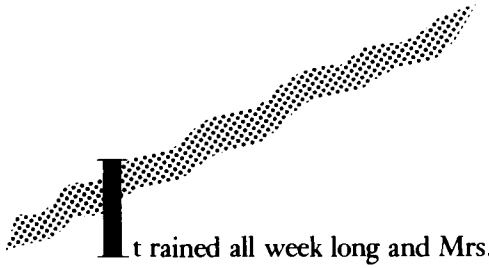
Brazil

EDLA VAN STEEN

Mr. and Mrs. Martins



It rained all week long and Mrs. Martins didn't leave the house even to do her bit of shopping. Often she checked on the weather, looking down at the street crowded with gleaming cars and open umbrellas, feeling no trace of boredom, but merely affirming: what rain! And she would go back to the television.

Despite her polite and smiling manner when greeting the neighbors, she seemed not to have friends, for no one ever visited her. Even so, she neatly combed her short gray hair and applied her lipstick discreetly, ready for any eventuality. No one wrote her letters and she paid her bills on time.

On Sunday she woke up happy—the sun was coming in through the half-open blinds. She dusted the furniture lightly, fried two eggs, and, as usual, put on her best black silk dress and remembered the pearl necklace. Then she bought a bunch of flowers at the corner and headed for the taxi stop, empty at that hour of the morning.

She was one of the first people to enter the cemetery. She walked slowly, reading the familiar inscriptions, for she was afraid of slipping on the stone pavement, which was still wet.

Something new caught her by surprise: "At last your wife's come to keep you company, eh, Mr. Mario?" She read aloud: "Claire Heller de Alencar 1908–1974. We feel your absence." She counted mentally: eight from fourteen, six; zero from six, six. Eight years older than she. Now the sun burned her back and brightened the plants and flowers in the damp beds. It's strange, she thought, men die before women; there are more widows in the world than widowers. Sighing gently, she started up the hill leading to her sepulchre, an austere marble rectangle that rose several centimeters above the ground. The names were written in gilded letters: Abel Martins 1910 space Laura Martins 1916 space. I'm making a point of leaving everything settled, her husband insisted; we have no children, who would bother with us? We must even prepare for living alone.

She climbed the step to the tomb, took a bundle from her handbag, and put it down on the slab. From the package she removed a tool, one of those with a spade on one end and two teeth for mixing the earth on the other, and she calmly began to tend the bed.

"What beautiful flowers." The man approached, hat and newspaper in hand.

Mrs. Martins greeted him without interrupting her task.

"I didn't think this was the season for immortelles," he went on, politely.

"That's true, I was astonished too."

"They're my favorites. They last longer than any others."

"All right then, as long as they have them at the florist's I'll keep on bringing them." She examined the arrangement.

"And you? Which do you prefer?"

"Violets, but they're difficult . . ."

"Next Sunday it's my turn. I'll try to find a few bunches."

Mrs. Martins gathered the withered plants, threw them into the garbage bin, and, using a handkerchief, wiped off the rem-

nants of earth. The rose and purple hues of the immortelles blended harmoniously. She exhaled a sweet and ecstatic expression for both of them and sat on the step next to her husband.

"Do you want part of the paper? I hear that the rains have destroyed some cities in the south. Here's the article. Look at this picture."

"Oh my, and the people?"

"Whole families were found in the branches of trees where they'd tried to escape from the floods. They'd miscalculated the height of the water."

"How horrible."

When they finished reading, they chatted about details of their week until they ran out of subjects.

At noon they ate crackers and apples.

"Is it awful being a widow?"

"I thought it would be worse. But the apartment is what bothers me. It's too big. If I could rent a smaller one, the size of yours . . . I couldn't go out on account of the rain and I felt really alone."

"That's impossible. Everything's all set. Can't you get used to it?"

Mrs. Martins, submissive, didn't argue. She would wait for another opportunity.

