with the bedclothes weeping
the telephone
filing for divorce?

If the sofa
takes out another loan
the cats
get the stove
and the trash
can goes off on a
vacation in the tropics
how do I make the rent
with mayonnaise
in the morning?

You can't build equity
in wheat bread
you just can't.

Without true love
the lawnmower sputters
without gasoline
the toaster gets depressed.

How am I to carry on
with the ashtrays
in convulsions
the endtables
having a nervous breakdown?

There's no tomorrow
in the clothes dryer
no October
in dead Wednesday.

BEAUTY PACKS HER BAGS

Beauty packs her bags and
moves out. She's fed to the teeth with
all this pretentious bullshit, the elaborate
posturing. And she doesn't give a goddamn
for your amateur standing.

Another willful female hits the trail.

What's left? ruffled bedclothes
(her scent on the pillowcase), dappled
curtains that swell with the hot evening breeze,
swaying mountains of dirty dishes in the sink,  
suicidal cowboy -- too sad -- on the radio.

While you stumble all night room to room, glass of scotch in hand, two left feet,  
kicking up the carpet, knocking over lamps,  
the overflowing ashtrays, a twitch  
in each bloodshot eye,  
rivers, rivers of tears.

-- David Barker  
Lakewood  CA

CHAIN LETTER 1980

In the mail  
ycomes one of those chain letters.  
It starts with a prayer  
and ends with a warning:

a man who received the letter  
and did not continue it, lost  
his job. Another, not believing  
in it, threw it away  
and died 9 days later.  
PLEASE DO NOT DESTROY THIS.

And so 56 hours after receiving this letter, it must be  
on its way (20 times copied)  
to someone else, or my own  
fate is sealed.

Some way to start a Monday.  
A prayer and a death threat.

It says a kind-hearted missionary  
from South America  
started the whole thing.

Last week, there were earthquakes.  
This week, chain letters.  
56 hours have gone by.  
I wait like someone finishing  
the last few lines of a story.  
An O. Henry ending.