

ONE WAY RIDE

My haircut becomes her ticket out.
She wants to talk about her divorce.
The way her husband fucked her over.
How she'll get him back six to one
for everything he ever did to hurt her.
The vengeance seeths from her finger-
tips as she runs the comb thru my hair,
lifts the ends, clips, smooths & lifts
again, working her way around my scalp.
Her eyes like coals in the artificial
light. She works the strands closer &
closer to the surface. He's living with
a younger woman, college educated, a
pharmacist. He made her teenage son lie
to hide that truth from her. That's the
kicker. She'll never forgive him for that.
No alimony, he thinks, wait & see she says.
I'll open that door & the bastard'll get
sucked right thru it.

STANDING TALL

The night before the wedding
was quite an affair. My usually
conservative father drank drafts
with us at the Duchess, laughed
like hell when we stole the pool cue
at Uncle's Place, drank some more
at the Trade Winds, helped me up
when I fell off the bar stool
at The Tavern, kept the pace
when we went to the Gag & Heave
for fries & gravy & on the way back
to the motel. I could see him
in the rear-view mirror, sitting
between Hound & Carl, taking long
slow hits off a bottle of Dewars.
He was laughing at a lot of things
I'm sure he didn't understand.
The next morning I was dog tired.
He roused me at six am
for a prenuptial service & stood tall
beside me when I slipped on
that narrow gold band.

— Marc Swan

Cotuit MA