Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter—tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther....and one fine morning—

So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.

from The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald

Great Lake Review
Walking to St. Joe’s, cutting through the hospital Emergency tunnel, with my cassock and a surplus Of carefully chosen stones in my hands, I go To serve 6:20 mass. I throw at the upper corner, Get a stone to stay on the dark ledge; Whip one at the stop sign on Seventh, hear the ping Resonate against the buzz of overhead lamps.

Down on the Presbyterian church sparrows chase One another through the vines that crawl up the brick. Their song is the loudest noise on Onieda Street. After a few stones, they stay close to the wall Like fleas on an animal’s coat. I drop the altar boy Clothes to the moist grass, try to nail a brown dart, Impossible target, cross the street and look back.

I go through the motions on the altar; ring the bells, Pour the wine and water, hold the plate under the nuns’ Throats at communion. I think of the stones In my pocket: they’re like marbles burning a hole to be shot. They hurt when I genuflect. Out of church, dying To wing a stone, I throw at the sewer opening, follow It up quick and listen for the drop-gurgle I missed.

Breaking into a trot up Mohawk Street, I’m Fran Tarkenton Flinging with an open palm while still in motion. Bam bam! Shredding a flower garden, I’m the half-bearded Soldier with a Hershey bar in his pocket. I cut towards Onieda on Fifth to sneak-up on the crazy lady’s house. She’ll be sitting on her porch, protecting her feeder; She expects me to be coming up Onieda Street.

I spot the red-breasted target, its head twisting away from me. I stop. Brooks Robinson throwin’ from the hole at third; I aim high, it flys up and takes the stone in its chest. I run up to the still robin, pick it up and run Like Hell for home. I hold it tight as the ping in my chest And hope Paulie’s up for school; he might know what to do.

Steve Marabito
Reclaiming McCaffrey Park

The light turns green,
The river is flowing again.
The countless, faceless ride through the night.
The band is almost ready.

A saxophone drifts across to the west side of Ninth Avenue into the world of a small boy ready to lift his first apple from Palito’s Fruit and Vegetable Stand.

He lifts it, and then goes to find the sax.
He doesn’t care where it’s going, just where it’s coming from.
In a moment he is there, and there are others there.
Who thought they’d even try
Reclaiming McCaffrey Park?

The sax is seen,
As is a drum that starts just when
The dam breaks filling the park with light.
Nothing here ever looked steady

Through the mist that surrounded the stage for all those years, through the dark clouds that hung over the playground like unseen beasts stalking their prey in silence, they took command of their knights.

The boy, unknowingly, has found their tracks.
The marks were left all over the street, hard to say who from.
They were out to clean the trail, who thought they’d even care?
Still no one questioned why...
Reclaiming McCaffrey Park.

What does it mean?
Do they really think that they can
Come in here and take over in full sight?
I think they do; and already

The place looks different as the last few drops of sun drip up the handball court then slip out of the park and head for Jersey on que from the MC who introduces the band.

But it isn’t the sun that got the ax,
They gave it to the vultures.
It seems their moment had come.
Odds are high on the street, still I’m glad they took the dare.
To watch could make you cry...
Reclaiming McCaffrey Park.

So what’s the theme?
How to control a lions den.
What is that can quiet such might?
The ocean strips the jetty.
They had never said a word before, they were hidden in plain sight, but their children needed a place to play amid these thousand walls, so they united for a box of sand.

This time they wouldn’t watch, then turn their backs.
Each One gets a number, and now they know they are One.
And as they hit the sidewalks, the people stopped and stared.
I thought I heard one sigh...
Reclaiming McCaffrey Park.

Steve Geary
The way you hit a woman all depends. It depends whether you want to hit her or hurt her. Let us say you want to hit her. You take one of your hands; the one you will not strike her with, and grab both her hands by the wrist. Do this, because if you don’t, you take the chance that in her terror and anger she will lash at your eyes or face. You will not take this chance. With the other hand you spread the fingers to open the palm. You draw your hand back and you will strike with the power and force you would use to extinguish the buzz of a fly. You will be sure to aim for the cheek. To aim for the nose will break it; to aim for the mouth will cut it. To hurt her you simply ball up your fist, the knuckles showing as whitely and evenly as curbstones, and unload into her face. And you will do this all in one motion.

But before you do, consider: The hands you are holding trapped, fluttering wildly like a captive dove, have once rested on your back, the nails open as they are now, digging white furrows across your skin as the bed under you creaks and shivers. Or they have held a phone cradled close to an ear while you have told her of your love during the piss-break of a long Greyhound trip.

But if we take your hands from her wrists, and cradle them around the phone as they were this afternoon, you would be hearing your aunt tell you of the recent death of your second cousin.

“Edward,” she says. “Edward, the whole family is coming to the funeral. We’d all like you to be there. You simply must come.” You do not like this aunt; you do not like being called Edward; and you have met this cousin only once. “He was driving, you know,” she says. “Right along Erie Boulevard. He had one of those aneurism attacks. Just fell forward right onto the steering wheel and piled into a parked car. The doctor said it was instantaneous. He never felt a thing.”

You are brought suddenly to the awareness that the death of your second cousin is only a topic in the gossipy mind of your aunt. When she has exhausted all facts and rumors on that topic she will switch to another without missing a beat. Perhaps she will tell you of your wife’s infidelity, as she has done before. A woman like your aunt has trained her ear to hear the tune of disorder. But the image of your wife as your aunt has presented her - sitting at the open air cafe on James Street while sipping drinks that have tiny umbrellas on the rim of the glass, is but a prelude for another image. That is, the image of your wife on dirty sheets in the sweaty act of consummation. It is this image which comes to mind when you hold a foreign telephone receiver against your ear and hear nothing but the ignored bleating of the telephone at your home. The telephone you are holding. But your aunt is not finished with your cousin. She goes on yet some more about the funeral arrangements; and you are aware of the sorrow and emptiness in her life. But to be aware of that in her life brings you once again revoltingly back to an awareness of the room you are standing in. It is the living room. You are aware of a sofa that sags on the end nearest the reading lamp. You are aware of the once fluffy rug that has been ground to a sliver by God knows who; and these, plus the crack in the glass of the china cabinet, the broken arm of the rocking chair, and the greasy fingerprints smothering the coffee table, all make you aware there is nothing in your life that is whole.

