

out thinking, let's see? where was I  
going? oh yes, the post office.  
I needed stamps.

I hit the classical music button  
on the car radio.

GUEST

we got drunk  
and then he started,  
he said, "listen, I know that  
people claim you're uneducated  
and unread  
but here we've been talking about  
The Red and the Black,  
you know that Lorca was gunned down  
in a Spanish road.  
you've mentioned the painters  
and I know that you know of  
the great musicians.  
you know who wrote The Cherry  
Orchard,  
you know that Ambrose Bierce was  
killed by Mexican bandits,  
and you know who wrote The Devil's  
Dictionary,  
you know who whipped Hemingway's  
ass and that Gertrude Stein had a  
wooden leg,  
you know of the one who went mad  
in a rowboat,  
you know those who died of syphilis,  
and you know that Anton Chekov  
shot his dog ... pardon me ...."

he got up, went into the bathroom.  
I could hear him puking.

then he walked out, sat on the couch,  
lit his pipe, took a hit at his beer  
can, put it down and passed out,  
sitting there, his head dropping  
just a bit.

she came down the stairway.  
"is he all right?"

"he's all right, he's staying  
tonight, I think."

"I'm sorry I left but I couldn't  
listen anymore, he just kept  
talking."

"it's all right," I said.

I turned off the lights and went up the stairway with her.

"it's pitiful," she said, "he adores you."

"he thinks I'm a genius," I said.

"are you?" she asked as we got to the bedroom.

"I will be if I can get rid of him."

we stood there getting undressed.

"have you brushed your teeth?" she asked.

"many times," I answered.

then I got into bed, fast.  
I was better at getting into bed than anybody that I knew.

then she climbed in:

"is your friend downstairs going to be all right?"

"he'll make the night and he'll return," I told her.

some things you just sleep away  
and I decided to do that  
as we faced away  
I slipped my feet to the backs  
of her calves  
while half a block down  
the dogs of night  
barked about nothing.

#### THE WAVERING LINE

I don't know where they come from ...  
the vet's ward, probably ...  
they're old, balding, macho but  
sexless ...  
the sex drive is no longer important,  
they are at the track everyday  
arguing over their choices,  
laughing ...  
sometimes in between races they'll  
talk about sports: which is best,  
the best baseball team, the best