

THREE-PIECE DINNER WITH FRIES

Nicholaus is so prudishly reserved
that when ordering fried chicken
from a woman

he is wont to hold up
his entire line

while seeking an acceptable
euphemism for "breast."

— Brook Zelcer

Fair Lawn NJ

OLD NASSAU'S BLACK SHEEP

i'm experiencing some typical fatherly concern
because my daughter, blake,
having survived my poem, "poop,"
is going off to teach english for a year
in macao, cinematic capital of opium dens,

and my buddy ray attempts to reassure
me with, "graduates of princeton,
gerry, have a tendency not to do too
badly for themselves in life,"

and i sip my vodka-and-tonic and think,

you know, he may be right; the only
downright fuck-up i can think of off-hand
who ever came out of princeton was
f. scott fitzgerald.

MY WIFE'S TWO TOADS

for years i wrote about half my poems
under the persona of "the toad."

now i seldom employ that mask,
but my wife has brought home two
real toads, one to live in an aquarium,
the other in the back yard.
she feeds the aquarium toad crickets,
which she purchases at the pet store.
when they escape, or sequester themselves
in the wire aquarium roof, they sing the
whole house to insomnia. this toad is
well fed, but he still flattens himself

against the glass that separates
him from his instincts.

the backyard toad we seldom see
except when he lets himself in from
the patio on a hot night and surreptitiously
seeks refuge behind the television set.
then i grab him with a paper towel and
he sinks his fingers and toes into the
carpet as i gently separate him from
the middle-class comforts to which he
apparently aspires.

the glassed-in toad will never know
freedom. the backyard toad, who with
a modicum of strategy could probably
escape, chooses carpeting over loam.

neither of them has much of a sex life.

ONLY IN FRISCO

returning from the men's room to
the fern-bar at the san francisco airport,
i hear, "jane has found that her new family
welcomed her kind words and gestures."

and i glanced up at one of the ubiquitous
t.v.s to discover an attractive white
woman surrounded by chimpanzees.

"what are we watching, a fucking tarzan flick?"
i complained to my buddy, larry kramer, and
larry, the kindest of poets, did his best
to suppress a wheeze of mirth as he
informed me, "gerry, that's jane goodall."

FLIRTING WITH DISASTER

for one evening, a few months ago,
i really thought that she and i
would end up married to each other,
even though we already both are married
elsewhere. we had a lot in common and
seemed to appreciate each other a lot
more than either of us was being appreciated
at home.

then last night over drinks
my jokes kept being taken as attacks,
there was a slashing irrational tone
in her voice that i recognized all too well.