Suppose, though, that having taken your hands temporarily away from the wrists of Trish, your wife; we now put them on something solid - as say, the steering wheel of your Greyhound bus. You have refused cross-country assignments, and now work out of LaGuardia Airport, ferrying passengers to Westchester County. On a slow night it sometimes takes an hour to load up the entire bus with passengers, and by Greyhound regulations you may not leave the airport until you have loaded the bus to capacity. But one day a woman stands before you. She has one of those faces, whether because of the bulging eyeballs, or the jaggedly drooping mouth that seems to have been robbed of all beauty or intelligence.

“I must get to New Rochelle by eight,” she says. “I must. My daughter is waiting for me, and she’s never very patient. Please, we’re almost full. Please let’s go.” You cannot, of course. When she keeps pleading you feel like
standing up, taking your hands from the wheel of the bus, and hitting her. Perhaps you even wish to hurt her. She would not stand a chance, and would probably flop down with the same resignation she uses to sit in her seat. But you do not hit her; nor do you hurt her. Instead you keep your hands fixed firmly to the wheel of the bus.

But we are not on the bus, we are still in the living room; and Trish has been putting up such a struggle that you now use both your hands to hold hers. She squirms and bunches up her mouth, her lips pressing outwards whitely, as you control her. It is not hard. You are a big man, and she is small and easy to control.

O.K. So you have her under control; and you reach back once more to hit her. But consider first if you want to hit her, then your hands have been granted the capacity of cruelty. It may be that you would take the hand that will strike her and hold tightly the grip of a pistol. And you could squeeze the trigger evenly and blow a hole through your cheeks or brain. Depending, of course, whether you wanted to hit or to hurt. Or you could take that hand, and sitting naked on the edge of a bed or bath, draw arcs across your wrist with the cleansing effect of all things that have coursed through innermost parts.

Or you can take those hands and apply them constructively. You are holding the steering wheel of the bus. You feel, first in the hands, then by the pressure against the tendons in your wrist, and then the muscles of your shoulder - a slight tugging of the wheel. You have blown a tire. You pull the bus off to the shoulder and from under the dashboard you take out flares as well as a toolkit. You light the flares. Should you be careless and not take this precaution, a driver deceived by the glossiness of the highway at night could ram into the bus, killing you with the lug wrench in your hands, and whoever happened to be above you in the john. You apply the strength of your hands to each lug; they are on the steering wheel, and from under the dashboard you take out flares as well as a toolkit. You slip her dress off, putting up such a struggle that you now use both your hands to hold hers. She squirms and bunches up her mouth, her lips pressing outwards whitely, as you control her. It is not hard. You are a big man, and she is small and easy to control.

Or you may think of this. On a night in January the snow is as wet as a clammy palm touching your wrists and shoulders. There is a blind woman on your bus. You are at the last stop, in Peekskill Mall, and she is the last passenger. She comes forward to the door, and with that curious cocking of the head that distinguishes blind people, she says, "You must walk me home, you must. I live right across from the Mall parking lot. It's icy out. I know that from the airport. I fell once already and almost broke by hip." There is a long moment of hesitation; you have a schedule to adhere to, and you must get home to your wife. Then she says, "Well, help me Goddammit!" You turn off the ignition, get out of your seat, and pull the thin brown uniform jacket around your shoulders. She is about to let out another bellow when you take her by the wrist with the same strength and firmness you now hold Trish. You help the woman out of the bus, get her bags from the storage compartment, and start walking with her across the parking lot. The wind picks up, and you have no gloves, so your hands are quickly numbed.

"Why the Hell does God choose me to shit on?" she shouts. Her head is tilted slightly towards you, and her body seems angular and crooked. She starts slipping, and you pick her up off the ground as her feet spin out of control like the tires of a bus trapped on a slick of ice. The rest of the parking lot stretches in front of you like a deserted and mysterious valley. You come to a large patch of ice and both of you start slipping. You drop her bags like excess ballast and grab her with both hands, but you fall to the ground anyway. The side of her head hits you in the lips as you cushion her fall. You taste, for a moment, her wet straw-like hair. "Goddammit!" she shouts. "I tell those bastards at the Parks Department to put down salt to melt the ice - but they don't do shit!"

You taste blood by pushing your tongue against your teeth; and you are not sure, because of the cold, if one has been loosened. But you get up, grab her bags and wrist and turn up a small hill.

"Third house in," she shouts in your ear, leaning against your collar. You get to the house and put her bags down. She starts crying as she fumbles for the key to the heavy oaken door. In the street lamp, her lightless face is red and wet; and when you try to help her, she pushes you away with a sob.

You may have these memories; however they do not take away the fact that here you stand, holding the wrists of your wife with one hand while you draw back to strike her with the other. What do you do? The choices are before you, as unseemly and plain as a billboard. Do you lift her to the ceiling in exaltation; or do you occlude the vision of her eye with a swollen cheek. Oh, but the answer is obvious to you who have held the wrists and fought the impulse to hit or to hurt. You take your hands, as lethal as they are, and as filled with the grime of your lust for damage; you must take those hands and put them around the light bones of your wife's shoulders. Grab her zipper and pull it down until it has reached the end of its track. You slip her dress off, down to her ankles. She is naked from the waist up, and her plaster of Paris colored belly slopes and the skin is taut. When you kiss her navel, your lips feel as if they are at the bottom of a long and tremendous slide. Your hands are now around the inward curve of her back; and you hold that, and her, and her love, as tightly and carefully as you would hold anything that has come so dangerously close to having perished.

Robert O'Connor
A fat man lives on my street
right near my house and we’re friends.
But, there is a strain between us when we meet.
At the grocery store our carts lock,
and I try not to be too obvious as I roam my eyes over his purchases,
consciously looking for malted milk balls or ice-cream
sandwiches, boxes and boxes of them and feeling guilty
because there never is any.
Or at the bus stop helpless under the rain,
huddled in the wooden box for protection,
our raincoats touch waiting for the PARK AVENUE and when it comes,
him having a hard time getting through the door.
He’s a nice man too, very friendly.
Asking about my health, my mother, my cat and
I like him and he likes me.
He sent me a rose once, when he heard I was sick with the flu.
We always sit together,
talking about everyday things, how much he loves musicals,
how I prefer dramas, and he has liquidy-brown eyes
that are constant on my face when he speaks.
And I’m sophisticated in my office clothes,
with my night time city friends,
and very polite as we ride to our destinations,
where I say goodbye,
putting my feet on the pavement, feeling somewhat unsettled
inside and wondering why I always become so bothered.

