

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS

i.

"Were you ever in a war?" she asks,
and I say, "Yes, there was a liquor price war
after the fair trade act was declared unconstitutional,
and I was in the vanguard of the hordes
that depleted the inventories of Scotch.

ii.

Later she asks, "How much did you spend that day?"
"Oh," I reply, "I guess I invested a couple hundred
dollars."

"That must have been," she muses,
"truly a short term investment."

YOU MUST GO HOME AGAIN

I think his decision was eventually overturned,
but it was within the last year
that a judge handed over to their parents
for de-programming
a couple of 30-year-old hare krishnas.
He said that the parent-child relationship
was not only sacred but abiding.
He said a parent would be incapable
of acting in anything but his child's best interests.
"Once a son, always a son," he said.

When I told a friend of mine that one over the phone,
there was nothing but silence at the other end of the line.

A MANUAL FOR MOTHERS
ON HOW TO RAISE THEIR SONS TO BE GREAT POETS

i know this poet on the east coast
who is likeable and writes very slowly.

i know this poet on the west coast
who is a prick and writes a couple poems a day.

the poet on the east coast enjoys
the west coast poet's writing very much.

the west coast poet does not care to hear
the mention in his presence of the east coast poet.

the east coast poet is a vegetarian;
the west coast poet is a drunk.

the east coast poet is a homosexual;
the west coast poet makes fun of gays.

they both write poems
that are readable, funny, dirty,

and great.

REQUIEM FOR THREE BAR GUYS

Ernest Hemingway used to say, "There are people
dying this year who never died before,"

and, in How It Was, Mary Hemingway says it became
an all-too-frequent refrain.

Well, I walked into the bar yesterday
and there was a schooner on the counter
with some bills and coins in it
and a note attached that read, "Flowers for Claudio."
"What happened to Claudio?" I asked,
and the bartender said, "Friday night there was
a disturbance outside his bar and he went out back
and found this guy trying to drag some broad into a car.
Claudio intervened, and the woman ran away,
and there was a scuffle, and the guy pulled out a knife
and got Claudio in a major artery."

"He died?"

"Sure."

"They get the guy who did it?"

"Do they ever?"

"I didn't know him."

"He was a good guy, just a young guy
who'd worked hard and saved some money
and got some backing and was trying to make a go
of a place of his own. Everyone liked him."

Just then a guy down the bar said, "You knew about Nels,
didn't you?"

"Nels?"

"The engineering professor who always drank in the 'Niner."