

you

you're a beast, she said
your big white belly
and those hairy feet.
you never cut your nails
and you have fat hands
paws like a cat
your bright red nose
and the biggest balls
I've ever seen.
you shoot sperm like a
whale shoots water out of the
hole in its back.

beast beast beast,
she kissed me,
what do you want for
breakfast?

fuck

she pulled her dress off
over her head
and I saw the panties
indented somewhat into the
crotch.

it's only human.
now we've got to do it.
I've got to do it
after all that bluff.
it's like a party—
two trapped
idiots.

under the sheets
after I have snapped
off the light
her panties are still
on. she expects an
opening performance.
I can't blame her. but
wonder why she's here with
me? where are the other
guys? how can you be
lucky? having someone the
others have abandoned?

we didn't have to do it
yet we had to do it.
it was something like
establishing new credibility
with the income tax
man. I get the panties
off. I decide not to
tongue her. even then

I'm thinking about
after it's over.

we'll sleep together
tonight
trying to fit ourselves
inside the wallpaper.

I try, fail,
notice the hair on her
head
mostly notice the hair
on her
head
and a glimpse of
nostrils
piglike

I try it
again.

pacific telephone

you go for these wenches, she said,
you go for these whores,
I'll bore you.

I don't want to be shit on anymore,
I said,
relax.

when I drink, she said, it hurts my
bladder, it burns.

I'll do the drinking, I said.

you're waiting for the phone to ring,
she said,
you keep looking at the phone.
if one of those wenches phones you'll
run right out of here.

I can't promise you anything, I said.

then—just like that—the phone rang.

this is Madge, said the phone. I've
got to see you right away.

oh, I said.

I'm in a jam, she continued, I need ten
bucks—fast.

I'll be right over, I said, and
hung up.

she looked at me. it was a wench,
she said, your whole face lit up.

**what the hell's the matter with
you?**

**listen, I said, I've got to leave.
you stay here. I'll be right back.**

**I'm going, she said. I love you but you're
crazy, you're doomed.**

she got her purse and slammed the door.

**it's probably some deeply-rooted childhood fuckup
that makes me vulnerable, I thought.**

**then I left my place and got into my volks.
I drove north up Western with the radio on.
there were whores walking up and down
both sides of the street and Madge looked
more vicious than any of them.**

the cockroach crouched
against the tile
while I was pissing and as
I turned my head
he hauled his butt
into a crack.
I got the can and sprayed
and sprayed and sprayed
and finally the roach came out
and gave me a very dirty look.
then he fell down into
the bathtub and I watched
him dying
with a subtle pleasure
because I paid the rent
and he didn't.
I picked him up with
some greenblue toilet
paper and flushed him
away. that's all there
was to that, except
around Hollywood and
Western we have to
keep doing it.
they say some day that
tribe is going to
inherit the earth
but we're going to
make them wait a
few months.

*who in the hell is
Tom Jones?*

I was shacked with a 24 year old girl from New York City for two weeks—about the time of the garbage strike out there, and one night my 34 year old woman arrived and she said, "I want to see my rival." she did and then she said, "o, you're a cute little thing!" next I knew there was a screech of wildcats—such screaming and scratching, wounded animal moans, blood and piss . . .

I was drunk and in my shorts. I tried to separate them and fell, wrenching my knee. then they were through the screen door and down the walk and out in the street.

squadcars full of cops arrived. a police helicopter circled overhead.

I stood in the bathroom and grinned in the mirror. it's not often at the age of 55 that such splendid

things occur.
better than the Watts riots.

the 34 year old came back in. she had pissed all over herself and her clothing was torn and she was followed by 2 cops who wanted to know why.

pulling up my shorts I tried to explain.

listening to Bruckner on the radio
wondering why I'm not half mad
over the latest breakup with my
latest girlfriend

wondering why I'm not driving the streets
drunk
wondering why I'm not in the bedroom
in the dark
in the grievous dark
pondering
ripped by half-thoughts.