Peg Maloney
Lunch With The Ladies

Olives cooked in garlic, cured provolone, bread and soup:
It's Tuesday lunch with the assembled widows at my
Grandmother's house. The women laugh, exchange stories
And wear their conditions with the existential grace
Of the eyes of a smiling statue.

Years pass, lineages slip through the fingers of memory,
Disintegrating into the dunnness of a cheap city house
Where Mrs. Cantino says her youngest son
Doesn't write her from any more.

Mrs. Bellicino recalls her husband's father
Pushing his life on a cart through the streets,
"What a old drunked bastard, three sheets ta the wind."
The chill in her voice lowers the others' eyes.
My grandmother hurries the soup and makes a joke.
The ladies laugh above the steam;
The soup is too hot and must be eaten slowly.

Steve Marabito

We Never Went To Paris

John and I went with the adults to clean out Pop-Pop's apartment. Aunt Maureen didn't think it would be wise if we went, she thought it would be too upsetting to our underdeveloped minds. There was nothing she could do though; Mom had no one to stay with us.

My younger brother and I hung back from the group of aunts and uncles where our parents were intertwined, and kicked through the slush that was splattered on the city sidewalk. We stuck our boots in the gooey mixture and made lasting imprints. We took turns seeing who could make their breath last longer in the chilly air. We drifted pretty far away from the group moving toward the apartment building, and Uncle Kenny had to shout to us to hurry up. John and I took our time walking. We knew every aunt and uncle would feel it necessary to remind us that we were supposed to behave, act our age, and remember that today was a very sad day for our family.

Mom took John's and my hand as we crossed the busy street. I hate when she does that. I feel as if everyone is looking at me and laughing. John didn't seem to mind but John rarely minded anything. He was a good kid for a seven year old. We were the last ones to join the cluster of relatives on the other side of the street. Dad didn't look so pleased with us but Dad didn't look very pleased about anything these days. I forgave his annoyed look today; after all, it was his father who had died. I knew he must be sad but he didn't look it. I knew because I had stood outside the bathroom door and heard him crying. I wanted to do something for him, but instead I just crept back upstairs and went to bed.

The three uncles followed by their wives and my parents moved into the lobby. Uncle Jimmy let John press the elevator button. I've hated elevators for as long as I could remember. My mother had hoped I would've outgrown it by now, but Aunt Maureen said that all nine year olds have silly fears. I don't like Aunt Maureen too much. Sometimes if I want to make John laugh hard enough that he wets his pants, I imitate Aunt Maureen's buck teeth. It's really
mean of me because he laughs so much that he wets himself and gets into
trouble.

The elevator doors opened and we all crowded inside. I scrunched up against
the farthest corner and shut my eyes tightly. I felt my stomach bounce up like a
rubber ball and I started to feel sick. I felt my stomach bounce again and the
ride was over.

I love the smell of my grandfather's apartment building. It always smelled of
wax and pipe tobacco and it had something exciting about it. The floors were
huge black and white tiles and John and I loved to jump from one to the other
without stepping on the cracks. We arrived in front of the green door that read
apartment 14B. Dad opened the door and the rich smell of spicy applesauce
with a faint odor of liquor greeted us.

We all crowded into the olive green hallway with its matching walls and
carpet, and took off our coats. The adults moved into the livingroom to discuss
business so John and I went into the bedroom to find the box of toys that
Pop-Pop always kept for our visits.

Everything was in place in the neat little bedroom as it always was when we
came to visit. Starched white shirts that seemed gigantic in size hung off
painted hangers in the wooden closet. A pink striped bathrobe that my brother
and sisters and I bought Pop one Christmas, now dangled off a metal hook.
Two straight rows of brightly shined shoes were on the floor. I looked at the
closet while John set up the pick-up-sticks game. Something bothered me
about the closet and I wasn't really sure what it was. It popped into my head as
I sat down to play: someone had disturbed the rows of shoes and there was a
space between the shirts and suits. I knew who had done it, it was Uncle
Kenny. I heard my parents tell him on the phone to come over here and get
some clothes for Pop to wear for his funeral. We hadn't been allowed to go. I
walked over to the closet and pushed the shirts and suits together burying my
head inside them in hopes to catch the faintest hint of my grandfather's smell.
I moved the shiny shoes back in line with my foot.

I got bored playing with John so I wandered over to Pop's dresser and made
cases in the mirror. Yellowed pictures with curled edges that had faces of
people I never knew, stared at me along with snapshots of my brother, sisters,
and myself. Taped in the corner was a birthday card I had drawn for him in
kindergarten. I opened the construction paper and looked at the dozen of
hearts I had drawn on the inside. I reached down and touched Pop's aftershave
bottles, quickly putting my fingers to my nose to catch its lingering smell. I
scuffed my feet on the carpet and took little baby steps into the livingroom.

I found Mom and Aunt Mary cleaning out the drawers to the china chest that
squatting in the corner. Scattered all over the sofa were bits of paper, photos and
odds and ends Pop had saved over the years. I stood in front of the small glass
case that sat on top of the china chest and stared at my distorted figure. I
moved my arms to watch the girl in the glass move hers. Inside this cabinet sat
the "Little Fellow", a statue of Jesus when he was a small boy. This was the
only thing in Pop-Pop's apartment that was off limits. Next to the statue was a
small gold bell that had the emblem of Saint Christopher on its handle.

Pop-Pop had gotten the bell in some church in Europe and sometimes would
take it out and ring it for us on special occasions. I looked over to my mother
and aunts and when I was certain they weren't watching, I slowly opened the
cabinet and reached inside. The statue wore a satin ruffled dress and it felt
smooth to my touch. My aunt glanced over at me and shrieked when she saw
what I was doing. I pulled my hand out of the cabinet so fast that I knocked the
bell out of the cabinet and it jangled to the floor. I stood there guiltily while
both women repeatedly told me that I knew I wasn't supposed to touch the
statue and if I went near it again I would be in serious trouble. I had it figured
out I already was in serious trouble. Go amuse yourself they said, we have work
to do. I skipped over to the mahogany bookshelves aware that the two women
were watching my every move. Pop-Pop was crazy about books and his
collection was huge. On top of the bookcase were my three favorite objects; two
Irish elves and a hula dancer that jiggled her hips from side to side when you
touched her. I knew these figurines were not off limits but I decided not to pick
them up to avoid getting yelled at again. Instead I tapped the hula girl's hips
and watched her jiggle.

The rest of the aunt and uncles returned from carrying the first load of
Pop-Pop's things to the car. The men began to take the heavy furniture
downstairs. I watched them move Pop's old wooden t.v. set with its huge rabbit
ears, down the hall. Just a few weeks ago Pop-Pop and my sisters and I had sat
in front of that set and watched Peggy Fleming skate across the ice.

