

**COLD BLUE GREY HOT ORANGE**

**DRAKE STUTESMAN**

## Did we come all this way for Birth or Death?

a burned house razed to the ground on a slight hill, huge beams and walls charred in disarray, in the midst a wardrobe is still standing, burned but upright. You see this through a spider's web and a hazy light. The web holds two skeletons of lizard bones, perfectly fitted in curved forms. the bones start to fade, the web lines break away to either side, the story begins. Two sisters, twins, lived in this house, one died in the fire. Both were geniuses.

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I haven't described the loneliness that follows the combination everywhere, the evening yawning like a fake story, how it crumbles on me. How I feel driven to this book, this entrance. How the endless rambling echo of the hungry past, the divine stitch basted, so wildly, I see it and it never lets go, but I'm left, left over, beached and the dreams, the slow angling conversations, bring this pain I can't get rid of, then all my pandering with the humdrum, I feel, I feel, I feel, and it remains, with the lines biting out my consciousness. The glorifying sleep. No monstrous emptiness reigns. I go coolly fast, I lift, I want, really, hear, I want just the patience, the kindness, the resilience, and the what I don't have...

"I don't know." I heard my sister say those words often before she died. Her death waves off my life, a mirage - solid, insubstantial. Is that what her life is like? Can I not actually remember it? Our lives exist only in the feel of my hand holding my cheek as I write, my tongue's weight in my mouth, by my presence: it speaks out of me, in what I want to say, not what I say; it's how I see. In my mind images dissolve and so often they're nothing, not what I felt.

Our name is Plane. To compensate for it's blandness we were given ornate first names - Clarissa and Belvedere - which then rarely were used with any affection; they were used officially and that was a lot. I'm known as Clay and Belvedere as Lotsa, short for 'lotsa lies,' an ugly name she hated but we all used. She started lying early and, now that I think of it, it was her most obvious attempt to overturn our reality. Truth and deceit mingled around us and that's why Lotsa's lies were so highlighted: they were grand, bald-faced. She'd announce, "I saw an elephant," and never budge no matter how threatened, how punished.

There had been a brother. I'm not even sure of his name or whether he was a half brother or a full one. Lotsa and I didn't talk much about him except for a period when we saw him as a child, our own, and we played games around his brief life. He may even be alive, I'm not sure. If asked directly what happened to him, our mother, when not endlessly changing details, would say with peculiar graveness and no irony - "I don't remember."

Identical twins, Lotsa and I were rated, in whispers, in shouts, from two years old as *children of extra ability*. As a gifted pair, we went from test to test, from university to university, from Army to Navy, from lab to lab, state to state, country to country, theory to theory, label to label, doctorate to doctorate, talk show to talk show, commercial to commercial. Geniuses! I have to laugh! - prostitutes comes closer, passed through so

many hands, fulfilling so many hopes, dreams, fantasies, used to the point of stupefaction. Used to stupefy and of course in the end to be stupefied. What did it all come to? Lotsa, mom, Al all dead. The prodigy part is mostly meaningless, especially now, but what exists, what always existed for me, visible, not visible, never actually present, is the family, and, now, Lotsa's death. When she and I looked at each other we saw ourselves and we saw that we looked at each other. Do you see what I mean? The same way a lover sees not only the beloved but sees, as importantly, the beloved seeing them. Though our lives separated drastically at the end, what I tell about Belvedere is about myself - not because we were twins but because I love her. She and I thought we scorned the ordinary way but we had no choice - for a long time we were treated as freaks, a unit: four eyes, two noses, four arms, four legs, two torsos and brain power fit for more than two, so they told us. We needed each other desperately as the only two human beings left on this planet of staring eyes. I could lean my head in Lotsa's direction and hear her heart beat - the only human sound in a world clanging like pots and pans - I could hear her heart and the sound of my ear listening to it. For many years, I lived, only alive in that suspended place. The world wanted Lotsa and me, wanted to pick our brains, our bones, wanted us to be together, separate, telepathic, androgynous, too female, too male, brats, victims, superkidden, to be over glamorised, underestimated: specimens for every body. How did we get 'found'? Our father. He needed the publicity. And he got it. In spades. How old was he then? His thirties? My age now. I don't understand him. He's a stranger, a bastard, but sometimes I reach across the strings of my hatred and a chord is played I didn't intend, other notes of something arising only from all the effort, from all the living of it.

The night before the funeral, last night, I dreamt of mom. It was a town, at night, like a Mexican village but I could only see a road, very wide, wet, that curved downward and then out of sight. It was very dark but some form of light shone off the watery surface and there were buildings, little buildings, on either side, but the road was far bigger than them. Up from below the visibility of the road, a voice came, my mother's, she called *Clay, are you doing what Clay does?* in a high plaintive voice, full of questioning, full of

despair, lost. And then she appeared in view, ranging up the road, continually calling out *Clay are you doing what Clay does?* and she almost staggered but didn't, walking purposefully, but still there was an aura of crazed about it, as if she wasn't sane but she was determined and she was full of pain. The image hung with me all day - why mom? I thought. Why think of her, so specifically, on the day of Lotsa's funeral? Why did her unknownness haunt me again when all I feel is Lotsa's loss?

Phyllis - we only called her mom between ourselves - died almost five years ago. I know deaths recall deaths but I don't want to be beset with Phyllis today. Not today. But that's the psyche for you, always folding one thing into another - saying - You feel this? Okay well, remember, feeling that? That feeling you never got a handle on? Well! Guess what, you're feeling it again! Phyllis's death was different, long and lingering, though I suppose Lotsa also died a long and lingering death, culminating in her burning the house down finally, sure, but all the signs of death were long in her. I could feel it, smell it, hear it, even though by the end we hadn't spoken in almost five months. I knew. The drunken haranguing phone calls at 2 am, 4 am, noon, with Lotsa sobbing or screaming or mumbling or silent, they also hung over my days and nights, like the dream hung over the funeral, even long after they'd ceased. I could still hear her voice, stiffening like her face had stiffened over the years.

