

FUNNY? (1993)

my wife never understands my  
sense of humor.  
she often gets upset by things  
I say.

"wait," I tell her, "I was trying to  
be funny."

"nobody could ever tell," she  
says.

"other people can," I counter.  
"no," she says. "they can't."

yet people will tell her, "how  
can you stand it?"

"stand what?" she says.

"your husband, he's so funny!"

I am not quite aware that I am  
funny.

it's a rather off-hand thing I  
do.

but it must happen.

like my doctor will say,  
"you've got all the nurses  
laughing, they are always  
eager for your next  
visit."

past girlfriends have told me  
"your sense of humor is your  
best asset."

not one of them but all of  
them.

but not my wife.

"you're not funny," she says,

"nobody understands what  
you're saying."

"huh? what's that laughter  
I hear?" I ask.

"they don't know you,"  
she says.

maybe that's it, my wife  
knows me.

still, I wish I could make her  
laugh.

I've heard her laugh at  
things other people say,

things that I didn't think were  
funny at all.

I think I even make some  
of our cats laugh.  
well, maybe not laugh but  
I see their mouths curl up  
in what looks like a  
smile.

but not my wife.  
"people don't know what you're  
talking about," she will say.

"I'm being subtle ...."

"no, that's not subtle; people just  
don't know what you're trying  
to say ...."

just think of it, all these people  
are just pitying me, they are  
laughing out of embarrassment  
for me.

looks like I'm no challenge  
at all  
to David Letterman.

#### VOUCHSAFEMENT (1990)

did you ever see a horse with a leg  
just broken  
trying to stand on that  
leg?

I don't have the guts to watch, I  
have to look away into the  
stands, and then there's another  
sight: all those human faces  
and I have to look away again,  
there's a charge of darkness, you  
are aware of your heart, your  
throat, your parts, your mind and  
what's left of the spirit, that's  
when the death-wish comes, that's  
when you know that you've never  
done anything right —  
take the horse away, the humans,  
the cities, the trash of history,  
just leave my shoes, untied, the  
left one upright, the right one on  
its side, there like that, stalled  
in reflection.