

Uncle Eddy

Uncle Eddy was handsome
& wild,
drank & smoked,
got medals and trophies
for running,
married a beauty queen.

Uncle Eddy
scattered laughter
like star dust
wherever he went,
did not let Death
suck his heels.

Uncle Eddy made you be
daring.

Uncle Eddy would take me
in his strong arms
& toss me to the sky,
catch me
with the wind blowing
my hair
& the sun
all over us.

Uncle Eddy came home
one Christmas
& went out on the town
& drove into
a steel pillar
of the Jamaica El
at 60 miles an hour.

Uncle Eddy was handsome
& wild
& did not let Death
suck his heels.

Fingernails In Spring

Sometimes I go crazy
with a hunger
or a desire
or something
that sends me to the ice box
20 times in succession,
makes me light
cigarette after terrible-tasting
cigarette,

makes me drink
4,5,6 cups of coffee,
then 4,5,6 cans of beer,
makes me pace from
room to room
picking up this book
or that object,
touching and probing
and tasting like a
blind man
searching for some
clue
of where he's at ...

And sometimes
I settle for cutting
my fingernails
that grow like new flowers
in spring,
impatient to be free ...

Aunt Ruth

When she was young,
she ran away with a man,
it was years ago,
she was stately
& well-educated
& stayed in the hotel room
for three weeks
before he left her.

Her stepfather
locked her in the attic
for a month when she returned,
& when she came down
she was a school teacher,
married a humble man
of Hungarian descent,
settled like concrete
in New England.

I never really knew her
till I was 18,
I was in the back of the car
defending people I knew
nothing about,
defending Beatniks
& the way they lived,
it was 1950 something-or-other,
Aunt Ruth was driving,
her knuckles white