All through the ceremony, Pepe couldn't stop mentioning in a hoarse furious whisper - for god's sake, a prostitute! your sister finally croaks, and she's got to have a goddamn prostitute in her house. Do you know what the papers have done with this! I kept thinking - two prostitutes, Pepe, two - and when I felt particularly fed up, I'd add - you pimp. Al Landow. Al. I knew Al from years back. He was very young - twenty-two, twenty-three, twenty-four, I don't know - and he still had the lusciousness of the young. When I first met him, I was also attracted to his shiny eyes and his touchable hair. Like teenagers often are, his presence now and again was suddenly a marvellous juicy fruit which you just want to smell, to hold, to revel in its new life. And then, of course, ripe fruit gets eaten. Al, for sure, got very munched on. The last time I saw him, I could see the effects of the munching. His once supple face would light when he talked, smiled,

and his hair, freshly washed, sprang strong from his head but when I looked at him just sitting there, just listening, his eyes would slowly settle into place and they'd hang like two black glistening rounds, one slightly higher than the other. And his age would be hundreds of years old, suspended, out of time, used so much a shape had overtaken the process of getting older. He was worldly, but it was an unconscious worldliness, but it was real. His older was just experience and experience's unchartable substance always appears in the face, somewhere, even in the necessarily disguised face of someone on the make. He said he was from the North East but I could hear what sounded like Southern syllables in his voice and I know his name was false. I loved Al but not like Lotsa did. Their erratic friendship had true depth but only because they had kinship. Al was trapped the way Lotsa was and that wasn't a pretty picture. I escaped but Lotsa never did.

How did they first meet? Famous person attracts opportunists. Our fame returned, about twelve years after our catastrophic fall from "grace" - to put it laughingly - we became fashionable. Retro chic had released the commercials shelved during the investigation and Lotsa and I became the prostitutes of the town again. The strangeness of being grateful for fame after so much scorn is hard to describe. I hated our fame but sometimes being liked by vile people is better than being disliked by vile people. Some wonders came into our lives and Al was one of them. Al found Lotsa and Lotsa was a woman very bitten by the sex bug. She liked young men. Why not? She'd never had a youth so really these nineteen year olds were older than her; she'd glacierized at twelve or ten or seven. With her Toms, Dicks, and Harrys she'd defrost for ten minutes and ease up. Most of these boys had much the same experience in the sex and rage department. I remember one - what was his name? - he told me a story about his friend who'd died and as the long word threads fished his past, he'd stop speaking, just for a second, as if pausing to remember or for effect but the struggle was not to cry, gripped at the back of the throat, slight, invisible except for a tiny halt in the stream of consciousness; in a few years even that connection to feeling would be lost. Al was beautiful. Lotsa told me how, when they first met, this lean boy walked across the room

towards her wearing a jewelled belt pulled across his hips. She said her body jumped. What a surprise I thought. But when I met him, I knew what she meant. I jumped too. His eyes had an edible burning in them; he consumed you as he drew you in to consume him. His whole being had mouthness. The soft guileless look was his most brilliant trick: I saw cynical people approach him, the one's who could never be suckered, who'd stare with transfixed sympathy: this *beautiful* boy who's been *hurt*. And I'd think, watching them, *oh, brother*. The scornful barely low lid over one dark eye balanced so well with the slightly shaky innocence in the other. He'd part his lips just enough to seem naive. It made an exceptional combination. Al was very good with the slight touch too. He knew to press just enough and not too much, transmitting a sensuality that seemed knowing, respectful but promised sold sex all at once. With the perfect super smile, a rapturous full look of surprise that rushed his entire face the way laughing does, he syruded us one by one, working lumpy rooms of lumpy shapes. Someone once said, "When that boy smiles, you just want to move in." Lotsa and I had endured so many lumpy rooms of lumpy shapes and, in her own hard way, Phyllis had endured alot of them too. We all craved light, craved a clear line, craved. Al was deep in the business of craving but he had some ability to step outside it - he was funny. I never found out how he got on the game. I don't know if Lotsa knew. I don't know if she wanted to know or if Al wanted her to know. I do know that at one point, and he must have been very young - fifteen - god, maybe even younger - he worked on the street because, though he never mentioned it, he once forgot himself when he met an old pal and they choked up laughing about how the boys used to trick for twenty minutes then run to the back of the bar, buy their rock, trick for twenty minutes, back in the bar, trick, rock, trick, rock. He was splitting himself and spoke very fast, I guess jettisoned back to those times when fast is all there is; fast has some safety; slow opens cracks, something leaks through. I could see that in the other boys - they talked with lightening speed, everything was slang, rushing, rage, spiky laughs, quick memories. Al usually spoke slowly. Everything about that story stayed in my mind. By the time we met him, his circumstances had become more moneyed. He was in escort and had a better grip on his drug intake. I slept with Al. Lotsa never knew.

He was very liquidy, mercury fingers, pulpy mouth, unfocused eyes. But at times his unfocused eyes groaned under an oily slackness; they seemed to have presence of their own, as if they had more substance than anything else about him. When he closed his eyes, they felt to me like they seethed to see from under the lids. His distance was magnetic and repelling. Every time, our attraction stayed alive in the first muscley kisses. In those embraces, there was a 'we' in bed, then two 'I's emerged and stayed two 'I's. I knew him the last six years of his life and those were almost the last years of my own life. Would Al have lived if Lotsa hadn't carried him away? I guess he could have. Al was never young, not like you'd say 'young'. Neither were Lotsa and I. But Al was smart, he wore a costume of young so he could get around in the world.

There's supposed to be a plot device here. I've struggled with it but when you're on the inside, deep inside your life, these devices don't stand out. They blackmail and guilt trip and beat and brainwash their way around you and you see globs, blurs, body reactions and not one single rational thought that stands up for very long.

After I could read again, but before that and usually when I watched movies, I loved the compactness of the idea of plot. Yes! *Plot* has saved me more times than I can say! I'd watch a movie over and over so I could see there was a plot. Lotsa and I would sit there and when someone'd do something she'd say - bastard! - and I'd say - is that bad? - and she'd look at me. After a while she stopped glancing at me and, looking right at the screen, would say - just repeat after me, Clay: bastard! and I'd say: bastard! and all would be right in the world of plots. We were once SO smart. I found out something - smart's as take-onable and off-able as fame. It comes from the outside because it's got to be defined and it's defined so it can be hardened and when its hardened it becomes something you can take on and take off, like a solid shell. Anyone can wear it - it has contours, patterns, or its elusive, gossamery. Real knowledge is what Al knew. What Lotsa and I came to know. And everybody knows you know, and then they turn against you. They see it sit in the weight of the face, in the dismissal by the body language. It's in everything. It was behind a game like Al's though Al didn't particularly know what he knew. He didn't have to. But I knew and that made it so much worse. It shook in every



tremble I trembled, in one huge *un-ness* - it was unknown, unthought, unconscious, untold, undreamt. Even dreams don't show it, because form is there and *un* is just a state of 'not-ness.' It exists as *un* and how does *un* come forth? It can't come forth or it won't be *un* any more - it becomes something else. That's smart. It won't make itself known because it knows what'll happen. And that was the smart I finally came to struggle with as prodigy ripped away. And then, the hatred that met me head on. You might think - oh, yeah, the old broken prodigy story: too much stress etc. Yes. Maybe. But I don't think that's it. No. I think my *un* fought with the *un* of the world which is absence, loss, longing. Plots love that fight, briefed as the individual against the system, the individual against madness, the individual for their need. But plots don't do it. Plots don't even come close. That struggle is never depicted very well because it's really, just *repulsive*.