I suppose
that at last
like the average man:
I've known too many women
and instead of thinking,
I wonder who's fucking her now?
I think
she's giving some other poor son of a bitch
much trouble right now.

listening to Bruckner on the radio
seems so peaceful.

too many women have gone through.
I am at last alone
without being alone.

I pick up a Grumbacher paint brush
and clean my fingernails with the hard sharp end.

I notice a wall socket.

look, I've won.

the old folks play a game
in the park overlooking the sea
shoving markers across cement
with wooden sticks.

four play, two on each side
and 18 or 20 others sit in
the sun and watch
I notice this as I move
toward the public facility
as my car is being repaired.

an old cannon sits in the park
rusted and useless.
six or seven sailboats ride
the sea below.

I finish my duty
come out
and they are still playing.

one of the women is heavily rouged
wearing false eyelashes and smoking
a cigarette.
the men are very thin
very pale
wear wristwatches that hurt
their wrists.

the other woman is very fat
and giggles
each time a score is made

some of them are my age.

they disgust me
the way they wait for death

with as much passion
as a traffic signal.

these are the people who believe advertisements
these are the people who buy dentures on credit
these are the people who celebrate holidays
these are the people who have grandchildren
these are the people who vote
these are the people who have funerals

these are the dead
the smog
the stink in the air
the lepers.

these are almost everybody
finally.

seagulls are better
seaweed is better
dirty sand is better

if I could turn that old cannon
on them
and make it work
I would.

they disgust me.

the blue pencil of the wave
shots of yellow road

a steering wheel
an insane woman sitting
next to you

complaining as the ocean
creams-off

and people in yellow and
white
campers
block your way
a frantic
time
as you listen
guilty of this and
guilty of that

you admit
this and that
but it's not
enough

she wants splendid
conquest
and you're weary of
splendid
conquest

getting there
she climbs out
walks toward the
house

you piss across the
fender of your car
drunk on beer

little spots of you
dripping down into
the dust
the dry
dust

zipping up you
march in to
meet her
friends.

coupons

cigarettes wetted with beer from
the night before
you light one
gag
open the door for air
and on your doorstep
is a dead sparrow
his head and breast
chewed away.

hanging from the doorknob
is an ad from the All American
Burger
consisting of several coupons
which
say
that with the purchase
of a burger
from Feb. 12 thru Feb. 15
you can get a free
regular size bag of french
fries and one
10 oz. cup of coca cola.

I take the ad
wrap the sparrow
carry him to the trash bin
and dump him
in.

look :
forsaking fries and coke
to help keep
my city
clean.

luck

what's bad about all
this
is watching people
drinking coffee and
waiting. I would
douse them all
with luck. they need
it. they need it
worse than I do.

I sit in cafes
and watch them
waiting. I suppose
there's not much
else to do. the
flies walk up and
down the windows
and we drink our
coffee and pretend
not to look at
each other. I
wait with them.
between the move-
ment of the flies
people walk by.

dog

a single dog
walking alone on a hot sidewalk of
summer
appears to have the power
of ten thousand gods.

why is this?

the night I fucked my alarm clock

once

starving in Philadelphia

I had a small room

it was evening going into night

and I stood at my window on the 3rd floor

in the dark and looked down into a

kitchen across the way on the 2nd floor

and I saw a beautiful blonde girl

embrace a young man there and kiss him

with what seemed hunger

and I stood and watched until they broke

away.

then I turned and switched on the room light.

I saw my dresser and my dresser drawers

and my alarm clock on the dresser.

I took my alarm clock

to bed with me and

fucked it until the hands dropped off.

then I went out and walked the streets

until my feet blistered.

when I got back I walked to the window

and looked down and across the way

and the light in their kitchen was

out.

there are many single women in the world
with one or two or three children
and one wonders where the husbands
have gone or where the lovers have
gone
leaving behind
all those hands and eyes and feet
and voices.
as I pass through their homes
I like opening cupboards and
looking in
or under the sink
or in a closet—
I expect to find the husband
or lover and he'll tell me:
“hey, buddy, didn't you notice her
stretch-marks, she's got stretch-marks
and floppy tits and she eats
onions all the time and farts . . . but
I'm a handy man. I can fix things,
I know how to use a turret-lathe and
I make my own oil changes. I can shoot
pool, bowl, and I can finish 5th or
6th in any cross-country marathon
anywhere. I've got a set of golf
clubs, can shoot in the 80's. I know
where the clit is and what to do about
it. I've got a cowboy hat with the brim
turned straight up at the sides.
I'm good with the lasso and the dukes
and I know all the latest dance steps.”

