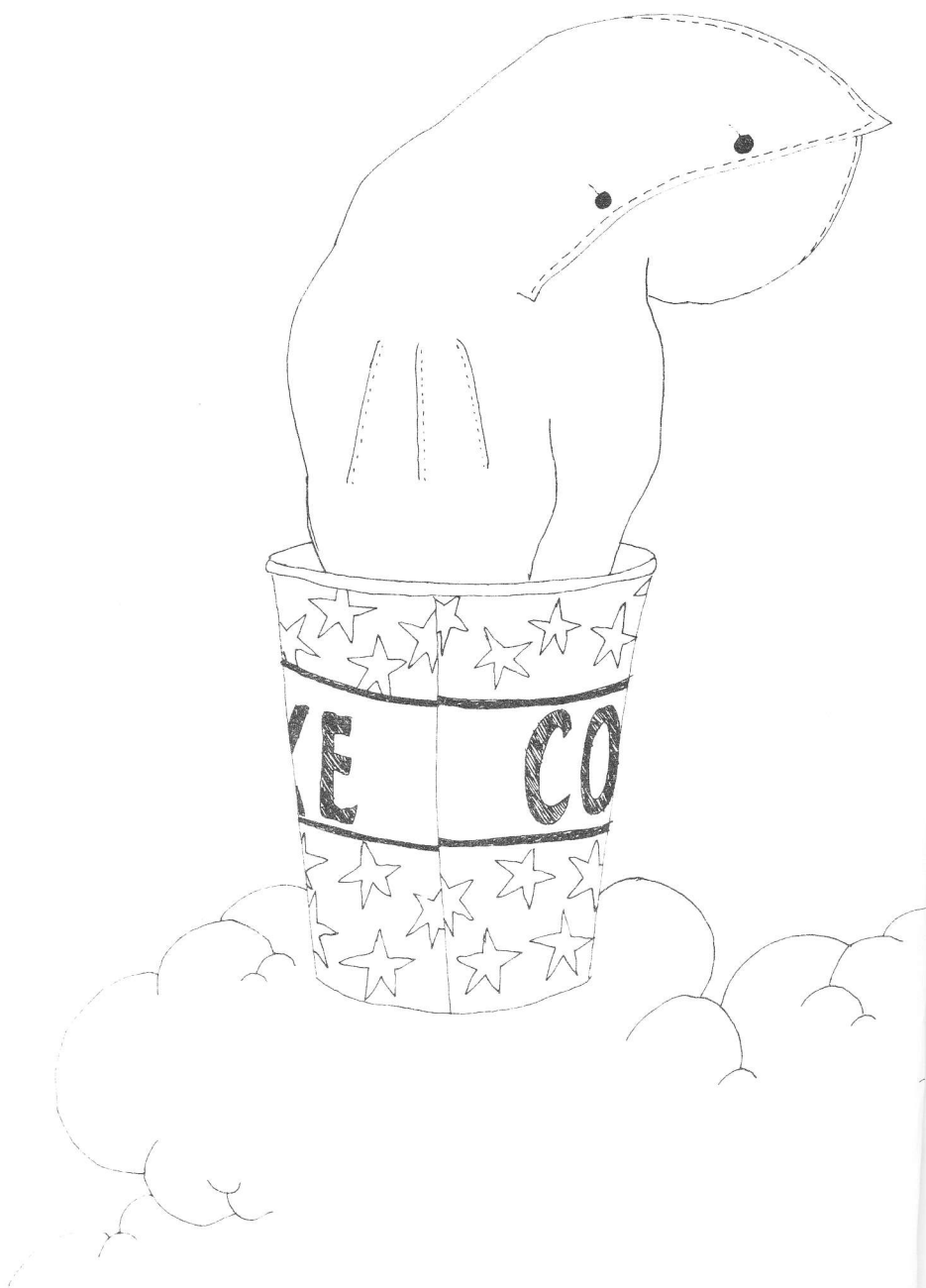
spaceless grass treeless tired plain
Standing dumb soil-stained hands dangling
Sodbuster honyocker dirt farmer
Silly women bent over babies crying
Somber cow standing asleep
Shing-a-ling bell corded around heavy neck
Sod-house dropping crumbs in bread pans
Spring rain leak cracks walls
Shining plowshare mirror
Silent homestead Kansas virgin prairie
Seconds pass, no clock-checking days off
Shuddering quiet quiet quiet wind
Sad oh sad sad dirt house speck
Somewhere but nowhere standing alone
Stubbornly pushing life out of the soil
Sodbuster loves his own--his own--his own
Shoddermanding across field on his own
on his own--his own

--Wayne S. Propst, Jr.

