

## Ordinate & Abscissa

The elephant on the freeway rides on an open truck driven by a shrunken roustabout with the pinched, unhappy face of a man on a diet of ice.

At 60 m.p.h. the elephant turns to me, shrinking from the inside out in his baggy, grey suit. We stare, enormous eye to eye, at one another.

I do not know what he sees in me but I do not spy oblivion or seminal rage, much less dim visions of Kilimanjaro.

He is only curious and lifts his trunk: a salute. I waggle my penis, the only trunk I own.

No Dumbo grins for me. He turns to regard the shrubbery, a traveler gone wrong, his nose following him.

### My Uncle Frank

drank and smoked and played poker in roadhouses until 4:00 in the morning.

Then he ate breakfast in a diner, had another beer, goosed the waitress, got into his truck and worked all day.

He had a wife but didn't mind her, carried rubbers, swore, fought

while I sat in the Baptist Church and yearned for the family car, a Nash that hunched in the parking lot.

Uncle Frank was always young but now my mother says that he will never see his fifties.

He has spells.

He feels poorly.

He is on the wagon.

I had to wait this long to write my uncle a letter that he will never see:

I love you, Uncle Frank. I hope you are feeling better. Everything is fine with me. California is beautiful. Get well soon.

Things That Make You So Scared You Can't Swallow  
And You Start To Cry And You Tell  
Them That You'll Do Anything  
If They'll Just Leave  
You Alone

Three thousand down at Hollywood Park and into the book for six more. Two strangers are standing by your car, so you start to hitchhike the other way but they pick you up and turn down a dark street.

Spread-eagled in New Mexico: an arena of lights from eight Chevrolets with angel-hair upholstery. Your long blonde beard is already gone. Your balls are next.

Up against the wall in East St. Louis. Eight blacks, not kidding around. Old diddley-bops who never outgrew key-chains down to their knees, talking so much shit even they can't understand each other. One of them starts to cut the buttons off your shirt with a pearl-handled shiv.

Your wife comes out of the kitchen wiping her hands on a pink tea-towel. "It's perfect," she says, "I'm making a good dinner, you're having a drink, the baby is playing so sweet. I can't think of anything nicer."

#### Orientation Week

and a family of two is exploring the Student Union. Dad is all decked out in the shirt she bought with her own money. Joyce is wearing snug cut-offs and her freshman breasts stir as she walks.

Dad knows that all the boys plan to slip some LSD in her cocoa as soon as he is out of sight. He takes in the monsters, their hair down to there, a fuselage in every pair of pants.