Years pass.

No. Just kidding. Another writing device. It doesn't matter what I write. I could say - seconds pass - it's all the same. Lived moments are dangerous and later, they're stories. It doesn't tell you anything. Words don't do it. I could write reams, get fancy. And so what. Words are powerful. That's undeniable. Words make suppression, undo suppression. Long fishing word threads have brought me the unknown in some form and I've begun to 'get it.' I've see trails of tears come backwards up through words unravelling the past like it was string. You tell a story and the pain is today. Words do that. But, in the end, words only outline plot. You want me explain what *repulsive* means. It means sheer nausea. Nausea. Can't be described. Words fear desire lust doubt terror suicide repugnance they don't tell you what those dangerous lived seconds are. But the gorgeous, whole, after-the-fact plot, I love that. It says: hey, those dangerous seconds are over. Relax. Have a story. I love those stories.

You're thinking: what kind of prodigies were these girls? Why should I tell you? Who cares? What does it matter? You'd focus on the tricks but what you'd miss is our joy. What I could do then I can't do any more. All that's left is a name - Clarissa Plane who could do X - or really better expressed for our circumstances - Y who could do X. We were numbers. The joy immanent in my prodigious talent is gone. It's like a loved dress that's too old to be worn and all the dangerous seconds of my lived life are in that dress. How do you explain that? All you'd see is sleight of hand. The unfathomable oomph of what was: even I can't get it any more. It's far away. I don't remember.

**I placed a jar in Tennessee,  
And round it was, upon a hill.  
It made the slovenly wilderness  
Surround that hill.  
The wilderness rose up to it,  
And sprawled around, no longer wild.  
The jar was round upon the ground  
And tall and of a port in air.  
It took dominion everywhere.  
The jar was gray and bare.  
It did not give of bird or bush,  
Like nothing else in Tennessee.**

The hate wasn't because I was a talent disappointment. No, that would have been a relief. I might even have been prepared for that. No. It was that I couldn't play the game, not that I didn't, as you might think, I was no rebel, at least not in the story sense, no, but that I failed to combat them. That's what they're really after - for you to rise up and obliterate them - and when you don't, you who've been groomed through hate, hypocrisy, when you fail to act the golem, they blow you away with a mix of relief and the unspeakable contempt of the disappointed. Weird? The story gets weirder. And

even weird was that the haters didn't even get why they hated me, us, it was their *un* working out of them. Their slaving instinct, never sleeping, ready to deflect, at all costs, whoever gets in the way. But what's important is that chicken and egg thing: am I smart because I'm nuts or am I nuts because I'm smart? I'm smart now because I see I'm defeated, or almost defeated, because I see Lotsa's defeated and Al and Phyllis. That's smart and where do I market that skill? I discovered something else - far more interesting: that weak people are very strong, in fact I'd go so far as to say they're the strongest things in the world. The lengths they go to to kill you! The strength and cunning they employ. That's skill! Incredible.

Words, weak people = strength. Gives you pause.

The point is, when you're nuts, there is no plot device. It's all one big blob. Except, for you, sitting there reading. You think: but how did she get nuts? Did she stop being nuts? How many nuts are there in this story? And you want these questions answered. Can I answer them? Yes. But first forget plot devices, and I'll keep telling the story. Through the fountaining dark,

loosened like hair over a black expanse,  
a loving figure,  
on a hard mud road,  
a presence seeming of plump  
pinks  
and blues of a voluptuous white thigh,  
approached me, steeped in a smile  
that appeared familiar and ever-near

Al's genius.

He'd set that strung undulant body just right, a sound ever rises up all around him beguiling, freeing; you might say: *who is singing?* and you'd hear: *everything, everybody.*

Fingers dark at back, slightly flurry raggedy as tips egress sea-anemoned skin. look into my face, look close, so that's all that can be seen. closer, all you can see is half my eye, full, looking straight at you. I go into a room, he's sleeping on the bed. a hand comes up and reaches my arm, takes me down to where he is. it's dark, dark dark hours float out phantom limbs of space, leaving only space. round chin, full lips with something in them, animal head for a face, skin coming apart at edge, at depth, darken faces, darken eyes, almost bruised flesh for depth, smudged layering different weights of transient touch like artist leads, concocting passivity, pressure speaking the whole body to orating in pressures and a high violin note hot barbarous heat hangs imminent in a shallow, shrill unwound sound perfect hysteria of shivering note without "is." bow across long strings. hours removed out of space, leaving only space.... I sit up and I'm lit, by his presence, from below. he looks up at me as he lies there, smiles

birds' voluting white light crevices come under drawn window blinds

dawn

At least once a visit, he stood in my doorway knowing the hall's light where an exposed bulb hung wonderfully framed him. He'd stand naked, his back blackened away from the glare, with one hand holding his neck, pointing the thumb down casually and he'd drape the other, palm outward, over his hip's curve so the relaxed fingers curled. Slowly, he'd look back at me. He saw the humor in it. Sudden soft warmth exuded as he lowered then opened his eyes, shining an instant's light and a shy pleasure smile. Even from across the room, his skin's auscultation spoke, explicit unmantle wholeness. I kissed back his all-over oyster kisses with not just lips but whole flesh and every point flooded ripples printing feelings in me that have never left and I thought of old fairy stories' loving boys whose opened mouths gushed pearls and diamonds instead of words.