I decided to find out what John was doing so I went back into the bedroom.
He was lying on his stomach rolling a toy car back and forth. I looked into the
box of toys and pulled out a rubber ball. I motioned to John to follow, and I
practiced my whistling until we reached the outside hallway. We began rolling
the ball across the white and black tiles as the men moved the arm chair, the
sofa, and the dinette set past us to the elevator. A bald man came out of one of
the apartments and asked us if Pop-Pop was moving away. John looked at me but I just kept rolling the ball between my feet and tried to remember the cartoons I had watched this morning. The man asked again, thinking I hadn't heard so I went inside and got my mother. She explained to the man that Pop-Pop had died and the man said he was sorry. I don't know why he was sorry, it wasn't his fault. It wasn't even his grandfather. The man smiled at me and told me he could understand that I didn't feel like talking. How could he understand if I didn't even know why? The bald man patted my shoulder and said not to be sad, my grandfather would be happy in heaven. I hate it when adults say everyone goes to heaven. That's how Mom explained it to us that day when we got home from school. She said the angels came down and took Pop-Pop to heaven so he would be happy. I thought he was happy with us. I didn't think the angels did me any great favors.

I left the bald man to my mother and went inside to the cramped little kitchen. The kitchen had been a favorite place of mine for as long as I could remember. I would sit on the table with a towel wrapped around my dress for an apron and watch Pop-Pop make his famous applesauce. I knelt on the radiator and looked fourteen floors down to the street. Sometimes I would drop pennies to hear them make a "clink" when they hit the pavement. There was a huge bag of garbage in the corner and I could see the little hula dancer peeking out from where she lay on top of the paper scraps. I reached my hand inside the bag and pulled her out. I held her in my hand and made her hips jiggle from side to side. She made a nice "clack" as her grass skirt swayed and her dark eyes smiled at me. I could've watched her all day but Aunt Maureen swooped in and told me I shouldn't expose myself to such filth. I didn't think of it as filth. I liked to make her jiggle and remember the silly songs Pop-Pop would make up as she danced. I didn't like to remember any more, and I promised myself that I wouldn't do it. I left the hula girl on the counter and stuck my hands into the pocket of my dress. I began to practice a new song I learned in Glee Club. 

We Never Went to Paris

Patricia Shea
The Ducks

Notes on the Guest Writer

Ray Carver’s work has appeared in Harper’s, Esquire, TriQuarterly, and many other magazines. His first book, Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?, was nominated for the National Book Award and his latest book, What We Talk About When We Talk About Love, has just been published by Knopf.

A wind came up that afternoon, bringing gusts of rain and sending the ducks up off the lake in black explosions looking for the quiet potholes out in the timber. He was at the back of the house splitting firewood and saw the ducks cutting over the highway and dropping into the marsh behind the trees. He watched, groups of half a dozen, but mostly doubles, one bunch behind the other. Out over the lake it was already dark and misty and he could not see the other side, where the mill was. He worked faster, driving the iron wedge down harder into the big dry chunks, splitting them so far down that the rotten ones flew apart. On his wife’s clothesline, strung up between the two sugar pines, sheets and blankets popped shotlike in the wind. He made two trips and carried all the wood onto the porch before it started to rain.

“‘Supper’s ready!’ she called from the kitchen.

He went inside and washed up. They talked a little while they ate, mostly about the trip to Reno. Three more days of work, then payday, then the weekend in Reno. After supper he went out onto the porch and began sacking
up his decoys. He stopped when she came out. She stood there in the doorway watching him.

"You going hunting again in the morning?"

He looked away from her and out toward the lake. "Look at the weather. I think it's going to be good in the morning." Her sheets were snapping in the wind and there was a blanket down on the ground. He nodded at it. "Your things are going to get wet."

"They weren't dry anyway. They've been out there two days and they're not dry yet."

"What's the matter? Don't you feel good?" he said.

"I feel all right." She went back into the kitchen and shut the door and looked at him through the window. "I just hate to have you gone all the time. It seems like you're gone all the time," she said to the window. Her breath decoys in the corner and went to get his lunch pail. She was leaning against the cupboard, her hands on the edge of the draining board. He touched her hip, pinched her dress. "You wait'll we get to Reno. We're going to have some fun," he said.

"I'll get up when you come in and fix you some breakfast."

She nodded. It was hot in the kitchen and there were little drops of sweat over her eyes. "I'll get up when you come in and fix you some breakfast."

"You sleep. I'd rather have you sleep." He reached around behind her for her lunch pail.

"Kiss me bye," she said.

He hugged her. She fastened her arms around his neck and held him. "I love you. Be careful driving."

She went to the kitchen window and watched him running, jumping over the puddles until he got to the pickup. She waved when he looked back from inside the cab. It was almost dark and it was raining hard.

They told everybody to go home. The mill boss had a heart attack. He fell right down on the floor up in the mill and died. "He was just in the lunch room this morning. They told everybody to go home. The mill boss had a heart attack. He fell right down on the floor up in the mill and died."

She said, "I've never seen any of these programs before," she said.

They sat in the living room and held hands and watched television. "I've never seen any of these programs before," he said.

She said, "I don't much care about watching any more. You can hardly get anything worth watching. Saturday and Sunday it's all right. But there's nothing worth watching on Sundays."

He stretched his legs and leaned back. He said, "I'm kind of tired. I think I'll go to bed."

She said, "I think I'll take a bath and go to bed, too." She moved her fingers through his hair and dropped her hand and smoothed his neck. "Maybe we'll have a little tonight. We never hardly get a chance to have a little." She touched her other hand to his thigh, leaned over and kissed him.
"What do you think about that?"

"That sounds all right," he said. He got up and walked over to the window. Against the trees outside he could see her reflection standing behind him and a little to the side. "Hon, why don't you go ahead and take your bath and we'll turn in," he said. He stood there for a while longer watching the rain beat against the window. He looked at his watch. If he were working, it would be the lunch hour now. He went into the bedroom and began getting undressed.

In his shorts, he walked back into the living room and picked up a book off the floor—*Best-Loved Poems of the American People*. He guessed it had come in the mail from the club she belonged to. He went through the house and turned off the lights. Then he went back into the bedroom. He got under the covers, put her pillow on top of his, and twisted the gooseneck lamp around so that the light fell on the pages. He opened the book to the middle and began to look at some of the poems. Then he laid the book on the bedstand and bent the lamp away toward the wall. He lit a cigarette. He put his arms behind his head and lay there smoking. He looked straight ahead at the wall. The lamplight picked up all of the tiny cracks and swells in the plaster. In a corner, up near the ceiling, there was a cobweb. He could hear the rain washing down off the roof.