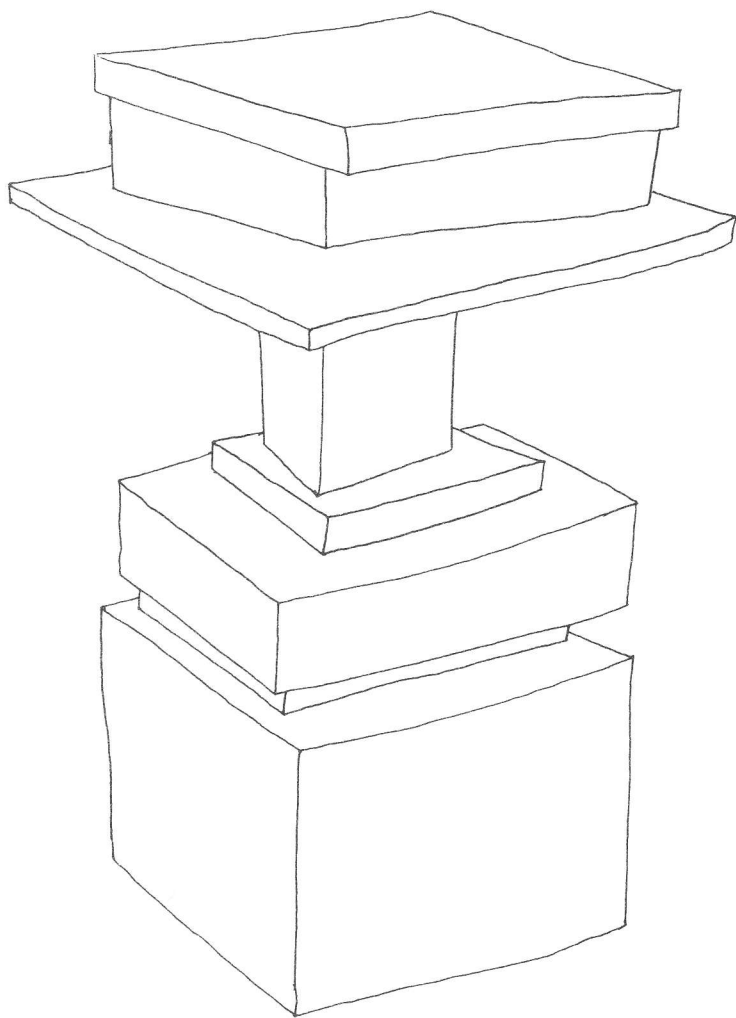
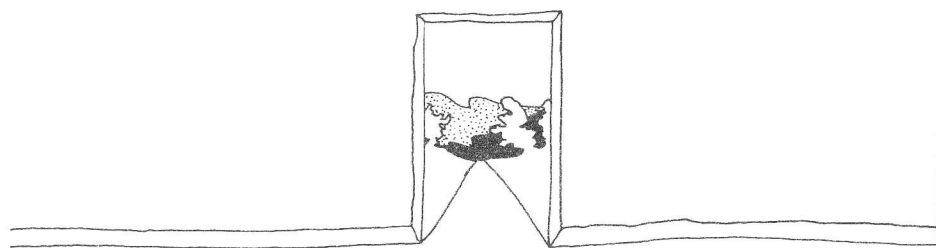
Ash tray; glasses, bring the wine
we wanted to quit
the room with ping pong balls
discussion turned to worlds existing
in the table near the wall
trivial wanderings about whole societies
living on atoms
the ping pong balls made the air heavy
the wine fermented below
the intercity viaduct along
the Missouri River poured slowly
through the balls.
the windows and doors open still
the balls pressed--more
people came, the wine
cotton-mouthed throats
music rattled through the
balls--bodies slowly
tumbled to the floor
beneath the crush of
the balls still more
red liquid--
the room now
a potion of
garbled cries
silently crashing glassed hand
blood dabbed by the balls
music turned to a hum
all this in the room
until the plaster walls pushed
through their lath sticks--
nails--fiber glass--wood--
shingles the oozing monster
slid into hot asphalt
of Louisiana St.

