

GROWING UP ALIVE

dave cherin so fell in love with the movie,
the great santini, that he instituted
bedchecks and reveille
and took to addressing his kids
as "little pukers" and "shitbirds."

i blundered into their living room
an hour before seder
and the kids were running about
calling their parents and each other
shitbirds and little pukers.

one morning dave came down to breakfast
to find the three kids seated before bowls
of sugared nails
because the great santini's kids
"ate nails and shit bricks."

it's a helluva way to bring up kids,
but when i arrived at the surprise birthday party for dave,
the cake was decorated with tanks and howitzers'
and read, "to the great cherini:
happy birthday

the shitbirds love you."

SOMETHING'S HAPPENING

i've never visited her at the school she teaches at.
i've met one or two of her colleagues
once or twice off-campus.
i've never met her principal.
she seems to like him.
maybe she's got something going with him.
she gets pissed off when i suggest it,
so possibly she does.
on the other hand, she's so busy
with the combination of her job and our baby
that i'm not sure she would have the time, literally,
to fit it in.

she talks to me about things that go on at her school,
but a lot of times i don't listen as closely as i should.
i'm too busy rehearsing my recitation of my own day's
events.
and as the baby demands more of each of us,
we legitimately have less to give each other.

it's my sixth child, and i've finally learned not to
fight it --

i let myself enjoy her.
so it's nobody's fault that we have so little time
to hear about each other's schools.

i wonder if she thinks my school is close to what it was
ten years ago when she was going there,
when girls, to my amazement and her rage, sometimes
pursued me.
i know how things have changed, but can she know it?

i don't know if we're growing very close
or very far apart.

SIX OF ONE

t.c. is a broker,
which isn't always a compliment,
but t.c.'s the sort of broker
who devotes the better part of each day
to horses, prizefights, pool, and such pursuits.
i've known him about fifteen years.
i can remember when he tried
to get me to invest in denny's restaurants.
i didn't have any money,
but even if i had
i wouldn't have bought into denny's with it
because i can't stand denny's hamburgers --
i much prefer bob's big boys.
t.c. used to get genuinely angry with me:
"gerry," he'd say, "don't you realize
that denny's charbroils their burgers,
while bob fries his?
fried food causes ulcers!"

and i am sure that fried food does,
but, unfortunately, there's been recent evidence
to suggest that charbroiling is linked to stomach cancer.

anyway, though, i ran into t.c. the other day
for the first time in a long time
at a kentucky derby party.
he didn't mention denny's,
which i must admit are now
on every other block in california,
and i must also admit
he was dressed in a lot more expensive threads
than my penny's jeans.