and I'll say, “look, I was just leaving.”
and I *will* leave before he can challenge me
to arm-wrestling

or tell a dirty joke
or show me the dancing tattoo on his
right bicep.

but really
all I find in the cupboards are
coffee cups and large cracked brown plates
and under the sink a stack of hardened
rags, and in the closet—more coathangers
than clothes, and it's not until she shows
me the photo album and the photos of him—
nice enough like a shoehorn, or a cart in
the supermarket whose wheels aren't stuck—
that the self-doubt leaves, and the
pages turn and there's one child on a
swing wearing a red outfit and there's
the other one
chasing a seagull in Santa Monica.
and life becomes sad and not dangerous
and therefore good enough:
to have her bring you a cup of coffee in
one of those coffee cups without *him*
jumping out.

yellow cab

the Mexican dancer shook her fans at
me and her ass at me, I
didn't ask her to and
my woman got mad and ran out of the cafe and
it began raining and you could hear it on the
roof and I didn't have a job and I had 13 days left
on the rent.
sometimes when a woman runs out on you like
that you wonder if it's not
economics, you can't blame them—
if I had to get fucked I'd rather get fucked
by somebody with money.
we're all scared but when you're ugly and you
don't have much left you get
strong, and I called the waiter over and I said,
I think I am going to turn this table over, I'm
bored, I'm insane, I need
action, call in your goon, I'll piss on his
collarbone.

I got
thrown out swiftly. it was
raining. I picked myself up in the rain and
walked down the empty street
cotton candy sweet
dumb shit for sale, all the little stores locked
with 67¢ Woolworth locks.

I reached the end of the street in time
to see her get into the yellow cab with
another guy.

I fell down by a garbage can, stood up
and pissed against it, feeling sad and not
sad, knowing there was only so much they could do to

you, piss sliding down the corrugated
tin, the philosophers must have had something to
say about this. women. their luck against your
destiny. winner take Barcelona. next
bar.

the bee

I suppose like any other boy
I had one best friend in the neighborhood.
his name was Eugene and he was bigger
than I was and one year older.
Eugene used to whip me pretty good.
we fought all the time.
I kept trying him but without much
success.

once we leaped off a garage roof together
to prove our guts.
I twisted my ankle and he came up clean
as freshly-wrapped butter.

I guess the only good thing he ever did for me
was when the bee stung me while I was barefoot
and while I sat down and pulled the stinger out
he said,
“I’ll get the son of a bitch!”

and he did
with a tennis racket
plus a rubber hammer.

it was all right
they say they die
anyway.

my foot swelled up double-size
and I stayed in bed
praying for death

and Eugene went on to become an
Admiral or a Commander
or something large in the United States Navy

and he passed through one or two wars
without injury.

I imagine him an old man now
in a rocking chair
with his false teeth
and glass of buttermilk . . .

while drunk
I fingerfuck this 19 year old groupie
in bed with me.

but the worst part is
(like jumping off the garage roof)
Eugene wins again
because he’s not even thinking
about me.

*I'm getting back to where I
was*

I used to take the back off
the telephone and stuff it with rags
and when somebody knocked
I wouldn't answer and if they persisted
I'd tell them in terms vulgar
to vanish.

just another old crank
with wings of gold
flabby white belly
plus
eyes to knock out
the sun.

a lovely couple

I had to take a shit
but instead I went
into this shop to
have a key made.
the woman was dressed
in gingham and smelled
like a muskrat.

"Ralph," she hollered
and an old swine in a
flowered shirt and
size 6 shoes, her
husband, came out and
she said, "this man
wants a key."
he started grinding
as if he really didn't
want to.

there were slinking
shadows and urine
in the air.

