

here in the heartland, my body light
as the birthday boy's

humming some lovely anthem as I walk
from the windows hearing Pearly Desire
so far ahead by deep stretch that the idle
photo finish camera turns, and look:
That's me, the one in the long black car
with the motor running.

SOME SAY I RAN GUNS TO CUBAN REBELS

The other day I went down to the saddling
paddock to return a book to my friend Darrell.
When he saw me, he handed the tongue-tie
to an assistant and walked over. We met
at the white railing, my forehead into
the secret space, his into the area
marked Hopeful Anticipation on maps
of Santa Anita.

He retrieved Laughing in the Hills.
"Did you like it?" he asked softly so as
not to disturb the big gelding circling
behind him.
"A lot."
"Yea. That guy writes okay."

Just then a restless owner stamped and coughed
so he said goodbye. It was then I noticed
how the people around us had been leaning in
their ears pink from strain, and I could
hear what they heard: The Word. In code.

Tonight they will whisper about what goes
on out there. They will be talking about
me, the Man in the Satin Jacket, down to
the lint and the secret compartment, not
even betting for awhile, just watching
them run, taking it easy, doing some
light reading.

I'M AMAZED

As she was undressing, shyly
she said, "You know, I don't have all that
much experience."

I felt like I'd been chosen first
for softball. But why? Why is love

homeopathic so that less is more
flattering? The vagina does not wear out
like brake lining. In fact, it keeps
its comfy, Shriner grip pretty much forever.

Still, she's so pretty there by the window
leaning forward to let her bra fall clear
in a tender bombing raid on Pantyland
with its sprawling suburbs of polyester
Georgette.

"Close the blinds, Hon. The whole world
is looking at your sweet ass."

"JUST IMAGINE THAT JESUS WERE WITH YOU"

-- my Sunday School teacher

What would you think today, Jesus, sitting with me
in the Adults Only Arcade? Could you be comfortable
breaking the 2-in-a-booth rule? What about those
leading men longer than Russian novels, those
starlets never alone, always a handyman popping
into the shower, and those phone numbers on
the tiny screen, each promising what we all desire
more fervently every day: A Good Time.

I know it says in your favorite book not to spill
one's seed on the ground, but how about on the door
and walls? No one knows your secret life -- what
you did on weekends and between miracles -- but
everyone knows you understand how the heart
can topple from loneliness and desire.

I believe if you were with me today, what a sensation,
what a huge light in this place darker and smellier
than Hitler's socks. Your sweetness would seep next
door to Booth 26, bleaching the happy bathers off
the screen, sending an angry patron storming out,
the dew still on his brow, but happy somehow satisfied
and -- like me -- feeling curiously blessed.

MISSING PERSONS

When Bill and Betty and I began to talk about
them, we meant the fresh-faced choir directors
and assistant pastors caught having affairs
who vanished into some Protestant Siberia,