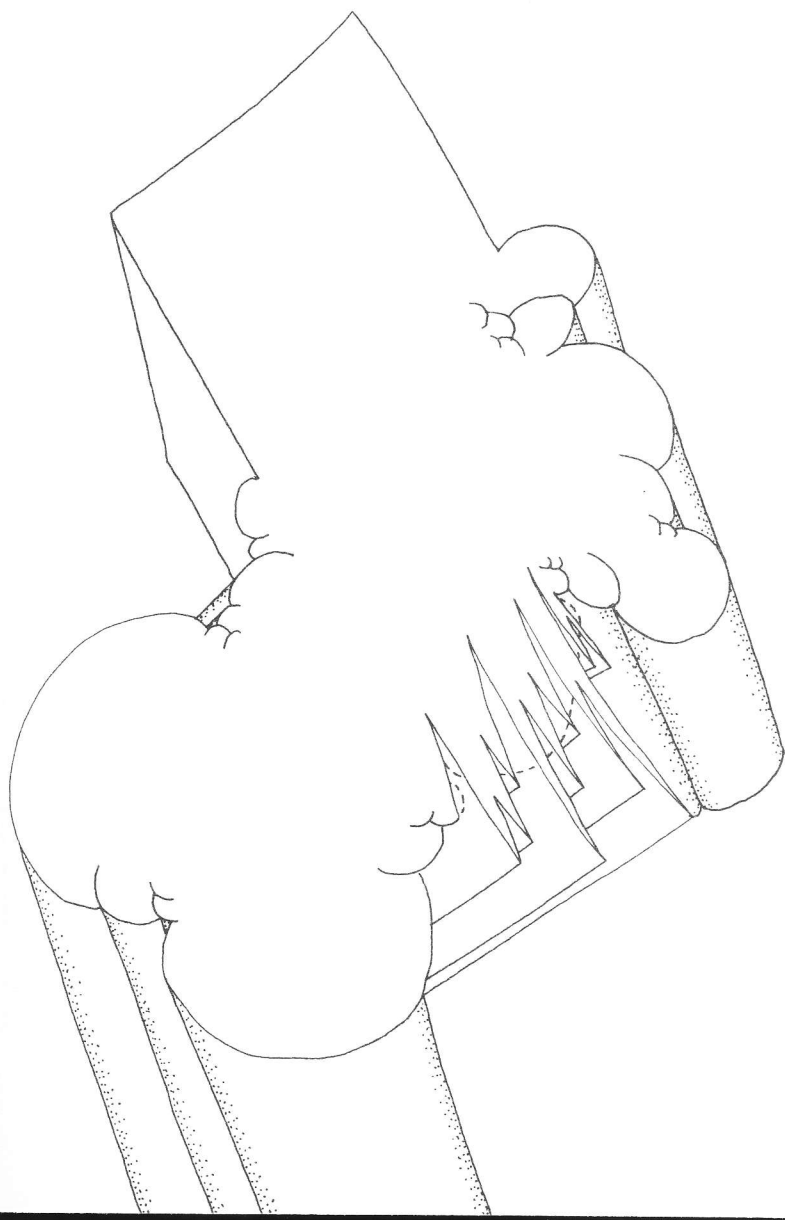


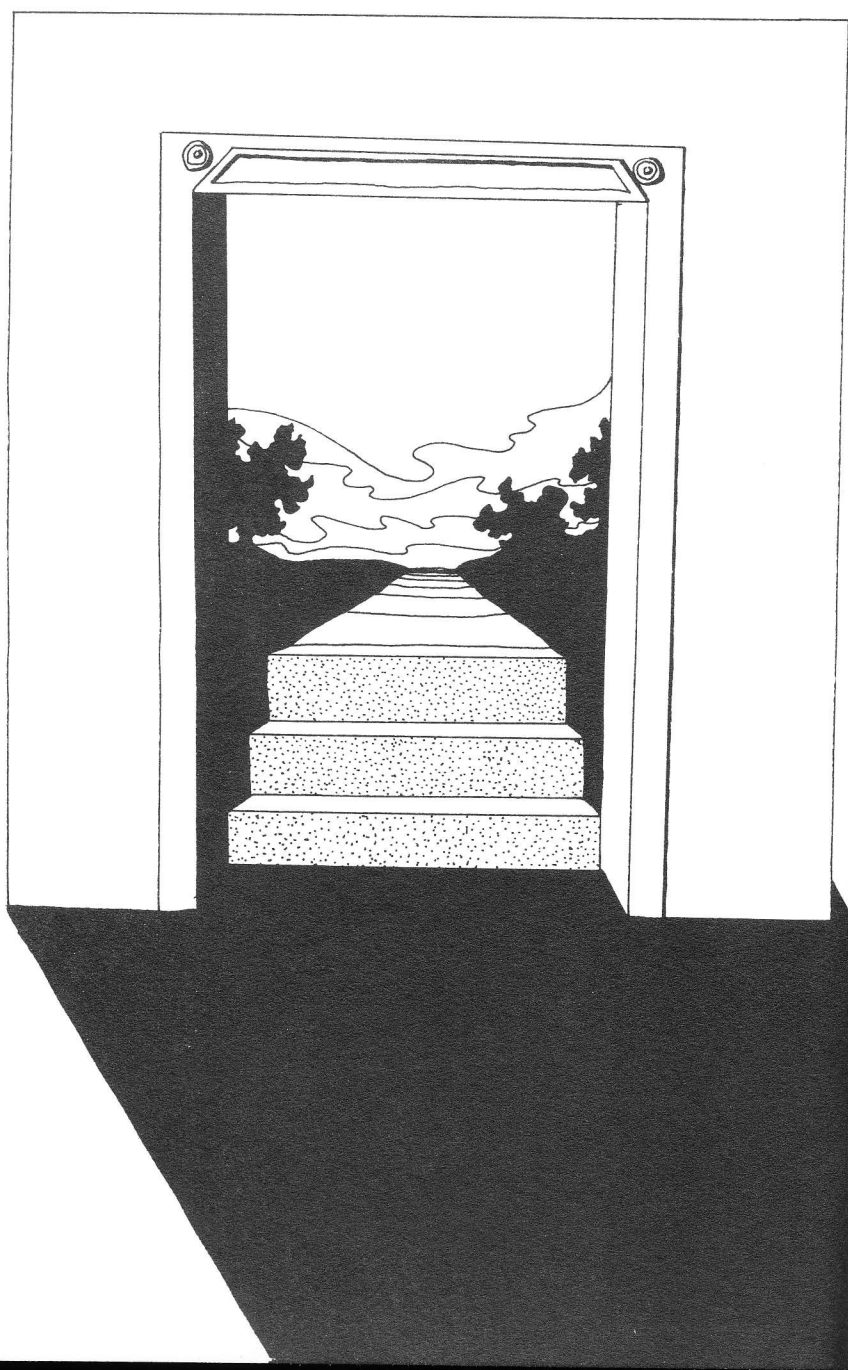


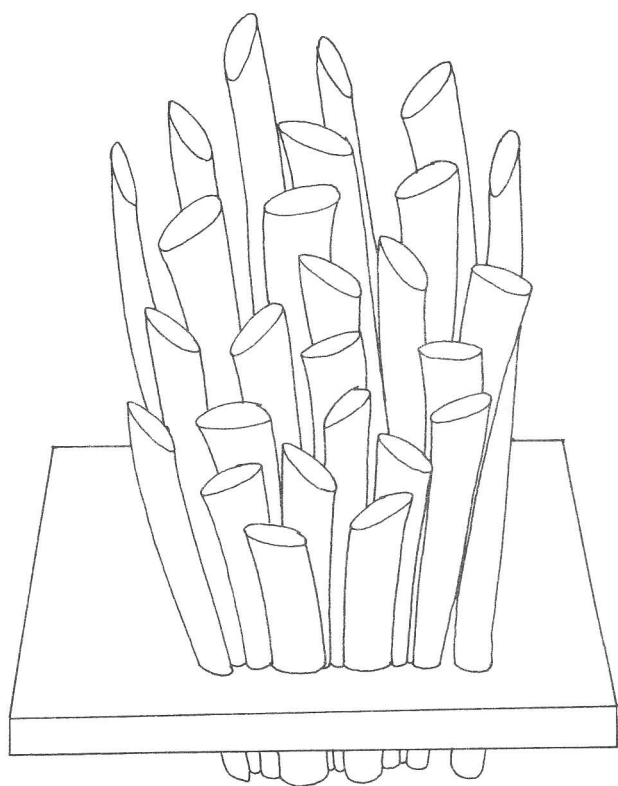












--Herb Williams

they are
looking in at us looking out
or
we
are over here
looking out at them looking in
not at all seeing
but watching ourselves
to be sure we are looking
forever out

My friends all want to change the world
organize and radicalize
beat the system
and kill the pig
me
I want to write poetry and make love

4

I asked a friend to walk down the street with me
and listen as hard as he could
All he could hear was his feet hitting the pavement

A FINGERNAIL PIE

by David Ohle

Good morning, Consolidated Power and Light.

Hello, Miss. I'm Reg Shelp. What I'm calling up about is my juice. Seems it went and--

Hello? Who is this?

This is Mr. Reg Shelp, calling up about my juice. Last night, right in the middle of my--

Did you say Red? Red what?

