

PRODUCE

My pregnant wife is as unusual
as South Pacific fruit.

Exotically shaped and textured
as if an apple was crossed with
a maraca with
a cantaloupe with
a salmon-colored, crystal ball.

And then touched
by the bristling genius
of the wolf, Gauguin.

HOUSESITTING

This is not our house
although we have lived here.

These are not our plates
although we have eaten here.

These are not our cups
although we have drunk here.

And these are not our dogs
although they lie at our feet
with ash upon their heads.

— Jeff Parsons

Surrey B.C., Canada

SPARE PARTS

On Sunday they meet at the swap meet.
He cruises the used auto parts
for a piston and a tie-rod for
a 1947 to 51 Packard.
It looks like a bug, his friends
tell him, like a big cockroach,
but he thinks — not a bug, an insect,
a scarab, a sacred beetle,
the sign of the Pharaohs, the kings of the dead —
like the hood ornament he buys
for a 52 to 55 Pontiac,
the head of an Indian in dark orange plastic

the color and feel of amber.
He wants it for his living room
he's not sure where.
He'll build a wood stand for it
in his shop in the garage
and put it on top of the stereo or the teevee
or some other place of honor.

BREAKFAST

There aren't any carhops at the drive-in,
but that's okay,
he isn't driving a car.
He buys a cup of coffee
and sits at the picnic table in front
and watches the kids on the jungle gym.
They're from Ohio, they tell him, southern Ohio,
on vacation with mom and dad.
That's their car, the Buick station wagon.
He notices the tailpipe is about to fall off.
The bracket's rusted through.
They put too much salt on the road in winter
in southern Ohio.
A farmer on an early run with a load of vegetables
sits down at the table across from him.
"Say, don't I know you," he says.
"Aren't you the guy who used to work on my ...
what was it? I thought you were"
"No," he says, "Don't think so.
But it could've been my brother, Lazarus."

SOAPS

In the afternoon he watches soaps.
Except for Richie and Biff and Delia
he doesn't know their names.
They all blend into one another,
all the handsome, lazy, idealistic
young men, his son
when he was ten, building the soapbox.
He didn't want any help.
The old man couldn't even go in his own garage.
It was secret, the ultimate soapbox,
beautiful as a starry night after a stormy day.
But it didn't roll,
he could've told him it wouldn't roll.
He could've fixed it in a minute or two.
Strange — he's proud of his son.