

a helluva lot that year  
but she never mentioned  
babies again.

-- Christopher Daly

Long Beach CA

### THOSE PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA EYES

Aunt Maple at 105 totters into breakfast, wants the pancake on the bottom of the stack, "They're all the same!" shouts the husband of her dead sister's daughter (nephew-in-law?), only she can't hear because she's got her hearing aid turned off, saving batteries, a whole box of old batteries under her bed, "They're not really 100% dead," a dab of soybean margarine, "I don't know whatever happened to butter..." "It got overpriced!" yells her dead sister's daughter's husband, but not even the vibrations get through, and her niece says kind of to the air over the center of the table, "I don't know why she even wears that silly thing if she doesn't want to put any batteries in it," Aunt Maple squirrels her way through one pancake, then another two, always dealing from the bottom of the deck, a cup of cream-swamped, sugar-supercharged coffee, then spiders into the living room where she sits on the sofa watching her watch,

10 AM, a car comes dust-clouding down the road, pulls up in front,

"Who's that?" asks Margaret-Niece.

Aunt Maple already at the front door as Mr. Knit Orlon rings the bell,

"Miss Maple Watkins?"

"That's me!" she says, he's swimming in shame/con-  
sternation/befuddlement,

"I try to block these things," says Margaret-Niece,

"I sell life insurance," says Mr. Knit Orlon,

"You're neither the first nor the last,"

"Well...", he stands there in a puddle of confusion,

then leaves ... as Aunt Maple goes into the kitchen after her pills,

Garlic Oil for anti-clotting activity,

Yeast as antioxidant, B-complex, selenium content,

E for varicosities and skin tone ..., transparent in the Kansas morning light, bright, expanding, like the first atomic bomb ever searing the Los Alamos desert morning air.

#### ORDINARY PEOPLE

It begins with never enough, you sleep on the dining room "studio" couch, your parents on the sofa-bed in the living room, you think Russia and space-lack, I'm talking about Chicago, 1940,

never enough food or clothes or books or paper or pencils, you become "small," always opt for the plainest, it's the Invisible Church-Mouse Syndrome, Lord, I Am Not Worthy,

you lower Death of a Salesman Dad down in the grave, Mom hangs (increasingly silly) on, you never can make a big sandwich or laugh a big laugh,

it's always wry defensiveness, you keep it all out with a word wall,

lower Mom down,

and, of course, Jay's gotta drink and Lisa's gotta get strangled, Chicago grows big against wee-one respectability, against the Americana maple living-room, the braided rag-rug, the converted-to-electricity kerosene storm-lamp hanging over the maple-slab dining-room table,

can you believe your big (red) lipped, big (mascared) eyed, big (all her) titted, bouncy Sister Rita's 65 (you're 50), who do you lower down next,

as you (2 weeks) look for daffodils in the Lake Country, for The Rock at Brighton, Tess at Stonehenge, god on Dover Beach,

two weeks,

you feel it's a kind of final Death-Watch Tour -- the English Literary Pilgrimage.