She stood up in the tub and began drying herself. When she noticed him watching, she smiled and draped the towel over her shoulder and made a little step in the tub and posed.

"How does it look?"

"All right," he said.

"Okay," she said.

"I thought you were still... you know," he said.

"I am," she said. She finished drying and dropped the towel on the floor beside the tub and stepped daintily onto it. The mirror beside her was steamy and the odor of her body carried to him. She turned around and reached up to a shelf for the box. Then she slipped into her belt and adjusted the white pad. She tried to look at him, she tried to smile. He crushed out the cigarette and picked up the book again.

"What are you reading?" she called.

"I don't know. Crap," he said. He turned to the back of the book and began looking through the biographies.

She turned off the light and came out of the bathroom brushing her hair.

"You still going in the morning?" she said.

"Guess not," he said.

She said, "I'm glad. We'll sleep in late, then get up and have a big breakfast."

He reached over and got another cigarette.

She put the brush in a drawer, opened another drawer and took out a nightgown.

"Do you remember when you got me this?" she said.

He looked at her in reply.

She came around to his side of the bed. They lay quietly for a time, smoking his cigarette until he nodded he was finished, and then she put it out. He reached over her, kissed her on the shoulder, and switched off the light. "You know," he said, lying back down, "I think I want to get out of here. Go someplace else." She moved over to him and put her leg between his. They lay on their sides facing each other, lips almost touching. He wondered if his breath smelled as clean as hers. He said, "I just want to leave. We been here a long time. I'd like to go back home and see my folks. Or maybe go on up the Oregon. That's good country."

"If that's what you want," she said.

"I think so," he said. "There's a lot of places to go."

She moved a little and took his hand and put it on her breast. Then she opened her mouth and kissed him, pulling his head down with her other hand. Slowly she inched up in the bed, gently moving his head down to her breast. He took the nipple and began working it in his mouth. He tried to think how much he loved her or if he loved her. He could hear her breathing but he could also hear the rain. They lay like this.

She said, "If you don't want to, it's all right."

"It's not that," he said, not knowing what he meant.

He let her go when he could tell she was asleep and turned over to his own side. He tried to think of Reno. He tried to think of the slots and the way the dice clicked and how they looked turning over under the lights. He tried to hear the sound the roulette ball made as it skimmed around the gleaming wheel. He tried to concentrate on the wheel. He looked and looked and listened and listened and heard the saws and the machinery slowing down, coming to a stop.

He got out of bed and went to the window. It was black outside and he could see nothing, not even the rain. But he could hear it, cascading off the roof and into a puddle under the window. He could hear it all over the house. He ran his finger across the drool on the glass.

When he got back into bed, he moved close to her and put his hand on her hip. "Hon, wake up," he whispered. But she only shuddered and moved over farther to her own side. She kept on sleeping. "Wake up," he whispered. "I hear something outside."

Ray Carver
The News On What's Happening

All action takes place in Charles Streetman's efficiency apartment. It is small, dingy and sparsely furnished with older style furniture---obviously a low-rent pad. Stage left is a sofa which pulls out into a bed. Directly behind it is a full-length bookcase against the wall filled with books. Moving center stage is an old armchair in fairly good but not perfect condition. Behind it on the wall are three large wall posters, one each of Burt Reynolds, Raquel Welch and Clint Eastwood. Next to the armchair is a small table stand supporting the telephone; above it is the light switch. Center stage is the front door which opens into the hallway; right next to it is the bathroom door. Front center stage with its back to the audience is a TV set. Moving stage right, again up front, is a small dining table with one chair to accompany it. Stage right is the stove, the refrigerator, sink, some cabinets and a small counter. Far stage right is the closet door containing all of Charles' clothes.

ACT I
Scene One--Tuesday evening, around 6:00 p.m.
The curtain opens to find Charles Streetman entering through the front door. He is wearing a green army jacket, green army fatigue, boots---military style---and a red beret tilted to one side. He carries a newspaper under his arm. He closes the door, puts the paper down and takes off his coat, putting it on the single chair in front of the dining table. He takes the paper, walks over to the TV set, turns it on and sits down in the armchair. He spreads the paper out in his lap and begins reading it to himself, occasionally shaking his head to bad news. After a few moments of this he picks up the phone without looking at it, then, checking the dial now and again while looking at both the newspaper and the TV, makes a call. There is a pause during which time Charles makes several glances to and from the television and the newspaper. When he speaks to the person he is calling, it is difficult to tell which subject---the phone, the newspaper or the TV---commands the bulk of his attention.

CHARLES: Speaking in a calm tone, self-assured, a tone which remains throughout the play except where otherwise noted. Sheila? Yes, this is Charles...

CHARLES: You're taking a nap? At six o'clock in the evening?...Sheila...Sheila, are you in bed with David again?...I thought so...No, it's just that I could hear his panting...I'm not jealous...I just don't think it's good--for you or him...

CHARLES: Right, well never mind. Listen, would you come down here for just a little bit? I have something to tell you...I can't tell you over the phone, it concerns something I received in the mail this morning...Yes, yes you can bring David...mmmBye. He hangs up and folds the newspaper aside, then goes to the TV and turns up the volume to an audible level. He crouches next to it while he listens.

TELEVISION: voice of an unidentified newscaster, obviously reporting from a war front due to the sound of bombs and gunfire-----due to the heavy fighting today in this tiny, young East African country, it appears to all concerned that it will fall to the powerful communist-backed faction of guerrillas in perhaps a matter of hours...It will then become only one of several small, unstable countries to succumb to Communist influence in the past three years...Elsewhere on the world's war fronts...The sound decreases somewhat, the front door opens.

ROMAN BARSTOOL: Enter Roman Barstool through the front door without knocking. After casually closing the door he stands for a moment with his hands in his pockets and looks around the apartment. He is wearing faded jeans and a plain green tee-shirt with barefeet. He finally announces himself when he sees that Charles is apparently hypnotized by the TV.

ROMAN: Got any beer?

CHARLES: Charles is not startled or surprised and answers by pointing with his thumb to the refrigerator. Roman goes to the fridge and takes out a beer.

ROMAN: Want one?

CHARLES: Charles shakes his head "no" and keeps watching the TV. Roman watches for a few seconds then slouches down in the armchair. Finally, Charles turns off the TV and gets up and faces Roman.

