

Midland, Texas: Beyond Politics

Kaye Newbury

I want to scoop you up
in your blue flannel robe
and white cotton Hanes panties.
I could do it, too
You are so lean
not even your teeth for weight.
Your tattooed chest and eaten away rib
don't frighten me.
I would take you home,
Away from red dust and cotton fields and dry winds
Away from my brother, circling the clouds
trying to avoid another Purple Heart.

After the clinic visit
I watch you smoke a Benson & Hedges.
As you lean against a pillar
the way you bend your neck
tilt back your head, sucking in pleasure
your white hair swinging
I see you, not in your cat-hair-covered coat
but wearing a purple halter-top sundress,
eyes squinting from smoke and sun.

I know when you speak
in your soft Texas voice
You'll say what you want to say
and your eyes, opening, will offer a dare
to the careful and proper
who want to save themselves—for what?

You say you're coming back,
And you'll be so much wiser, next time.
But would I care
without the smell of cigarette smoke and Jungle Gardenia
and your closet full of Size 6 shoes.

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