No. Reg, as in hedge. Short for Reggie, or Reginald if you want to go that far. Reggie Shelp.

You mean R-e-g-g-i-e S-h-e-l-p? Like that?

Yes.

Reggie Shelp, eh? Well, every day has its little surprises. Like I said this morning to my husband, Louis. I said, Louis, our baby sweetmeat has gone and lost his mind because last night he got out of his beddy-weddy and tip-toed up to my ear and said, and I quote: Mother, can you imagine a fingernail pie? All in all Bruce is a good lad, but that's some heavy stuff there. Can you imagine a fingernail pie, Mr. Shelp?

With cut ones you mean, or ones pulled out whole?

Nevermind. Say again what you called about.

It's about my electricity. Last night when I was taking my bath--poof, off they go. There go the lights. One flicker, two flickers, and black.

I declare. Were you afraid the least bit?

Afraid?

Scared.

No, not scared. Maybe surprised a little, but certainly not afraid, or scared. That's a difficult thing to--

I think you'll have to make a decision here, Shelp. We need a solid yes or a solid no if at all possible, for the form. Now were you, and please be frank, were you even the eensiest little bit afraid?

To be absolutely honest there was a moment there when . . . actually, it was more like--

Good old fashioned pants wetting terror. I knew it.

Of course not, Miss.

Ok, suit yourself. You're down for limited distress.

That does seem closer. Put that.

It's a pity because you'd of gotten much quicker service with an ampersand instead of a stupid asterisk.

With what?

Holes. Ampersand holes and asterisk holes. It goes according to the kinds of holes we punch in the cards. Now, ampersand, that's your real raw head and bloody bones stuff--pure fear. And then your asterisk. That's milder stuff--petty fright, chills, migraine. So the holes go in the cards and the cards go in the machine and that's that. It's just your types of fears matching up with your holes. We do it that way.

Seems very chancey, getting these things down exactly right.

I would hesitate to call it child's play, Shelp.

What I'd really like to know, though, is when can I get my lights fired up again?

Do you have any pets?

Do I have any whats?

Any little animals around the house? Mainly we're worried about cats and dogs. Rabbits and hamsters, possibly. But not your aquarium animals like fish and turtles. They don't count.

I do have a cat, but I don't follow the--

His name?

Cosmo. But what does that have to do with my--

And how long have you been cut in?

One day. Less than that if you don't count the time the juice has been off.

Then you're new with us, eh Shelp? Let me welcome you aboard.

Thank you very much.

And don't worry one minute about your cat. We have very good facilities here. This keeper we have, Mr. Fitch. He used to be top vet with one of your bigger petting zoos on the Coast. Now he's in charge of C. P. & L.'s kennels, and he does one heck of a job too. He's a natural.

Like a mother and several clumsy children Shelp and his bargain basement luggage deboarded the wheezing Pullman. In order that the momentum of travel might subside he rooted himself to the gumstuck platform and allowed his mind to swim freely until the lightheadedness passed. He watched other passengers deboard and be enveloped in clots of close and distant family and led away like invalids to parked and waiting automobiles. He set his luggage down and thrilled briefly at the sensation of recoiling biceps.

Shelp surveyed his new sky. It was more of a dusty tarpaulin than a bright canopy. It seemed close, smothering, and for the moment at least, birdless. It's sun was burning hot and scorching the air. Shelp's sinuses funk'd behind his eyes.

Shelp, being a salesman, was waiting-room wise. He knew them well, understood them, and had certain expectations about them. This one was nothing new. It had its gluey pews, its solitary, weak-spurtd drinking fountain, and its ammonia soaked, single urinaled men's room.

He arranged his luggage in a ziggurat construction near the ticket counter. At the apex of the pile was a spanking new Kittie-Karrier containing Cosmo, more of a good friend to Shelp than a foundling tom.

Then he went to the men's room. The lone urinal gagged on cigarette filters and candy wrappers. He confronted it. He could not piss very well with his back to the door. It put him on edge and prevented a free flow. But his bladder was enormously distended as a result of the sway and bump of the train. As it began to work itself loose and give liquid someone entered and stood behind him. He waited, hoping that the intruder might decide to use the enclosed toilet. He checked to see if the stall was empty. It was not. There was a pile of feet and clothing there. That was out. The intruder remained fixed, breathing sour air over Shelp's shoulder. Shelp pretended to finish, pulled the handle, and sidestepped.

The intruder said, Is funny, no. I see dis a lot in Army.

Shelp realized that some sort of conversation was inevitable. He surrendered.

You saw a lot of what in the Army?

Some guys not piss, somebody stand behind dem. Is common tink. Not bother me. Still I like you, yuh?

The intruder was pissing in a great bovine stream and smiling grandly.

Shelp began a handwash-delay maneuver. He milked the soap dispenser and worked up a heady lather. But the intruder continued to piss. Then he washed his face, something he rarely did in public rooms. Still the intruder pissed.

I finish soon, the intruder said. Den I leave, you piss, yuh?

No use prolonging the conversation, Shelp thought, and let it go at that. He resoaped.

The intruder's piss seemed to be at an end. He shook his tool with a degree of violence and thrust it homeward through his khaki fly.

Shelp began a new round of washings.

I Greek, the Greek said. Can tell way I talk, yuh?

Shelp felt his bladder separating itself from its niche, expanding like an overblown innertube, sweeping aside the innocent organs.

Is accent, no? Is price I pay. When I first come, get out of Army, hard time find job. But I look hard, I find one. Is good job. I like it. Now I leave. You piss, yuh?

The Greek left. Shelp dried his pulpy, wrinkled hands on the last few clean inches of a revolving towel, which smelled, strangely, like root-beer extract. Then he went to the urinal and released his bladder. Even if a roller skating team had burst through the door, he thought, he would have pissed. It was out of his control now. He did look back, though, every now and then.

He gathered up his suitcases once again and stood outside the station on the curb to look for cabs. An elderly woman, easily in the latter stages of her

seventies, drew up with rodentlike silence and stood next to him. Her hair looked like a dime-store wig that had been repeatedly washed in strong soap. Her eyes blinked feverishly under lightly pinked spectacles. Shelp braced for conversation.