CHARLES: Well, how about a report, Roman?

ROMAN: Well, I didn't go to any classes again today. I went to see my friend Cooke--she's doin' OK. Then I went over to Hank's--you know Hank, the guy with the guns--things are cool there too. From his house I went to the bar, the Kicking Mule, had a few brews...Man, it's getting expensive for one little draft...

CHARLES: Everything's getting expensive, Roman. Ahh, they're getting closer. Any week now--any day! I can feel them coming. Hell, we all can. Everyone knows it's going to happen.

ROMAN: He thinks a moment. What do we know?

CHARLES: The invasion, of course. He starts pacing the room. I figure it'll start with money, fake money, at first, then real money, their money. That way prices for them become very conveniently astronomical--they've already begun to soar, as you know. Then they'll have complete control of our economy. After that they'll send people, imposters, agents. Yes, I've already seen a few of them, watching you at the grocery store, taking notes behind the banana rai... sighs. Ultimately, of course, it'll be the takeover of our government. Our whole society as we know it will fall.

ROMAN: Wide-eyed, extremely interested. Takeover, huh? By who--

CHARLES: He points to the TV. By them! He grabs the newspaper. By them! It's to happen soon, Roman, believe it. Why else would living be so hard to do today? Why else are the streets so tough to survive at night--or at any
other time of day? Why else would food and essential items cost so much—and that's only if you can get what you need.

ROMAN. Waving his hand. Ahh, it's not so tough.

CHARLES. Dismissing Roman's ignorance. You're a skinny man, Roman, you don't eat that much. You really wouldn't have an idea. Believe it when I say it's tough.

There's a knock on the door. Charles immediately becomes concerned and approaches and opens the door with caution. Upon seeing his visitor he acts relieved. Enter Sheila Breakwork, a thirty year old woman well-dressed and well-made up. She leads a small white dog by a leash. She moves immediately to the cabinets and sink, stage right, and begins to fill a bowl with water. She speaks quickly in a feigned self-assured manner.

SHEILA. David's thirsty, Charles. You don't mind if I fix him a drink. . . You know, I really don't know why you couldn't tell me what you had to say on the telephone. It's not that I mind coming down here and it's not that I think we see too much of each other as it is, but you must agree that sometimes I really don't understand some of the things you tell me and I begin to think that I waste my time down here. So, if this is going to be one of those times please let me know right now and instead of expending my energy on being confused I can use it to pretend that I'm interested. By this time she has let the dog off the leash and given him the bowl of water. Charles has shut the door after her making sure there is no one in the hallway. Sheila goes up to Charles and pulls him to her by the collar of his coat and gives him a kiss.

SHEILA. She glances quickly at Roman, says indifferently Hi, Roman.

ROMAN. Just waves.

CHARLES. He gives Roman a quick glance and they smile together about Sheila's incessant "say nothing" manner of speaking. Then he addresses Sheila. This shouldn't confuse you too much. He assumes a super serious look on his face and walks to behind the dining table—stage right—and turns to face Sheila and Roman.

SHEILA. After some silence. Well, what is it? she sighs. Oh, you are always so damn dramatic. I remember you called me down here once to tell me that you had an idea for your master's thesis—just an idea, that's all—and you acted like someone who had found the answer to the world's problems. I wouldn't be surprised if it's nothing at all. What is it? You said it was something to do with your mail and with your mail how exciting can that be?

CHARLES. He lowers his head. Sheila. Roman. He pauses, then raises his head and looks at the two. I'm getting out.

SHEILA. After waiting for more. That's it? You asked me and David down here to tell us that? Charles Streetman, you've been saying that for the three solid years I've known you: 'Sheila, I have to get out of here but I'll finish my master's first, Sheila, I'll be leaving any day now just as soon as I get up the money. Oh, Sheila, my darling, I feel it, I'll be gone in a moment's notice, just as soon as I get something published.' Charles, this isn't news!

ROMAN. Hey, I gotta agree, Charlie, you have said this before.

CHARLES. After considering what they have said. You're right. You're both right. I have mentioned the so-called 'eye of my departure' before. But you both know how hard things are out there. And you both know this chaotic situation—where there's no money, little shelter, where you have to risk your life to get something as simple as toilet paper—this situation is going to get worse. Yes, well, this time my words are for real. I've paid my dues. I'm getting out.

SHEILA. Seriously. Paid your dues? Where did you get the money to do that?

CHARLES. No, not like that, Sheila. He takes a large opened envelope off the table and holds it out to Sheila. This is it. This is my dues. My ticket out.

SHEILA. She takes the envelope and looks at the pink piece of paper inside. What is it? She hands it to Roman who reads it aloud.

ROMAN. Reading the paper. "Sorry, a 'no' on this." He looks at Charles. That's it.

SHEILA. What is it?

CHARLES. He crosses the room and takes the pink piece of paper from Roman and looks at it again himself. I don't expect you two to recognize . . . such an item of . . . of almost certain, well, salvation—like I said, a ticket to safety.

SHEILA. What is it, Charles? What is it?

CHARLES. Seriously, with obvious pride. It's a rejection slip.

SHEILA. A What?

CHARLES. From my publisher.

SHEILA. Surprised, proud, moving closer to Charles. Your publisher! Charles, Charles, you got something published! Oh, Charles! She throws her arms around him.

ROMAN. Stands up to congratulate Charles, shakes his hand. That's Great, man! Really fantastic!

CHARLES. He puts his hands out as if to protest. Just a moment, people. I did not get something published. This is a rejection slip, which means I almost got something published.

SHEILA. With sympathy. Oh, I'm so sorry, Charles.

ROMAN. Hey, man, look, me too, huh?

CHARLES. Still serious. No, don't be sorry. This is almost as good.

SHEILA. I don't understand. I mean, how can something you didn't get published do as well for you as something you expected to get published but didn't? She acts confused.

CHARLES. Explaining. It goes this way: I sent something out—a poem be
holds up a sheet of paper off the table--to a magazine, Yankee Magazine to be specific. O.K. So they didn't like it. At least, they can't use it for this particular issue. So they send it back to me along with this he holds up the rejection slip to let me know.

SHEILA. She waits for more. Let you know what?

CHARLES. That they read it, Sheila. Don't you see? Proudly. I have exposure! The fact that my "piece," as they say in the industry, wasn't printed doesn't matter, and the fact that I didn't receive any money doesn't matter. It's the exposure!