trudged passion

whirling slice slur pinwheels

far flung room

ciphering

demoted

exault

dredged and solitude lightened and lightened and lightened

Al would pass his hands down my bare arms, oyster up my neck, sing in my ear: from this valley they say you are going, I will miss your bright eyes and sweet smile, but remember the Red River Valley and the cowboy who loved you awhile. My feelings for him built into meaning, late, *late's* word snakes in the dark, I lie in a hammock strung throat to throat in night. I love because of unrealised reality, because in poured lamp light, I brood on inadequacies evident, as real as the flush hurricaning the room's hazes. I love you and whatever I believe in myself I want to hide within you. lip graze on skin tries to freeze terrible fear, fear choke memory. I want to root in time, in chemical time, in a body, moving, moving, moving, plucking at your elbow, soothing fever, when the body fitfully ardents moans a sweat far away, unreachable, but beside the bed, a figure is the quiet fever will not allow. if I can't be what you need, I love you anyway, that inability I understand though it slithers harmful in me. And often, too often, these feelings inexpressed down to only looking at Al. I watched him do everything. I watched him put a bottle of water to his mouth, suck the water, tilt it high over his head. With the young ribs, slender bumps of muscle, his throat sloped back, and the slurping, more than anything else, there was a vibrance. That's what we all went for. Not just his beauty. Okay, he was good looking but that's never enough. A livingness in him made us crazy. I could see what everybody wanted: it was envy more than sex. Hues from the doorway caught in the thick glass rim, streaked criss-crossed white lines, around, through a succulent sharp kaleidoscope as water gorged down his throat. I thought: if he'd drink me like that and I could leave the world forever.

Drink me, Al.

Drink you? I just have. That's as good as it gets today.

What do you think of me?

What do I think of you?

You're repeating everything I'm saying.

Clay, baby, you're not saying anything.

No. Yes. Do you really like being with Lotsa? Doesn't she get on your nerves?

I don't have any nerves.

Al gave me his I-am-the-greatest smile. I thought - fuck you - as I often thought.

Al, come on, tell me what you really think.

This is what I really think. Lotsa doesn't get on my nerves. What's eating you, anyway?

Yes. What's eating me? I don't know. You?

Clay, baby, you know I love you.

Really? Why?

What? Do you want a speech? Ok, let's see. First cause you're human, then cause you're a woman, and then because you're Clay.

I kept thinking - that order doesn't sound right but I couldn't quite put my finger on what was wrong. Strongbacked, slim-waisted, broad shouldered boys. I remember when Phyllis and Lotsa and I flew to X in a little plane and the steps out were so rickety the boy had to help me. He was strongbacked, broadshouldered, of course, and of course, young, of course. I put my hand on his arm just above the wrist and could feel his veins. The pain that grabbed me when I grabbed him. He looked right through me. How old was I? Fourteen, fifteen, twenty? Sex again. Unreachable.

Did Al see me or did he see Lotsa? We looked exactly the same and Al often got mixed up when talking to us. Do I care? Like Lotsa, like Lotsa repeated over and over and over in the last years, I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. That night he opened his extremely thin wallet and brought out a piece of almost transparent paper with typed words from a manual type writer. He said - Lotsa sent me this two months ago.

the trouble is I hate too much. no. it is by the name that you judge yourself. if I flounder at the endless paraphrasing and naming I lose, and yet too, the hideous ambivalence

that can not get inbetween. "the too strong grasping of it loses it". if at first to clear the slough, the physical slough from my brain. when I walk in the day light I feel crushed by the terrible expansion of the air. elimination is the first sign of change. evrything I do doesn't sem to come inot anything evyrthing I think feels detached frim me, as if its a pastiche of other people, others fading and thickening thru me, not me, I'm not there, or there like a skin, nothing else, no identity, no permanence. I forget constantly forget constantly what I was thinking. forget what I wanted to think about, forget desire, fear, names tokens, remembrances, places I put things, forget how to remember where I put them, the day the hour what year it is, forget to bother, in this incredible self consciousness, forget myself, I am everybody else, everybody I've ever see, every face every gesture, intonation evry visble thought I am myself a little girl in X, in Y, in Z, I am looking at this girl, brought out by smells and sunlight, need need and this skin of me, this glut of "not-ness" in me, these strange depressing sensations, if I forget really and heavily forget, then I forget that what happens is frightening, that the more I forget the more afraid I am when I remember, is that what it is - remember, no just change skins, from the solid the safe anonimity under my own dumb water, like a diver in a bell suit, into the thin the invisible the transparent awareness of the ever present ever repeating ever the same loss of yourself, that you are not, that you are not what? the words, go around them the words go around them the words th words it is those endlessly diff levels, territories that becoming is taking place in, always diff from person to person and also between people it is in me something terrifiing in the moment, being lodged too long, in a ceratin exposure, where that becoming is too constantly going on, changing you the irrevocableness the imbalances the will that moves with it and the other will, unseen, moving ready to rise and face you with a ceratinty a certainty that has passed, like ungraspable time passing that you don't see it happening until it is there what you are what you did, what you did not think you were, what you could not see, like space you can't see, sensual moving of being alive until these certainties, fixed as you have been fixed in a body, thruout time and space, in an acute consciousness, that too is permanent inside you -not in time- seizes you and you are a terrible recognition of yourself. I talk to no one. it doesn't alwasly bother me. I feel I'm losing a precious touch with the world. I prob. am, not like madness, not strong, a likea dumbness, a fine dust coming settling silent over me. what it is, what it will be, what it will always create out of itself, out of the vunerable clenched knot in me is fear. the speech that becomes a twirling hand there is a whirlpool drawn down into the belly the summit springs from the feet. selfprotection equals misrepresentation the sound of the thich heat a satyr's voice, whisper without verb from the green jungle. the shell light, the crimped drivelling water sounds . I could see like an open body, everything was alive and present and full of space. I used to be a moralist, protection, I'm sure, because I could not enter so I shut myself out.

