

With no sign of what we had achieved.
We sat in our tents and thought
It more than we should have to bear,
Seeing the problems already solved,
The distance come, and the distance
We would have to travel
To reach home.

10.

A few days later we decided to leave
The entrance of the pass and make our way
To a village some miles to the east.
We had heard there was a shrine there,
Similar to the one on the other side of the pass,
But smaller, much smaller. After that
We would begin our journey home.
The destination made little difference;
Our only wish was to leave
The shadow of the mountain which pressed upon us,
Reminded us of things better forgotten.

11.

Our journey home passed without incident,
And we saw no person or thing that seemed
Of significance. The people we did see,
Natives and tribesmen, avoided us,
As if we were the danger,
Not the land itself.
And finally, when we reached home,
Nothing was changed. Buildings and people
Were all as they had been before,
While few knew that we had been gone,
Knew of our troubles, or the difficulties
We had passed through.

-- Stephen Dobyns

Iowa City, Iowa.

Orgy

Tommy's back yard smelled
of grapes as I stepped off
the cindered alley & crept
through the log grass
beside the garage
carefully

carefully, as the evening
before I'd put down his beard
in front of patricia, so he
knew I was shooting on
his candypants whore
& he collected guns & only
needed an excuse to Come
with one to his shoulder &
my scheming meat framing
his .44 bore

the back screendoor squeak-
ed & sung & a tic turned me
halfway to run till I heard
her sick starvingdog call ...

-- Hurry, Baby, Come! Tommy's
gone for the day ...

each fated step was quick
to the door as I reached
for her sweaty red sunsuit
& her eager wet smile

then Tommy stepped from
behind the blind screen & I
cursed the Time we were born
in -- the wars that had trained
us & the hate that we had
as the hot highpowered slug
dug deep in my belly & my
last view of our Time was
my wild final Come, mirrored
slack-jawed & sleepy in the
half-lidded eyes of Patricia
& Tommy & the world as it
died

6/65

just lately
I've seen through it
I've seen through it all
once, you know
I was quite religious
but now
there is nothing, nothing

yet still I pray

O Nothing, that
which is Cipher, which
is Naught