You ought to try violent exercise, she said. You might lose that fat roll there. She poked him at the belt line. Nobody wants to carry around an extra load like that. You shithead.

I do them sometimes. It never works.

Ever think of surgery?

I get sick in hospitals. I don't like to look in the rooms and see all those coffin faces looking at me.

Listen to me. My Sonny had a roll like that. I kept telling him, get rid of that roll, bonehead, or else it'll sneak up and put the stops on your ticker. You think he listens? Is the Pope a Jew? No, his mother don't know it from Shinola, or so he thinks. One day I'm sitting there talking to him after dinner and I dash into the kitchen to heat up the coffee. I'm gone five minutes, mind you. I come back and what do I find? Sonny. Forty-three years old. Dead as a fish with his head smack in the middle of his plate. You keep that in mind next time you reach for éclair number two. It goes right for your heart.

I worry about that sometimes.

A cab pulled up. Shelp offered to let the woman share the ride, but she declined: No, I was just over there and I saw you standing here and I thought I'd come over and say something about that fat roll. Thank's anyway. Remember about Sonny.

I'll have nightmares.

Isn't the weather horrible? You ought to smell my armpits--like a goat farm.

Well, goodbye.

Chow, porky.

The Cherry Apartments were red brick, boxy, and stretched as far as the eye wanted to see. Shelp went to the main office. The manager was asleep, his white hair billowing in the air-conditioned breeze, one red-streaked golf ball of an eye cocked open. Shelp tapped the nipple of the chrome counter bell.

Hello?

The manager awoke with ceremony, a frightened animal cringe showing in his face, saliva spilling down his jaw and spoiling his collar. He hacked from the pleural depths and spat a nugget of rheum into his handkerchief.

Hi there. I'm Shelp. I wrote you about an apartment and you wrote back and told me you had one for me, and then I had some cartons shipped here and--

Who?

Reggie Shelp.

Shelp? Look, Shelp. Don't ever let any man, woman, or child on the face of this earth tell you that the landlord's life is a pushover because here's one aged fart who knows better. You and I are honest and clean, granted. But what about the other bastard--the phone stealer, the carpet burner, the bathroom flooder, the condom flusher? I tell you I've got it up to the eyes. Next summer it's Mexico for this landlord. Me and the old lady. Mescal and rotten beef, son. That's my speed. You can take this whole place and give it a firm shove. What's your name again?

Shelp.

And what do you do to maintain that gut?

Pardon?

What do you do for a living?

I sell sandpaper and other abrasives.

I'll wager that's a rough business, get it? Course, you've heard that one a few times. Forget I said it.

My company is opening up this territory. I'm the first salesman in these parts. I'm the company groundbreaker. I always get the new territories. I

also handle industrial diamonds, masking tape, a million things. If you ever need anything in that line, let me know. My samples are coming on the bus in a few days.

You married?

Nope. Still single. But looking.

I don't like too much unmarried fucking going on on my mattresses. When you come right down to it it ain't my business, but I believe in a certain amount of Christian behavior. And I make rounds every night too. So don't try anything. You might get a surprise visit from me while you're in the saddle. Are we square on that point?

Yes.

Is that a cat in that box?

Yes. Cosmo.

Extra twenty-five on the deposit. They eat my sofa arms.

Shelp spent the afternoon carving out an atmosphere for the harshly square and echoey apartment. He unpacked the cartons that he had shipped earlier, put ash trays out, tacked up frameless pictures, arranged pots, glasses, and silverware in the kitchen, and rearranged what few pieces of furniture there were. Then he made out a grocery list and went through the directory until he found a grocery that delivered. He ordered, and they delivered, and he loaded the refrigerator.

By evening he had gotten himself full of food and tired. His body still ached from the torture of the Pullman seat. He was ready for his bath.

What about relatives?

All deceased, excepting an old aunt somewhere. She moves from home to home. She's just about dead anyway. So don't count her.

Fine. Any property?

No. But I don't see how this relates to the fact that my electricity has been off all night now and half the morning. There's food ruining in my refrigerator. My radio can't play. My toothbrush won't plug in, or my razor. I want you to do something as soon as possible about getting my juice back on.

Don't be in such a hurry, Shelp. Bide your time. Don't go and be silly and end up getting yourself in trouble. What's your favorite color?

This seems stupid. Not to mention my air conditioner. It's like a greenhouse in here.

It may seem stupid at the moment, Shelp. But I would advise you to give me all the information I need pronto, and without all the guff.

Prussian blue, or maybe olive. I like them most.

How about a nice grey? Could you do with grey in a rush? We've got a heavy stock of Dixie grey, but we're a little weak in the blues and greens. I think Prussian blue would be a little loud anyway. Can you live with Dixie grey?

I guess.

Now for some measurements. Jacket size?

Forty-eight.

Pants?

Forty-four-thirty.

Weight?

Two-thirty-five.

Height?

Five-seven.

Do you wear glasses?

Yes.

Any prosthetic devices? Hearing aid? Dental plate?

No.

Hairpiece?

No.

That's the ticket, Shelp. Be sharp and precise. We'll get this thing processed before you can say piccalilli.

Maybe if you could give me a few directions I could fix it myself. Maybe it's just a fuse.

He brought his radio into the bathroom and dialed in a static-free station. In the room there was one small window. Though the glass was opaque Shelp could see the shadowy limbs of a thin tree whipping back and forth in the wind. A storm of some kind was in its beginnings.

He started the water running for his bath. It steamed out of the spigot and made him feel slow and sleepy. He knelt down beside the tub and peppered the water with baking soda. The steamy warmth fogged his glasses.

He undressed and faced the shaving mirror. Beads of perspiration collected along his hairline like raindrops on a clothesline. The mirror's glass was of low quality and it drew his face out of its proportions, pooched it out too much to one side. It looked grotesque, clownish. It seemed someone else--another Shelp, mutant, standing there, smiling an asylum smile, amused by his counterpart on the real side of the mirror. Slowly the mirror clouded and the image was lost.