As I read, he laughed, making a quick piano note sound, and said - Okay, she's nuts. I can identify with that. But he closed his eyes, slightly sucking in his breath, when he said the



last few words. I suddenly hated what they had between them which was as strong as the smell of lime, invisible, indistinct in any form but its reality. This liquid boy and my ever undoing sister, they shared a hard shape of solid estrangement. I loved them both, more deeply than I can say, two people who my arms would have stretched across a million miles to embrace but who could never feel the feeling of its touch only its flesh. They were too afraid.

the letter continued -

I hear the night. the skirts drawn up over the Y shaped knees, the night cozy with nothing to say, intending to say nothing, is my keeper, unhooks the thread-bare collar that rolls over my neck day by day, lets loose the incorrigible business silently. and my melting face in the cheek of the night. the clock has entered the corral, become friendly and now I need it, the inclining belief like a beard in the liquor falls from my isolate chin to my lap till it drops inevitable off into swirling daylight. but now I'm alone. the subject withdrawn. the silence unbeatable and admired with the same love as a narcissus. the insular unwrapping liquor, silk internal underwear. the triumphant face leading me away from the fatal bath I stood in. I can not hear my trudging in the armoury of care where I drink from a bottle and I listen and listen with the hollow-faced silence, I listen to each name my footsteps disturb there. each unbearable name claims a sovereignty. with a dry head and these horns I hold on. the eclipsed sentences finally go dark and the stiff pearly light paws the loud room. the silence, immediate within a two-toned conversation, becomes the aching clock and its hominess becomes a saddle at my back, smooth and silent, riderless, like a dressage in a round room. the tongue makes no effort, pretends, dips in oars, the lacquer, the water, the before, the escapes, the future in cartoons, the inky trailing hand over my body, leaving every mark. none of this is how I remember it. I remember. I. remember. but first somehow again and again, the silence, for all its miserliness, in the drifting crafty air, I hear, out of talking, waiting, the silence again. comes, doesn't hit or scare, comes to me, in my sleep, stiffness, and smooths my face, enters my hair, loosens my body.

What a boozier - he said.

When I began to pull away from Al, feelings of rejection became intense, though in a sense, I left him, what I left was a withdrawal, and what presence is that? It's strong. Its

strong vacant power enters everywhere and, magnetizingly, rivets you to absence. And absence is so dominant that if they sawed your leg off, they'd find blood, muscle, bone and *absence*. Such incredibly hard work to get away because it's in you not outside you. Strangely, in the separation from Al, I couldn't stop thinking of Phyllis. *mom, mom, mom* I'd call in my mind as if I was a tiny child crying out in a freezing fog. Why? Why call her? But there she was - in name only, name only because Phyllis never arrived in the cold fog. It was the calling that came again and again - Phyllis never appeared, just the longing for her and that felt like pure loss. Really, pure loss, unadulterated by any action, any memory, any presence of a real person. The name *mom*, my size, the cold, the fog: that's all there was - there wasn't any more.

I said nothing about the letter. I'd seen different versions over the last few years and this one did look a little worse but what bothered me was that Al had it on him. Al said he was tired and asked if I had any stuff and I told him, like always, no, I never do. I watched him throw five chunks of sugar into the glass of gin I gave him. I started to clear the table then gave up, there was too much piled there, and said, just put your glass on one of the papers.

Al said - What's this? Dear Clarissa, Had a marvellous red snapper yesterday. Excellent sauce. Enclosed is a card sent to my wife by my mother. Then it's signed - Pepe Plane. What? He's joking? He signs his full name when he writes to you? I didn't know your grandmother's alive.

I said - She's not.

Al said - But how does he mean she wrote to his wife?

I said - He doesn't mean Susan. He means Phyllis.

Al said - Fuck! How often does that guy write to you?

I said - I don't know. Once a week?

Al said - Fuck. Lotsa told me you guys stopped speaking to him for a year and he still wrote.

I said - Yeah. It was two years. Yeah, he didn't notice any change, just kept writing, and the same stuff he writes now.

Al said - Jesus, what a freak.

Al smoked a spliff as he asked his questions. Then he said,

Does he worry about Lotsa?

I doubt it.

I do. Lotsa's all I have.

No, Al, no. You have me.

Oh, yeah, oh yeah, honey, yeah. But Lotsa... do you think that letter means something?

It's her usual letter.

I'm scared.

Why? What is it?

I don't know. When I kiss her, I feel, what, I feel she's, like, not there. I can't get her.

Oh, I know. Lotsa's not totally with us. She's always been like that.

No. Not ...that's not.... No, she's .... She's, she's...I'm losing her! I'm sure I'm losing her. I love her.

When he said that I leaned forward and recoiled at the same time. Al said every word I didn't want to hear but I felt a strange elation for Lotsa. Maybe she would be safe with Al. Maybe I could keep both of them as a kind of two for one.

Lotsa's ruthless. That's what gets me. I know how much she hates everyone but I know she wants me, but I feel something, something else, when I'm with her. I get lost. I don't... But there's more. There's more now. You know, in bed, she's lying there. I can't see her face and she said - I want to cling to you - and

Lotsa said that to you?

Yeah, and I said, I just said - I'll cling back. Clay, she told me she loved me, like, like, and you know how you can tell? You know? I mean a ton of people say that to me. It's crap. It's their problem. Fuck 'em. Alot go for that whore shit. But when she said it, I felt like, I felt, something, like... like...I don't know... god, I'm afraid for her. I'm afraid, I'm going to lose her.

Lotsa never was too good at saying much. You know that. Though you couldn't shut her up when we were kids, except then it was lies.

Do you think she's lying to me?

No. She's not lying to you. I'm sure she couldn't lie to you. They're weren't those kind. I lied too, of course. Mine were ordinary, you know - eating candy - but hers were amazing, no other reason then being just *honestly* untruthful. At first, Phyllis and Pepe laughed, at least Phyllis did, but then Pepe got worried it might effect our celeb chances. Watch out! flaw! he worried child psychologists making a hash of The Home Life if L's lies got around too much. But you know, she's - sort of - pathologically - honest. Her lies now, they're just blind spots, she doesn't know she's got it wrong. She's so angry.

You know what, that's true.

Her lies. What were they? I don't know. Some fabuloso version of things. People should have bent a little for Lotsa. Her lies were, just, making it bearable. I mean, everything was so splintered. L's lies made as much sense as what was going on. They should have seen that. They were out to crush her. Why? What was the point? The crap that flew around, each person had more bullshit to add to the story. We never knew who to believe. Isidore told us we lived with her for awhile just after she met us. It took years to see the obvious but Isidore had pictures. But, get this, Pepe and Phyllis denied it. I mean, come on, denied it? What the hell is that? Lotsa and I just believed everybody. You know, they called us the Dummy Duo for awhile. I mean you've gotta laugh!

What do you mean the Dummy Duo? I thought you guys were sort of wonder brats.