I moved along the
glass counter,
pointed and called
to her,
"here, I want this
one."

she handed it to
me: a switchblade
in a light purple
case.

\$6.50 plus tax.
the key cost
practically
nothing.
I got my change and

walked out on
the street.
sometimes you need
people like that.

*the strangest sight you ever did
see—*

I had this room in front on DeLongpre
and I used to sit for hours
in the daytime
looking out the front
window.
there were any number of girls who would
walk by
swaying;
it helped my afternoons,
added something to the beer and the
cigarettes.

one day I saw something
extra.
I heard the sound of it first.
“come on, push!” he said.
there was a long board
about 2½ feet wide and
8 feet long;
nailed to the ends and in the middle
were roller skates.
he was pulling in front
two long ropes attached to the board
and she was in back
guiding and also pushing.
all their possessions were tied to the
board:
pots, pans, bedquilts, and so forth
were roped to the board
tied down;
and the skatewheels were grinding.

he was white, red-necked, a
southerner—

thin, slumped, his pants about to
fall from his

ass—

his face pinked by the sun and
cheap wine,

and she was black
and walked upright

pushing;

she was simply beautiful
in turban

long green ear rings

yellow dress

from

neck to

ankle.

her face was gloriously
indifferent.

“don’t worry!” he shouted, looking back
at her, “somebody will
rent us a place!”

she didn’t answer.

then they were gone
although I still heard the
skatewheels.

they’re going to make it,
I thought.

I’m sure they
did.

now, if you were teaching creative writing, he asked, what would you tell them?

I'd tell them to have an unhappy love affair, hemorrhoids, bad teeth and to drink cheap wine, avoid opera and golf and chess, to keep switching the head of their bed from wall to wall and then I'd tell them to have another unhappy love affair and never to use a silk typewriter ribbon, avoid family picnics or being photographed in a rose garden; read Hemingway only once, skip Faulkner ignore Gogol stare at photos of Gertrude Stein and read Sherwood Anderson in bed while eating Ritz crackers, realize that people who keep talking about sexual liberation are more frightened than you are. listen to E. Power Biggs work the organ on your radio while you're rolling Bull Durham in the dark in a strange town with one day left on the rent after having given up friends, relatives and jobs. never consider yourself superior and / or fair and never try to be. have another unhappy love affair.

watch a fly on a summer curtain.
never try to succeed.
don't shoot pool.
be righteously angry when you
find your car has a flat tire.
take vitamins but don't lift weights or jog.

then after all this
reverse the procedure.
have a good love affair.
and the thing
you might learn
is that nobody knows anything—
not the State, nor the mice
the garden hose or the North Star.
and if you ever catch me
teaching a creative writing class
and you read this back to me
I'll give you a straight A
right up the pickle
barrel.

I am driving down Wilton Avenue
when this girl of about 15
dressed in tight blue jeans
that grip her behind like two hands
steps out in front of my car
I stop to let her cross the street
and as I watch her contours waving
she looks directly through my windshield
at me
with purple eyes
and then blows
out of her mouth
the largest pink globe of
bubble gum
I have ever seen
while I am listening to Beethoven
on the car radio.
she enters a small grocery store
and is gone
and I am left with
Ludwig.

*the place didn't look
bad*

she had huge thighs
and a very good laugh
she laughed at everything
and the curtains were yellow
and I finished
rolled off
and before she went to the bathroom
she reached under the bed and
threw me a rag.
it was hard
it was stiff with other men's
sperm.
I wiped off on the sheet.

when she came out
she bent over
and I saw all that behind
as she put Mozart
on.

my grandfather was a tall German
with a strange smell on his breath.
he stood very straight
in front of his small house
and his wife hated him
and his children thought him odd.
I was six the first time we met
and he gave me all his war medals.
the second time I met him
he gave me his gold pocket watch.
it was very heavy and I took it home
and wound it very tight
and it stopped running
which made me feel bad.
I never saw him again
and my parents never spoke of him
nor did my grandmother
who had long ago
stopped living with him.
once I asked about him
and they told me
he drank too much
but I liked him best
standing very straight
in front of his house
and saying, "hello, Henry, you
and I, we know each
other."