He removed his glasses, set them atop the commode, roughed up his chest hairs and lowered himself into the water. Cosmo watched.

WEATHER BULLETIN:

Severe dust storms, accompanied by violent winds, increasing tonight, increasing tomorrow, and abating the following day. Visibility doubtful. Now, more music. Stay tuned for further bulletins.

You'd think they'd give you a few more details than that, Shelp thought, resting his head back against the lip of the tub and feeling the more-than-warm water press around his body. His cheeks approached the deep color of wilted roses. Small veins arose and crawled around his temples like bright green inchworms. He felt himself sinking into warm, watery sleep. Cosmo slept.

WEATHER BULLETIN:

Extremely severe dust storms and damaging winds, increasing tonight, increasing tomorrow, reaching a peak the following day and finally abating over the weekend. Protect openings. Keep small animals indoors. Visibility negative. Stay tuned.

Shelp, wrenched from his torpor by the anxious sound of the weather bulletin, heard the wind racing along the side of the building and the dust flying against the window. Cosmo, also awakened, watched the shadows play across the tiny window, his pupils wide, dark, and receptive, his ears stiffened, his head moving in tandem with the tree's limbs.

The first flicker was of short duration. Shelp sat up. The second flicker was more definite. Cosmo stood up and arched his back. Then the lights went out.

Definitely not, Shelp. NO REPAIR INSTRUCTIONS OVER THE PHONE! Would you want strangers playing around with your things? You wouldn't want to get inside that greasy box anyway and get your clean hands all gunked up. Leave that for the servicemen. They have training and tools.

Maybe I can do it without instructions. It can't be that much of a chore.

Absolutely no. The boxes are off bounds to users. You'd get a jolt and sue us. They're locked anyway. Better forget the whole idea, quick.

Can you send a man out then?

A man? Did you say, send a man out?

Yes.

Just like that he says, send a man out. I'm afraid you're a little on the funny side, Shelp. The way you're chomping at the bit to get a man out there. It makes me laugh. If I were you I'd calm myself. Take a nap, read a magazine, chew a piece of Aspergum, drink some milk. Try and forget about the juice. You'll feel better.

I'd like to make some sales calls this afternoon. I'll have to shave and--

I swear, men are getting to be perfect fruits. What's wrong with the old lather and blade technique? Is that too hazardous for you, Shelp? I could vomit the way men are getting. I told Louis yesterday, I said, Louis, how would you like to borrow my brassiere because you're growing quite a set there from sitting on your duff all weekend drinking beer and looking at television. Shelp, I'm very ashamed of today's man, my own one included.

Listen, Miss. There's some bad weather brewing up out there and I'd like to get something on the radio about it. I can hear garbage cans clattering down the street. That's how the wind is. And dust is pouring in under the door and window. What am I supposed to do? Sit in here and wait around and not have any idea what's going on out there?

That's what I'd advise, Shelp. No more, no less.

Well, it's not what I'd--

What kinds of flowers tickle your fancy, Shelp?

I'm pretty sure I've had enough of this.

WHAT KINDS OF FLOWERS!

Pissweed.

Is that a joke, Shelp?

Is this a joke?

Don't mess with the cobra, friend. It bites. Now give me one or two flowers, and be serious. Jokes get my dandruff up.

Seaweed and moss.

Be funny, Shelp. Just be funny. But let me remind you that our gardener is a regular Luther Burbank. And if you choose seaweed and moss, you get

seaweed and moss. I can just picture you all draped with seaweed and a nice moss nest on your forehead. Jokes can be costly, Shelp.

In exactly five minutes I start making phone calls.

Phone calls?

My company has power. I can bring pressure.

Pressure?

Pressure, Miss. That's right.

I declare, Shelp. You do put a lot of stock in electricity, don't you?

This piddling is costing me plenty. I'm through with the run around. Let me talk to somebody higher.

Shelp sat for a moment in the darkness staring at the glowing radium face of the silent radio, feeling like an injured gull downed in a nighttime ocean, the bathwater lapping against his belly. He wondered what was happening.

He waited a few minutes to be sure that the lights were not going to come back on then climbed out of the tub, groped for his glasses, walked in wet footsteps to the phone and called the manager by matchlight.

Hi. This is Shelp, from today?

Who? I can't hear nothing with this wind sucking on the goddamn windows.

Shelp, from today? Sandpaper?

Yeah, Shelp. I remember. What's up your bunghole?

My lights went out.

Well, butter my rump. I should worry about that when I've got about fifty old ladies with sneezy noses, about twenty-five screeching bitches with gritty salads, and one freak that thinks the sumbitching world is ending. And I should worry about Shelp's lights? I admit, you and me are blessed with a few traces of brain muscle, granted. But what about the rest of these jackoffs? I say cram the whole kit and caboodle. Next year, Shelp. Me and the old lady. Spickland.

I was just sitting there in the tub, you know. Tuned into the weather forecast. All of a sudden, snap, off they go.

Like I said before, Shelp. It's like two billy goats trying to shine a frog with a tin can. It won't work. I don't have time to screw with your lights. In fact, I don't care about your lights, understand. I don't have nothing to do with lights. That's some other body's hair. Me, I got other things to do. The thing for you to do is to put on your little pajamas, get in your little bed, close your little eyes, and lay the shit off me for the duration. Call up the electric outfit in the morning. Drop it in their laps.

I guess if that's the only thing I can--

That's the size of the boot, Shelp. Wear it.

I guess I'll give them a buzz in the morning.

Good thinking, Shelp. Good-night?

Good-night.

Oh, pus! Wait a minute, Shelp. I forgot something. They expect me to keep track of everything. Here, listen, before you hang up I have to make a note on something. Are you still there?

Yes.

Just a little quickie to drop in your file.

Sure.

Ok, here goes. When those lights went out. Were you scared?

Hello, tiger. Sammy Tanner, Cables and Connections. Lady says you've got a bone to pick. Is that how it is?

