

the color and feel of amber.
He wants it for his living room
he's not sure where.
He'll build a wood stand for it
in his shop in the garage
and put it on top of the stereo or the teevee
or some other place of honor.

BREAKFAST

There aren't any carhops at the drive-in,
but that's okay,
he isn't driving a car.
He buys a cup of coffee
and sits at the picnic table in front
and watches the kids on the jungle gym.
They're from Ohio, they tell him, southern Ohio,
on vacation with mom and dad.
That's their car, the Buick station wagon.
He notices the tailpipe is about to fall off.
The bracket's rusted through.
They put too much salt on the road in winter
in southern Ohio.
A farmer on an early run with a load of vegetables
sits down at the table across from him.
"Say, don't I know you," he says.
"Aren't you the guy who used to work on my ...
what was it? I thought you were"
"No," he says, "Don't think so.
But it could've been my brother, Lazarus."

SOAPS

In the afternoon he watches soaps.
Except for Richie and Biff and Delia
he doesn't know their names.
They all blend into one another,
all the handsome, lazy, idealistic
young men, his son
when he was ten, building the soapbox.
He didn't want any help.
The old man couldn't even go in his own garage.
It was secret, the ultimate soapbox,
beautiful as a starry night after a stormy day.
But it didn't roll,
he could've told him it wouldn't roll.
He could've fixed it in a minute or two.
Strange — he's proud of his son.

Now. Not then.
Then he was embarrassed.
Then he was the laughing stock,
the mechanic's son who couldn't set a wheel!

— Lee Rossi

Santa Monica CA

ODIE'S STORY

Uncle Jim thinks he's a connoisseur of cigars, so my sister, who works in the R.G. Dunn factory, gets these cases for dollar cigars and puts 25 cent cigars in them and I take them to work and give them to the dude and he's smelling them and going around saying Now you want to smell a good cigar, smell this. And everybody else knows except him that they're only cheap cigars. You know, he seemed so fucking happy I finally couldn't tell him. As much as I don't like the guy, he seemed really grateful. It made his day. I thought I'd feel good putting one over on him, but I just felt bad. I mean I've never seen anybody get so excited over cigars.

A MATTER OF PRIDE

Whenever I see a truck jacked up high so you can see the rear axel, I look at it and wonder if it's one of the ones I helped make. And when I pass the sign on the freeway listing the current number of new cars built in America, I think about how I helped make some of those cars.

But we don't have any control over how fast the number turns. Anyone can come in and press my two buttons. But I spend half my time trying to get away with not working. It seems like that's the only way to make a dent — to goof things up.

But if I goof things up and everyone else goofs things up then we'll all lose our jobs. But I'm paid well to push my two buttons.

But I don't have any say, finally. And finally there's some rich guys getting richer because somewhere down the line they got their money first. And finally maybe they're paying us just enough to keep us comfortable, just enough so we can go in debt for our houses and cars. Just enough to keep us numb and distracted and tired. Just enough. I watch the number slowly turn.