

arthritis of the mind

from that first parental admonition
security stalks
I was 18 & living alone
my sister saw my confusion
she suggested I enlist
according to her
they would train me to be a photographer
I was trained to be in the security police
3 years of it
with a secret clearance
the logical move after discharge
was to become a state trooper
my father pushed civil service
that's what he would've done
if he had another chance
I passed the test
& became a mail carrier for about 3 days
the supervisor laughed when I quit
where else would I make that kind of money?
my father told me to come to New York
with all the skyjacking going on
the government was creating a new occupation
sky marshal
I passed the test but didn't follow up
just as well since it went the way of the Edsel
the T was looking for busdrivers
I passed the test
& drove bus for a year before quitting
they practically pleaded with me to stay
it was the military all over again
instead of promising that 4th stripe
it was the guarantee of becoming a fulltimer
security is an illusion
any insurance man knows that

heavy

I found myself in northern Italy
surrounded by little towns
from A Farewell To Arms
& Nick Adams stories
in my late teens
just as the author had been
it was too much
I made Pamploma
saw the great Antonete & El Cordobes
drank at Harry's Bar in Venice

daiquiris of course
for three years I slept in barracks
that had been occupied by Nazi officers
did guard duty in their towers
surrounded by barbed wire
20 years after their defeat
a Jew in their quarters
it was too much
my head was swimming with all this shit
I decided to buy a typewriter at the BX
& learn how to write

on leave

I was tanned & fit
Melvin was on the way out
he was 25
my mother had taken him in
when he was 16
now cirrhosis was taking over
he died just before I left for NY
I had one week left
since my plane to Italy left from NY
I decided to see my father
for the first time in 3 years
meet his new wife
they took me to Toots Shors
Radio City
where I saw Johnny Carson taping his show
my last night
they took me to see Streisand live
in Funny Girl
there was a young woman sitting next to me
who offered me some of her candy
she was alone & play hopping
my father kept nudging me to go with her
he thought she was some celebrities' daughter
I never asked
it was probably the best visit with him
I ever had

survival technique

never let your mind kick you
in the butt