Right as rain. Here I am sitting here listening to the weather go berzerk out there and no juice in the wires to run the radio to tell me what's going on. What I need is some fast service out here, because if I don't get a man out here pretty fast I'm--

Ok, jockomo. But first let me shoot you a few questions on this thing here. A little form here to fill out. Just a few simples is all. Ready?

In about ten minutes if you look in the hallway you'll see head's rolling. There's going to be some heavy chopping going on around there if I don't get some service soon.

Fuck you, Shelp.

. . . ? What I heard just then. I didn't hear. Right? Maybe you should run it by again, slower.

Fuck you, Shelp, and your mother, and your father, and your sister, and your brother, and the whole rest of your chancerefaced family. Fuck them, too. Doublefuck them. You hear me? Was it clear that time?

I guess I'm supposed to sit here and listen to that?

That's entirely up to you, Homer. I tried to be nice to you and first thing you do is work your balls up into a froth. The manual says if a caller gets testy, shock them. So, you stand shocked. Now, do you want a man out there or not?

I do. And that little toilet-mouth episode there is probably going to cost you some dues. But right now, let's concentrate on getting a man out here on these wires.

Hallelujah, Dudley, pal. Just answer these questions and you'll get a man.

I remember your name. I guarantee you some trouble.

What is your church preference?

Either Romanesque or Gothic. I can't decide.

That was clever, Shelp. That was cute. Do you want a man out there?

I do.

Then answer straight. What religion are you?

Zero.

You're an atheistic person?

I have a personal dislike for God. Yes.

You scum. I'll put you down for non-denominational. Do you prefer bayberry, lemon, or plain candles?

I'm neutral on candles.

I'll put plain. Cheap candles for an atheistic bastard. Do you have any physical anomalies?

You mean?

I mean is your body more or less normal? Are you hunched over or anything? Protuberances? Crooked bones? Things like that?

No.

Are you continent?

What?

Do you shit and piss on yourself unexpectedly? Do you spring a hard at odd times? Can you control impulses?

Yes, but--

Ever married?

No.

Engaged?

Twice.

What happened? They played around a little on the side, and you got upset?

I refuse to go on with--

Forget that one. That was me. That's not on the form. Well, I guess that takes care of all the necessities, Shelp. There's a space down here for remarks. Anything you want me to put down? And don't get smart.

Put down that I don't intend to sit still for this.

Ok, Percy. Now the thing for you to do is to talk to Mr. Strappe. He's chief engineer for your district.

Shelp dried himself and walked around the dark apartment smoking cigarettes until his throat was seared, and then he went to bed. The wind kept him awake for some time, but quickly he became attuned to its rhythm and used it to put himself to sleep.

He awoke early, fed Cosmo, and read magazines until he thought the Consolidated offices would be open. He flipped the wall switches several times, hoping that they would suddenly work and he wouldn't have to make the call. But they didn't.

The wind's violence increased and the dust rained against the door without letting up. Cosmo licked his chops under the sofa. Shelp made the call.

Jack Strappe here. What can I do for you, Mr. Shelp? Tanner tells me you're in the dark. Pardon the humor there, but I believe that if you can't find humor in everything you might as well settle down in a ditch and die. So I try my best to get a chuckle or two out of everything. How about you, Shelp? Is that your philosophy?

I usually spend Christmas in a ditch, laughing.

Tanner said you were a sharp.

Mr. Strappe, I'm getting very nervous about this whole thing.

Did the lady tell you about her kid and that fingernail pie business? I really got a kick out of that.

Yes.

Kids are strange sometimes.

Yes. What about my electricity?

Put yourself in my place for the time being, Shelp. Under the circumstances, would you send a man out? I mean, assuming you didn't have all the necessary information on the caller? We need to get everything exactly right before sending out a man.

You bet your buns I'd send a man out. That weather out there is about to--

Then I'll send a man out. I'll bank on your judgment.

That's all I wanted to hear.

Now, I want you to cooperate with him. Try to understand that his job is not the easiest in the world. If you do that we might succeed in getting this thing over with before lunch break.

Now I smell progress. Next time I'll know who to talk to. Straight to the top. No more fooling around with hired help.

He'll be a Greek fellow. A good man. Excellent manner. Citations at every annual banquet. A hell of a good man. He wandered in here one day, really down in the dumps, and we took a chance on him. It paid off. He's the best man we have. Do exactly as he says and things should go along without a hitch. Keep in mind that his job is to make things as easy as possible for all parties concerned. Any suggestions he makes will be intended to help you. Try not to be stubborn or unpleasant. If you do, things might not go so well. Make him feel at home. He's a veteran, but even the best of us get the butterflies now and again. If he seems nervous, try to boost his spirits. It'll go much better for you.

What about my juice? I notice you didn't even mention that. What about the food warming up in my refrigerator? What about the weather reports? What about my toothbrush? What about my razor? What about my air conditioner?

The procedure is pretty well layed out.

I'm supposed to make calls this afternoon. What about that? I'm telling you there's an inch of dust under the door. I want some weather reports. I don't think you realize--

First, he rings the doorbell . . .

There I was, sitting in my tub, having a good bath, listening to the weather reports, and first thing you know--

Then you let him inside . . .

I put almost a whole box of baking soda in that bath. Oh, it was a warm one. God, it was warm. And so I'm sitting there--

He'll sit with you for a while and talk to you.

And all of a sudden . . .

You'll try to understand one another. He'll try to see your point and you'll try to see his. He'll listen to your story, and you'll listen to his.

Snap! There go the lights. One flicker, two flickers, black. You can imagine how--

Frightened? Sure, I can imagine. That's part of my job.

Yes, I was a little frightened.

Nobody holds that against you, Shelp. There you were in a strange bathtub, in a strange bathroom, in a strange building, in a strange town, and you were a little frightened when the lights went out. Nobody can call you a sissy on that score. One small scare doesn't necessarily make a man less of a man. Everybody has his little frights now and again. I've had my share. Ask anybody and they'll say, Strappe has had his problems through the years, heaven help him. But finally I started to see a little humor peeking out of every nook, hiding under every stone. There's plenty out there, Shelp. You just have to look for it. Turn over a few stones. Shelp, I don't know. Under different circumstances you and I might be slugging gimlets together in some bar somewhere. But a thing like this only goes one way. The barrel's over the falls and that's it. There's blood on the rocks in the morning. Do you understand what I'm saying, Shelp?