Yeah. Exactly. The thing was, we took everything literally so if someone told us they had a worm at home who could read - we just nodded. Someone actually told us that. For years Lotsa and I would point to each other and say - hey worm, I hear you can read real good!

Yeah, but the lying... what's with this lying. You really don't think she's lying to me?

You sound so upset. Al, Lotsa's not that well wrapped anymore. You know that.

He sucked away furiously on his spliff and blew the smoke out of his nose. He guzzled the gin suddenly and looked at me with anger over the rim of the glass.

So-well-wrapped. You're just jealous! You're always moping around and Lotsa's off doing stuff.

Doing stuff? Like what? Fucking everyone she can get a hold of?  
Fucking's better than not fucking.

You know, you don't know this, and don't tell Lotsa I told you. Anyway, you could've stumbled on it from anyone. For awhile, Lotsa lost it completely.

She told me.

She told you? She didn't tell you how long it took for her to get it together.

Lotsa told me it was you.

Me!

Yeah. You.

It was me. Before Phyllis died. I don't know. It all froze up. Lotsa panicked; I could feel how scared she was. We hadn't talked for a while but she called me every day. Sometimes twice. That, that more than anything else, made the difference. It's funny. I remember when things began to get a little better, she got me a job in a hotel. I worked for room service.

Room service! Not true!

Yeah. True. I used to start up in the lift, I couldn't remember the floor. I'd go back to the kitchen and they'd tell me. And I'd start again and get in the lift and couldn't remember what floor again. So I'd go back. Or I couldn't remember the room. I'd go back five, six times. Still, you know, they were really nice to me. They were sorry when I left. Oh well.

Yeah, but the lying?

Lotsa's? When Phyllis died, Lotsa stopped lying totally. I was sorry. I liked her tall tales.

What's a tall tale?

You know, huge. Not sneaky lies. Just - huge.

Lotsa, the size queen!

Yes! Lotsa the size queen! Whatever that is.

(hysterical laughter)

I think she took the shit that came at us and just thought - the hell with this, I can do this. What else could we do? The whole situation was so insane. There wasn't a stick of - hey, this is real - anywhere.

You were pros, weren't you?

Were we? I guess so. Professional daughters.

Huh? Yeah. I get it. But, what did you guys do?

It doesn't matter what we did. It's all over.

You know, I could've just lived with someone, just got money off them. But I didn't want to do that.

Yeah. That's what it was like. You're stuck. The whole world is papered with what other people want. There's no way out. No breath. Nothing.

Come on. Tell me what you did.

No. There's no point.

Why?

Because you wouldn't get it. Nobody does. What do you know about my feeling about what I could do?

You know, I met a guy the other day and right off, he says to me how smart I am. I know that shit. He's trying to figure my scam. He is *SO* wrong. Man, I can bluff and double bluff, and bluff again. You think I'm a fucking moron.

No. You don't get it. It's not that at all. I just... I can't talk about it any more. I can't see the words dragged up from inside and then this whole thing made into something words don't know about. *I can't tell you.*

Okay. Okay. Anyway, I can find out any time I want. But, okay, Clay, honey, it's okay, I get it. I'm sorry. Lotsa really thinks you're great. She talks about you alot.

She does? I don't believe it.

You don't? Ok, she doesn't talk about you. We're too busy fucking.

Al. Don't tell me any more. I don't want to hear about you and Lotsa.

Clay, you asked me about Lotsa, anyway. And Clay, you're forgetting something, aren't you. A few years ago. Yeah. Clay, you're forgetting. You're forgetting what I said to you? Remember?

Suddenly the whole evening felt like a shot at the doctor's. I didn't want to go on. But Al kept saying - Remember? Remember?

**Come seeling night,**

**Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day**

**And with thy bloody and invisible hand**

**Cancel and tear to pieces**

**This great bond that keeps me pale**

**At night, the sunlit leaves come to the foot of my bed, and the fear ! Who is visiting me/ disguised as a green thing, entering my nostrils/ to the part of an ever-open wound, this evergreen of unbearable pain?**

"I am able," literally I mutter toward the pretty room, only looks. but love, I avoid, I can not name, holding in suspension there something I neither face nor understand, and won't want to. is there a face to that desire? it comes to that. who? won't say - won't remember. won't give or take on loss or gain. won't bask. I never basked for love. I basked for jumping, for release, for freedom, for joy, but I held love. it never reached my mouths, my minds. a photograph frantics the room, the clock tones, silence now, the music cut off from the disc, in comes, was there, was ever there, across the dark lines, strike the face, what falls on deaf ears. I hear it, put there. slight whincing. dabble of panic. the teeth shut to themselves. the liquor rancour spread stupefaction and subsides, dirty hands spread the face. the feeble pathetic sweat, dripping, unending toilet, going back and forth, in and out of the room, the little breast of affection mews, rubs childishly, hangs in the hand. hair pulls. it too rubs. the whole body buckles resents won't let up, won't go ahead, won't do or not do. no reason a hatred, a no compromise, a non want, a not, a no, a non, a won't see, won't hear, won't speak, taste, touch

fawning sycophants at the desperate head who bows downward a loose ball with gnashing teeth, rumbles into the throat, sits at the bottom where the stomach swells, gags at the rolling hair, can't be digested, held

It wasn't me.

It was Lotsa who came undone before Phyllis died. But after, after she died, Lotsa retreated; said virtually nothing; she almost didn't speak at all for a while, a long time, but one night, at her house, sitting in an unlit room piled up with boxes, she looked past me suddenly, and cried out - Phyllis! Phyllis! You've died and left us with all the cannibals! When my time came, when it happened to me, Lotsa called everyday. She used to say - hey Feet of Clay, how're doing? at the end of the call, she'd say, don't do anything. Don't. I'll call you tomorrow. And knowing that she'd call, and call me feet of Clay, how odd, how much of a difference that made. If she wanted AI not to know, what did it matter.

Think of this book as a scroll. You control the edges of my story, roll it one way, another, it shifts in width, perspective, intimacy, dimension. It has no vanishing point; it's always with you, always with me.

I pictured them together. Lotsa lying on her stomach in the dark with her hair over her face, talking into space at the bed's edge. AI on his back touching his chest with his



hands but his head turned to look at her obscured form. I could see his eyes, those moments when defencelessness showed through. I knew what it took for Lotsa to say something like that. Why did she have to get the guts to say it? Why does she get all the marbles? I picture her words in mythic pictures, mother  
your kisses pressed  
further than my skin,  
and years after,  
they return  
as images of glamour  
a cigarette,  
a drink, passions, a lover.  
Relentlessly, in these lies,  
I've tried to find your assuring caresses,  
I long ago felt or wanted to feel.  
It's not a pretty picture.  
Don't cry. Let me tell you something.  
I talked for hours last night in a car,  
and my words about you  
changed my future;  
the past loosened  
and the white coffin of childhood,  
buried there, began to open.