ROMAN. But Charlie, man, the way I understand it, like only one person woulda read that. That's not a whole lot of exposure.

CHARLES. He gets enthusiastic. That's the key in this particular situation, Roman. In this case it's that one person who read it who has already given me all the exposure I need.

SHEILA. Getting worried, almost whining. I don't get it. I'm sorry, I don't understand. Oh, I'm getting confused again.

CHARLES. OK, listen. I sent that poem to Yankee Magazine. Over every other magazine in the country I chose Yankee Magazine. Why! Because of their editor.

ROMAN. Is he a big shot of some kind?

CHARLES. She! She is a bona fide Celebrity! Capital C, Celebrity-

SHEILA Again in a whining voice. Oh, Charles, please don't start that Celebrity stuff again. I thought you were over that. I just cannot believe you still think that a 'Celebrity' is going to come along and take you out of here, help you to escape, as you always put it.

ROMAN. Well, what's her name ... and what makes her a Celebrity?

CHARLES. Her name is Julia Imefat and ... and ... well, she's the editor of Yankee Magazine.

ROMAN. Is he a big shot of some kind?

CHARLES. She! She is a bona fide Celebrity! Capital C, Celebrity-

SHEILA Again in a whining voice. Oh, Charles, please don't start that Celebrity stuff again. I thought you were over that. I just cannot believe you still think that a 'Celebrity' is going to come along and take you out of here, help you to escape, as you always put it.

ROMAN. Well, what's her name ... and what makes her a Celebrity?

CHARLES. Her name is Julia Imefat and ... and ... well, she's the editor of Yankee Magazine.

ROMAN. Yeah?

CHARLES. Well, it just so happens that as editor of a magazine you are entitled to meet all kinds of people--it goes with the job. Writers, actors, musicians, all those people who are out of this mess. Those people who don't have to worry about the streets being safe, where the next bowl of cereal is coming from, et cetera. She is right on top of things. She must know hundreds of people. But that's not important, at least not now, not for me. What's important is that Miss Julia Imefat is one of those Celebrities who selects certain people, ordinary people, and ... and ...

SHEILA. She makes them 'safe.' We've heard all this stuff before, Charles, but how do you know that this Miss ... Miss ...
SHEILA. Come now, let's hear it already.

CHARLES. All right. He takes the poem in hand and begins to read. It's titled, "A Patriot By Any Name." He clears his throat.

A Patriot by any name
Is a loser, to me.
He is one who accepts shame,
So he is a loser, you see.
He fights for his country
But doesn't seek fame.
He cuts down a cherry tree
And takes all the blame.
He doesn't change, he stays the same
Through his life, through his "Liberty".
He fights through earth, water and flame
To keep his name, his family tree.
What can be done for this man who's free but not free?
He says we're all losers, all the same.
But the worst of all losers—to me,
Are the patriots, patriots of any name.

He pauses, then, looking at Roman and Sheila for their reaction.

ROMAN. Without hesitation. That's cool, Charlie.

SHEILA. Obviously not impressed, but attempting to hide it. Well...uh...it's good—it gets the point across.

CHARLES. Again modestly. Thanks, but like I said, it's not really a very good sample of my talent. Some day I'll really impress you. However, I do think that it is good enough to let someone—like Miss Imefat—know that I'm here, that I'm ready and able to do whatever I have to do to get out of here. Confidently.

In fact, I expect I should be getting a call any time now.

SHEILA. Right, Charles. Sometimes I think you're crazy.

There is a knock on the door—just as Sheila is ready to open it. She is so startled that she can't open it.

CHARLES. Opening the door. WHAT did I tell you? The door is opened to reveal a short stocky man in his fifties. He is wearing a dirty tee-shirt and work pants.

Uh, hi, Shake. Um, I guess you came for the rent money, huh? The man nods his head. Well, um, can I get it to you tomorrow? I promise. Tomorrow. In the morning. He smiles in a "right buddy" manner and leans against the doorway, blocking Sheila's path.

SHEILA. Nervously. Hi, Shake. Uh, uh, She looks at Charles, then back at Shake. Me too! I mean, I'll have it to you tomorrow . . . before Charles! I'll give it to you first thing in the morning.

Shake smiles again in the same manner, nods his head. Then he looks at Roman who has been staring straight ahead, trying to look inconspicuous.

CHARLES. After some silence. Roman. I believe this man is looking at you.

ROMAN. Getting out of the chair, trying now to act innocent. Huh? Oh, Shake, how ya doing? He shakes his hand. Yeah, well, my social security check is late, ya know. I'll have things straightened out downtown at the SS office—might be a couple of days, but you'll get it. The man smiles again.

SHAKE. To all of them. Tomorrow! He turns to leave.

CHARLES. Oh, Shake. Uh, I won't be here much longer, so I put an ad in the paper to rent the apartment out. OK? You won't have to worry about a thing. Shake nods his head in a threatening manner and leaves.

ALL THREE AT ONCE. Phew!

CHARLES. To both Sheila and Roman. That's one thing I'll be glad to get away from.

SHEILA. Once again composed. Charles, you're sub-letting your apartment? She shakes her head. You're crazy! She goes out the door.

ROMAN. Moving toward the door. Well, I guess I better get something to eat. Thanks for the brew, Charlie, man . . . Hey, listen. You're really leaving huh?

CHARLES. That's right.

ROMAN. Well, can you do me a favor?

CHARLES. Of course.

ROMAN. Will you let me have your poster of Raquel Welch? She's fine!

CHARLES. Of course. You can have all three, if you like.

ROMAN. No, just hers. Thanks. Roman Exits.

CURTAIN FALLS

Mike McGrady
I. The White was for hope

When our marriage broke up I went home and painted the entire corral. I don't know why it was so important, but it was. I had to get home and grab a paint brush and stand in the Arizona sun and paint the corral. I painted it white, so white you couldn't look at it for very long.

"Jesus, is that fence white," my Father said.

"Whitest damn fence I ever saw," my Mother said.

They stood, arm in arm, framed by a rose arbor. I wanted to cry, they looked so good. They looked so good standing there that I wanted to cry and maybe paint the fence again. After all, I had the time, and another coat wouldn't hurt.

"That's true," Father said. "The chicken coop could stand a coat too." I heard a coyote yelp in the distance.

II. Morning Ride

There were partridges near the barn and it was still cold enough that I could see my breath. I kneed Poco's belly so that I could tighten the cinch. He blew hot smoke and danced away from me.