Yes. I think the wind is picking up.

What are your feelings at this point?

A weather report might say something about--

I think we can send the man now, Shelp. Right away. Is that agreeable with you?

The bathwater was a little hard. I chafe in hard water.

Why don't you stretch out and take a nap?

Yes. Even in hot weather I take hot baths. I like hot baths.

After you replace the receiver your lights will go on.

Yes. My lights.

Then you'll have about thirty minutes, assuming he can make it over there

before he knocks off for lunch. You never know. With a storm like this he might get tied up.

Yes. So I turned up the air conditioner to make the place cold--

Another thing I just thought of. If you feel like you want to write something down, go right ahead. Be sure to tell the man about it and he'll get it to me. One thing, though. Be sure and do it on regular 8 1/2 x 11 sheets. That way we can drop it right in your folder without all this retyping business.

Yes.

And one more thing. . . . Shelp?

Yes.

Empty your pockets.

Yes.

And take off your belt and shoes.

Yes.

Better yet. Take off everything. Just a bathrobe would be good.

Yes.

I guess that's about it from this end, Shelp. Can you think of anything else?

No. Nothing.

FIVE POEMS

--Patrick Nolan

FIONA POEM #4

this morning she
dressed and tied
a scarf around her
hair like a peasant.

now she goes
back and forth
throwing dirty water
out the window.

FIONA POEM #5

in the desert
heat
on the road-
side
she cries with frustration
shielding her child
from the sun
wondering why
there is no
compassion.

FIONA POEM #6

she moves this way
& that, moving
this & that
rejecting parasites
with a facile tone.

an easy toe
squashing any &
every moving heart.

you can't put her down,

she does whats to be done
& a strong belief
in reincarnation
won't change the rhythm
of her cleaning.

REASON

what is said
romantically
in rhythms
never approaching
the dynamics of reason
was not meant for

the ears
altho not bloodless
are heartless
funnels to the brain.

FROM A LETTER

(for keith abbott)

What you've described
As jade tree fog scenery
Is essentially peace-
Ful energy.

Now that I think of it
Something similar
Goes on around me
In the city.

The energy, vibrations
If I must, is mechanical;
The buildings are steel,
The trees . . .

CLANK!

STORY OF THE MOUTHS

David Wilson (in Florida at this writing) drifts around writing his poems on sidewalks and toiletstools and would like to find a way to work full time on his writing. Once was a student at the University of Kansas.

C.H. Hejinian is a wife and mother formerly of Massachusetts, last heard of from California. A book of her poems should be out soon.

Edward English came to Lawrence, Kansas from the Greyhound station one October Friday and by next Wednesday had set up a reading to which he drew a crowd of two or three hundred. On pages 17-20 are excerpts from his commentary and two of the poems he read. The title of the piece is drawn from the way he signs his work.

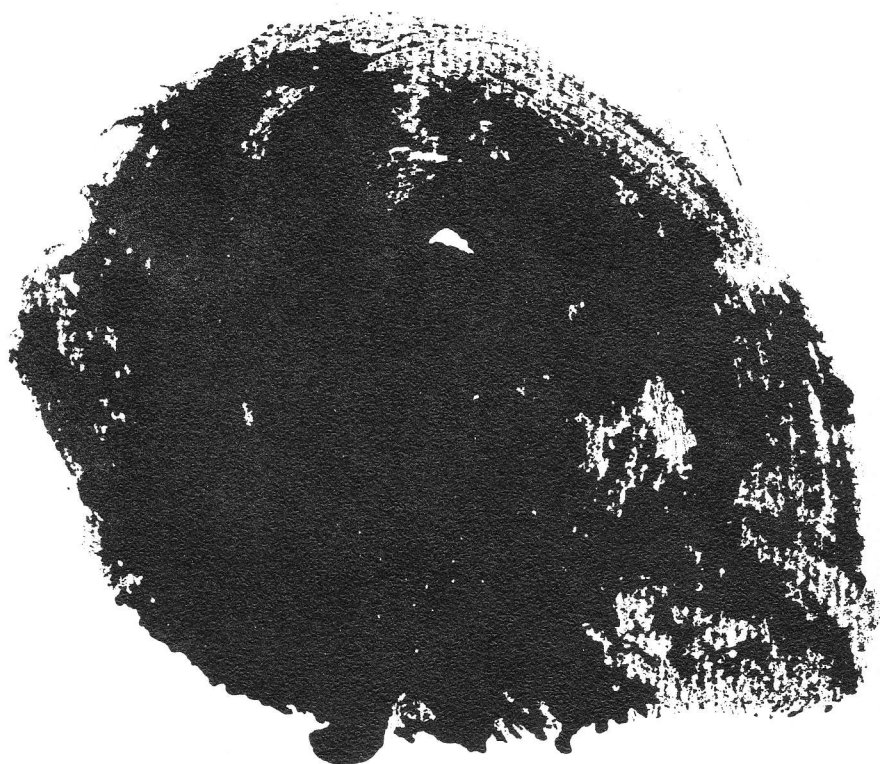
The poems by Bill Berkowitz, Wayne Propst, and Herb Williams, are from a collection entitled "Broken Thumbs " soon to be published by Cottonwood. Propst and Williams just graduated from Kansas and headed off for California and the University of Iowa, respectively. Bill Berkowitz is still in Lawrence -- student, teacher, poet, and political activist.

David Ohle is a graduate at the University of Kansas and takes his writing seriously. David did much work on an interview with William Gass that will appear in a future issue of Cottonwood.

Patrick Nolan came roaring into Lawrence last May while on his way to California. He said that he makes a good living from reading his poetry -- sometimes as much as 30 a year.

Lee Chapman... woof.





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