And I felt Al's response: abundant suppression canopies my life, rich icing or voluminous sheets, like snow, like fog. Suppression bodies over my body, touches my touch, puts a curled hand over my sight, presses my ears with unseen fingers, stops my mouth, mixes my mind.

It's blank is such a friend to me.

It reshapes the world's shapes and clouds their auras with turbid air. And there, anger hinting, a thick honeysuckle, tortuously voluptuous, and fear's longing, a transvestite in bones beneath her perfect clothes, are the flesh, the flowers, the feeling of this life. These images fill my exhausted being with purple words, and as this purpled person, I would have married you.

Love is the word they want me to say. Love is the feeling I wanted to use. Love doesn't move in my snowing chest, snowing hips but is there, is a blank, a before birth lump where you and I and my life mass together. I'm not born yet; a thousand miles distant from my thumping heart, my life flows from me in a cape of living time.

I drank from his glass where his lips had been. I went back into the living room and lay on the floor in the dark and looked at the ceiling. The lights from the street moved in black and white sheets and diagonals across the flat surface. They always comforted me. I thought of Al walking toward the main avenue. I put my cold hand on my pounding stomach and said out loud - Don't think badly of me.

**Come seeling night,**

**Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day**

**And with thy bloody and invisible hand**

**Cancel and tear to pieces**

**This great bond that keeps me pale**

My eyes drifting in circles, across the heavy white windshield of the ever occurring gesture that caused it all, accident by accident, into my side, my side of it, I lay, down, and I lie here, with my sleeping eyes, and draw up every wisped breath from all that long day, when we all changed. Collapsing around me. Every winter Phyllis used to rant - You've rotted another coat! because I couldn't stop sweating. In the beginning the dread was in the motel rooms, when I had my own room, and later it was any room, the

yellow light became silence, the supports on the bed became silence, the line of the desk, of the sill, of the ceiling became silence. Silence, a ceaseless monotone. I could hear my hair tick together, feel my face flush, the blood settled in my lips. Sweat fell on the floor. Afraid of drugs, liquor, afraid to be without control, I walked three, four, five a.m. in each measurable room or, dehydrated by silence, my legs pressed together, I sat, day, day, night, night, room, room, for, what? - fifteen, eighteen years. The last extreme, by the time Lotsa and I each had our own houses, became what I called, finally, the 'suicide object'. What episodes put across to you how this really feels? What little paragraph or scene or incident conveys the realness of these obliterating sensations? None.

When I lost my fear, not even a year before Lotsa and Al died, I saw less and less of Al. Certainly I stopped sleeping with him. The two 'I's got too hard for me to bear. The first kiss should open the second, but, for us, the kisses began to close. When I held him, his tapering waist hungered me. The little contacts of perfumey breath, faint, showed his desire for me had overcome his resistance but he went on resisting, the agony of wanting him was too much. His withdrawal became more and more all I could recognize of him; his lure blurred and disappeared. I still missed him. His own hands, own eyes were always there in the beginning, then his hands became professional and awkward, his eyes turned away. Tonight these haunted rooms could be a place; a solid void made out of never moving time is a present thing. At midnight, when I'm alone, to the foot of my bed, luminous with knowledge, green leaves come, speak and everything known fails me; dissolved sentences, dissolved events, ever green in their dissolution, evergreen desire for an approaching receding thing, green habitation of own unknowing. Al was my edible green that I couldn't eat, I couldn't grow out of.

But Lotsa had his friendship.

**sui**

I often wonder how much comes out of absence.

if repression could be petted as an animal is, soft grey back humped over all it hides,  
child's-creature-pervasive-spread-corpulent-lazy and ever ready to never move. ate.

need sexual. dreamt. high blown sugary satan felt. knows in autistic certainty, eats,  
chews, dreams my infused feeling's inner feelings. a house's boiler anger burns my is-it-  
cold?-home need's rage surfaced radium brought to the raise of a muscular lake my  
heart, you can hold it in a closed fist and it resists with its tensile strength, its organ, and  
you can lay it in your imagination against your cheek like a beloved object and it is soft.  
sorrows sorrow in aggressor: ballads are simple language. I feel so suffering about AI

The past, an Odalisque or an Apollo, is stroked, for a moment so smooth, such a  
companion. A body imbued with being that has no past, no weight of hot or cold,  
everywhere present in the rest of reality. It is what isn't, what hope perceives alive,  
deep in the self's crumbling comb.

Your blue hand reaches to touch me. Its tips crave like a thirsty kiss, a kiss desperate to  
be a living kiss as each day ends with age.

I am twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty

I sleep like the dead, like the dead I pretend I am asleep and, like the living, I wrap my  
desire in the clothes of your talented kiss and your hot skin. Your kiss, your skin tremble  
with flesh and blood in my other life. Today I see you when I last saw you. My real hand  
reaches to touch you but

silence is what my sighing fingers touch. My hands draw over its free surface made of  
minutes, of months, of years

waxed together  
by the torch  
burning in my perseverance  
and the coarse grudge  
hardened inside it.

A mass  
sanded down in time's  
fluidity; a lover's  
weight handled without hands but by sympathy in the dark.

You were touched too much by Midas fingertips of adoration  
and your gold lines shine in barriers of bees.

What I want

is your honeyed shape

I still perceive alive

deep in the self's crumbling comb.

*Dark.*

I lean against its cleanness, breath my breath.

A body double,

my resentment, shifts and lifts, up,

as an out-of-the-body-experience.

It goes back on time's lengths, past sheeted furniture of memory, before names or  
verbs, and, dripping with tears, finds you.

You're young.

A phenomenon in crowns of air.

My common hands' rage to reach you stops. Stricken, my kiss of pins-and-needles goes  
numb. Burly much-tongued kiss I came with to kill you, spiked in resentment's spines, a  
sea urchin in my mouth waiting. And now,

in time's hollow, below a mundane world,

I see that you don't see me

I see that you don't hear

My love, loved, at your feet, I give your gift of your kiss, your skin, and go.