The desert was green that December and the earth was a rust color, especially with the red sun coming over Hat Mountain throwing a tint on everything. At the end of the graded road behind the barn were two old wrecked cars. They were rust color too.

I took my hands out of my pockets when the sun started to warm me up. I thought that it would be nice just to keep riding, deeper and deeper into the desert. I felt so good about the riding and the sun that I wanted to glide in a walking trot all the way to Mexico.

I caught, out of the corner of my eye, just a flash of grey. I thought, "coyote" to myself.

III. Coyotes are after my Mother's chickens

I hung around the house, standing in the kitchen, watching Mom wash the dishes. She was talking to me:

"How's your job? Are you happy? Are you going back to her?" I was sticking a butter knife into the toaster.

"You know that's plugged in." she said.
“What?”
“You know that’s plugged in.”
“What’s plugged in?”
“The toaster you’re sticking the knife into.”
She was looking out the window over the sink as she said that, and suddenly she stopped pulling glasses out of the suds and leaned forward to get a better look at something in the back yard. She was standing on her toes and then she said “shit” and ran to the utility room, grabbing a .22 automatic out of the closet and ran out the back door.
I followed her and saw her fire three shots at a disappearing coyote.
“I’ll get one of them yet.” she said.
“What did you start saying shit?” I asked her.

IV. Chasing an old coyote
I was 12 when we caught that coyote in the open, four of us chasing a coyote across a dried-out cotton field. He must have been old or sick because he couldn’t outrun us. So we kept him in the middle of the field and then tried to run him over until he caught a hoof in the side. We left him limping into a dry wash and rode back to the road laughing.
Jim was waiting for us. I hadn’t realized that he wasn’t in on the fun until it was all over. He said that his parents believed that coyotes are their ancestors. We told him he was full of it and that was just an Indian superstition.

V. Poco throws me
I was thinking ‘coyote’ to myself when Poco jumped sideways.
“Whoa, Poco” I screamed. “Goddamit”
Poco was jumping and bucking. I pulled his head up and kept him from throwing me but he kept jumping, first sideways and then he lunged forward, the bit in his teeth. The leather reins cut into my fingers.
“Shit”
Poco wheeled on his hind legs and reared.
“Son of a bitch”
We went down backwards. I jumped to the side; he hit, rolled on his back like one large rocker off a chair.

VI. Cheating at golf
My Dad wanted me to play golf with him on Saturday. The golf course was the only place where he could talk. There was something about sitting on a bench in a lime green cardigan, waiting for two or three foursomes to get off the tee, that really opened him up. He told me the story about the time he and Ed from the shop tried to hit a coyote on the fourth fairway.
I broke 100 that day but cheated a lot. We both did. If there was a tree in the way, we’d move the ball, or kick it out of a rough, or sometimes put the ball on a little tuft of grass so we could hit a wood. Sometimes we’d even forget a stroke. All in all, we cheated about the same.

VII. Horses can scream
He broke his leg when he went down. He kept trying to get up and kept falling down again. His wild eyes looked so large and white. I ran down the river bed, not wanting to look back at him thrashing in the sand. I didn’t know horses could scream like that.

VIII. Go with God
The Mexicans came out of nowhere, out of the desert, just appeared in the driveway. One had a red rag around his head; the other had a hat pulled over his eyes and they were both soaked from a shower.
My father saw them first and walked out to talk to them, his hands stuffed in his pockets. I could see him shake his head and then point across the desert to the west. Mom was holding the .22 and checking to see if it still had bullets. And just like that they headed across the desert in the same direction my father had pointed, walking under the “Vayos Con Dios” sign over the driveway entrance.
“What did they want?” I asked my father when he came back into the house.
“What they always want: food and a job.”
“They call them Coyotes,” my Mother said. I noticed she had put her rifle away.

IX. The Meeting
I didn’t see them until I was almost on them. They were standing like grey plaster statues, so still. I remember thinking that only wild animals can stand that still. I also remember thinking that if I could get close enough I could see my reflection in their eyes.
I picked up a rock and threw it at the largest coyote. He moved just enough so that the rock missed and then he froze again. We stood a while longer: one specimen of Homo Sapiens, sub species of the order Primate and approximately 20 specimen of Canis Latrans facing one another in a dry river bed in a desert.
Finally, they moved off toward the spot where Poco lay exhausted.

X. Looking for home
My parents stayed in the departure area until I was in the plane and the doors closed. I looked for our house and found it by looking for Hat Mountain and Winslow Peak, the red tile roof of the house drawing my attention. The empty corral didn’t look white from the air. I imagined coyotes in the back yard chasing chickens.

Dan Holt

The Coyotes

“I don’t know if I want to go back.” I said to him while we were waiting to make our approach shots to the 18th green.
“What do you mean, you don’t want to go back?”

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Dan Holt
Some series in a poem or two...

1 Before there was time
   There was nothing.
   Before there was nothing
   There was time for nothing.
   So there was nothing.
   And nothing for time.
   In fact nothing had time
   For nothing to be anything.
   So it simply did nothing.
   And wasn't anything with
   No time nothing?

2 Simply this: to do is to live.
   Therefore one must do as much
   As possible if he wishes to claim
   He has truly lived.
   Otherwise he's only so much leftover
   Mayo after a roast beef sandwich.

3 Eaten by a molecule it came to
   Pass that he was pretty small.
   Cold, also, unaccustomed as he was
   To being compressed into such tight
   Confines.
   What a mess he thought to himself.
   How I could ever let this happen is
   Beyond my ken.
   So he floated over Mars and went
   To sleep.

4 By the by, he happened to mention
   In passing, did I tell you I loved
   You?

5 Love, she claimed, was for those
   Unfortunate enough not to enjoy
   Being with themselves.
   This she said to me as we
   Jogged our way through the downtown
   Streets as I tried to convince her
   I was earnest.
   Try to like yourself first, she breathed,
   Then maybe you can see me.
   Hey, I shouted as she sprinted ahead,
   Did it ever occur to you that perhaps
   You might be afraid?
   Of what she asked?
   Of yourself I muttered and walked
   Away.

Myron Farr
Sleep Comes Hard

A thought, 
a rapid, darting glimpse of something,  
part of an idea, incomplete.

And then another,  
partially connected to the first,  
gaining speed and followed close behind  
by more and more.

Flitting, fleeting bits and pieces  
pushing through, colliding;  
then ultimately merging to become  
a steady, constant racing stream.

The soft, gray mass heaves, churns,  
turning in upon itself.  
And I, again trapped and helpless,  
find no apparent means to stop the process.

Gerri Forman