

should i say the madness. now if this tomato were at my mother's it would be part of an elaborate salad which would be followed by an equally elaborate meal. and i certainly do not have anything against that kind of eating. but living alone it's better to concentrate on the tomato by itself. this is more in keeping with the situation. so, for dinner i'll have this single monstrous tomato with a pinch of salt, and i'll eat it at the table along with three chairs empty and still.

100 LAPS

it's monday night and the football game is a lousy one so z goes out and starts his car and lets it run for awhile, since it is one of the first really cold nights of the year and he hates frosted windows. i offer him some wine when he comes in but flatly he refuses it, like i knew he would, knowing how little he drinks these days. so i drink alone as we watch a few more plays, and then finally i just turn the set off and we sit on the couch for awhile waiting. he has his old black overcoat on, which he's very proud of. it has an unusually high collar, which causes him to look like a vampire, especially too because he has long black hair these days, swept back. not that that is the style he wants, but his wife has been pestering him to have it that way. she says she misses the curls. z would prefer to have it short, like he does in the summertime, extremely short, so that when he washes it he doesn't have to fuss with it. this short style he calls his "convict cut." i prefer seeing his hair short also. i think he looks more intimidating with it short. you might ask me why i'm so concerned with z appearing intimidating, and i would have to say that i believe it's a must for an old broken-down poet like z. the same goes for me. at this stage of the game we can use all the protection we can get. we've written ourselves into such a tight-ass spot with poetry that in a society such as the one we live in we have become dangerously vulnerable. between the two of us there is not a single

credit card. so we sit and talk awhile, be-
moaning the early onslaught of winter weather.
z talks about his parents having just recently
moved to arizona, where they live in an expensive
old-age retirement community. he claims his
father now swims 100 laps a day in the pool there.
says his father is completely crazy about swimming
and because of this he is the picture of health.
somehow this seems to make z feel more secure
about his own well-being. i don't fully
understand the connection here between z
and his father, but i accept it, for his sake
and mine.

— Ronald Baatz

Woodstock NY

SUE'S PAST & MINE

I really enjoy it
when Sue talks about
her ex-husband
 and lovers
rummaging through the past
going over it all
 it's cosy
talking over a beer
in a pub
 or lying together
in her bed smoking
and staring at the ceiling
or the romantic painting
of a Scottish loch
 or Italian lake
in smokey blues and greens
on the wall beside the bed
we know the rough outline
of each other's pasts
almost as well as
we know our own
it's cosy and gentle
lying there
 reminiscing
and though I've heard
most of the stories before
just as she's heard mine
there's always some new
twist or slant that adds
to the picture in my head
it's like an old fiction