I *wanted* to leave but something warms on my flesh and goes too.

Below the surface, your full shape, ears unturned, eyes stopped, shines in flurries of  
feelings blown like snow in the pitch black unknown. These cold flakes hold hot  
emotions, emotions I wanted to bestow on you as garlands of touches. You are  
undecorated by my lonely kisses and empty hands

and stand so still in my imagination.  
Crushed around  
snow of craving waves in blizzardly sheets of time

I can not go back in time

I have: you: my breath.

---

dream:

I went to a dingy club and there was a thuggish looking guy, heavy set with cuts on his head showing through his dark short shorn hair. despite everything (his rejecting me) he came and lay on my body, like two spoons, between my open legs with his back to my stomach and I put my arms around him and he held my hands and lay them peacefully and tenderly on his abdomen and we lay like that while people ran around and it was peaceful and intimate despite the aura of mayhem and rejection.

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Once, on my own, I was travelling from coast to coast to meet Phyllis and Lotsa, and I had to get a bus from the town to the airport, a four hour ride. I arrived, of course, having missed the flight by fifteen minutes, not because the bus was late, but because I couldn't calculate that the bus scheduled to get in at 2:30pm would not make a plane

connection which left at 2:15pm. I sat in the airport for ten hours, waiting for the next available flight. I never moved. I didn't go to the toilet. Didn't get something to eat. I didn't get a magazine. I found reading almost impossible by then anyway, taking five to seven minutes on each page. I barely turned my head to the left or the right. I looked straight ahead. Why? I was afraid to move, too afraid. The sun rose over me, pale and soft in the beginning of day, heightened, bore down on my head, moved on, cast lengthening extrovert shadows off my figure, disappeared behind me into the cool evening. I sat.

Years later, Al and Lotsa persuaded me to one of their haunts: THE CROUCHING CHANCE, a club that began attractive to the eyes and ended a swamp. The smoke machine was on and the strobed main room fierce with people doing the ants in their pants dance. We went to the long circular triangular fronted, mosaic panelled bar, and Lotsa said cheerfully to the grinning bartender - Ron! Clay, my sister. (He shook my hand.) Bring us your finest brain drain! Water for all my friends! (Her arm swept the room.) I wanted to turn and watch the people but found myself almost unable to move and I leaned on that bar for hours shouting sketchy conversation at the barman or saying nothing, drinking little. Al and Lotsa tried to get me on the dance floor but I wouldn't go and they left but came back.

In front of me, the heaving room behind them, their languidly charged excitement, that feeling after swimming when you're loose, held, phasmed lagoon foppish mercurial whole *have now*. Lotsa, leaning her arm on Al's shoulder, made a dawdling body-S with pointing arrow in her multicoloured tight herring-bone striped dress. Feet of Clay - L pulled on my arm - Come with us. Come on. I laughed but the fear paralysed me - No no no no no. I looked quickly around, lapping up the sights I could see while facing out. My arms ached from leaning so hard on the bar. I was sure Al thought I was an idiot. Eventually we all sat at a table wedged by a balcony a few feet from the central floor.



People came by and said hello. Al was keyed-up and smiled his I-am smile ceaselessly but in the dark I could see it was effusively alive. He didn't look at me much but the few times he did I felt a softness. Her legs out, feet crossed on the rail, dress rouched up her thighs making her look even more an iridescent-suited swimmer, Lotsa threw a peanut in her mouth, flourished her cigarette hand, raised her glass, beamed at me - *Clay!* - beamed at Al - *Al!* - threw back her head and even over the music I could hear her saying - Puff puff, chomp chomp, gulp gulp. Aaaahhhhhhhh, happiness.

A number of brain drains and many hours later, as we got to the back door to leave, Al and I walked ahead but turned as we exited to see Lotsa lose her popper strength and wilt to the floor, crawling on her hands and knees after us onto the pavement. A man came running up and she extended one hand to wave him imperiously away when he said - Are you alright?! and she answered - *Just tired* - continuing past him, carefully holding her short fine-pointed gold heels off the ground, putting all her weight on her knees. She crawled through the club's vacant back lot to a crevice in the asphalt that made a little shelf, and Al and I sat down beside her. None of us said anything but we each had funny smirks and then we all laughed. We stayed there quite awhile, Lotsa resting her head on Al's leg, lying on her back with one leg bent upwards and the other crossed over it, her white knees showing through two ripped holes. L always looked comfortable until almost the very end of her life. A mild night, the area was now very quiet, pacific even, the near chain link fence bulging with sweet scented creepers and behind them tall black cypress trees dustily greened the air. I lay my cheek to the rough road and felt a kind of contentment that's hard to describe - the left-aloneness of vacant lots always appealed to me, the weeds growing through the hard top, the wildness and easiness and sort of usedness of that city space, Lotsa spouting her theories into the dark - *you know what I think?* - Al smoking his spliff and laughing - *tell me* - the soft air, the stars, the mineral smells, my two dear people, the three of us lying there. I fell asleep and woke to Lotsa perched in a squat over me, her feet firmly planted, rocking back and forth on her ankles, saying - am I disturbing you? - and us both saying in unison - Not any more than I *already am!*

I turned and lay on my back and stretched my arms away and then put them behind my head. I said - Do you mind if I groan awhile? Lotsa said - Groan on. I groaned peacefully. What's Al doing? Nothing much, Lotsa said. Al. What're you doing? I rolled my head to see Al a few yards away. He stood up and suddenly jumped down out to his hands and did a back flip toward us. I sat up, my mouth gaping.

Lotsa said, You look like a kid who's just seen

**blue**

orange

I often wonder how much comes out of absence.

Monsters of bulk, weight, burden, force, violence, reaction that come from a simple non-gesture like neglect. Lead feet drag unconsciously on a long deserted life as you haul madness so intense it's barnacled to your fragile beginning. You look for people who are willing, are able, to still see that little creature you once were. I saw Lotsa's, she saw mine, though less and less as the years went on. What Al saw, I'll never be sure, and who. So much had hardened in him. I know he'd have had a hell of a terrible distance to travel to get out of the state he'd gotten in. Like Lotsa. Both bricks by the end of their lives. Their eyes peered out of rigid faces and there got to be a - what are you looking at? - attitude about them. Less so with Al, his face, his body's welcome was his trade, but what had once been fountainous, exuberant, began to freeze. The tears I cried for that passing