"Doesn't the television help?" he inquired, concerned, without turning his head: he knew that entreating look.

"More or less, and for you?" She looked at him curiously: clean collar and suit, polished shoes. A shame he was losing his former posture, his back bending.

He noted her gaze.

"Remember at what loose ends I was at the beginning? But you, you look wonderful, you even seem to have grown younger."

Dozens of people were visiting their dead—movable colors on the landscape. Soon solitude would resume its post there and in those people capable of hearing its very reverberations—as if

their souls had found a refuge in the sound they could still emit. Mr. Martins swallowed a deep sob.

"How many installments are left?"

"None."

"What will happen now?"

"We'll just go on waiting."

"Do you think I'll go first?" Mrs. Martins at once regretted the question, so unguarded.

"Would you like to?"

"No, but I feel prepared. If it happens . . ."

"That's why we're practicing." He wanted to embrace his wife, but he refrained.

She thought the moment opportune for her much rehearsed question:

"What if I bought a cat?"

"And who'll take care of it if . . . ?"

"You're right, it's a silly idea. The poor little thing might suffer." She was embarrassed.

An employee sweeps the ground. He wears patched gray overalls. He's of the type that seems to have sprung up from the very ground, so much a part of the surroundings is he.

Mr. Martins hands him an envelope.

"It's so you'll always come take care of this . . . well, we're old, and even if one of us lingers more than the other, this way your dedication will have been rewarded."

"Really, sir, you needn't worry."

"Please, take it."

The employee shifted his shoulders in a rude gesture: why do these two come here every Sunday? The thought was cut off by someone asking for information.

Mr. and Mrs. Martins proceeded to pass the day conversing and simply enjoying one another's presence. Perhaps fragments of their life in common peopled the ample silences.

"Are you really sure about changing apartments?"

B

"One bedroom and a living room would be enough."

"We'll take care of it tomorrow," he promised.

She smiled, grateful.

"Do you suppose there's one in this neighborhood?" He consulted his watch. "Let's go, it's almost six."

The cool wind caused him to turn up his coat collar before lending his support to Mrs. Martins for the descent.

"We won't have more rain. The weather's calming down."

Slow shadows appear along the cemetery lanes, swelling the line going back.

Mr. and Mrs. Martins part with a kiss, each taking a separate path: Abel misses the feel of an arm on him; Laura must take care not to stumble.

Translated by Daphne Patai

Soviet Union

ISAAC BABEL

Di Grasso

A TALE OF ODESSA

I was fourteen, and of the undauntable fellowship of dealers in theater tickets. My boss was a tricky customer with a permanently screwed-up eye and enormous silky handle bars; Nick Schwarz was his name. I came under his sway in that unhappy year when the Italian Opera flopped in Odessa. Taking a lead from the critics on the local paper, our impresario decided not to import Anselmi and Tito Ruffo as guest artistes but to make do with a good stock company. For this he was sorely punished; he went bankrupt, and we with him. We were promised Chaliapin to straighten out our affairs, but Chaliapin wanted three thousand a performance; so instead we had the Sicilian tragedian Di Grasso with his troupe. They arrived at the hotel in peasant carts crammed with children, cats, cages in which Italian birds hopped and skipped. Casting an eye over this gypsy crew, Nick Schwarz opined:

"Children, this stuff won't sell."

When he had settled in, the tragedian made his way to the market with a bag. In the evening he arrived at the theater with another bag. Hardly fifty people had turned up. We tried selling tickets at half-price, but there were no takers.

door she would shout *"William."* Jessica told Mark that Judy was jealous of hot running water. Mark typed a very flimsy poem in green ink. The poem implied that certain persons, like him, were able to see angels in the air, while others couldn't. He moved some books from one pile to another. He doubted that he would ever read *The Death of Artemio Cruz* and wondered if he should feel depressed about this. When Lena Chen came over and cooked food in the wok, Mark always chopped the onions. "Monkey cries whenever Chen the Wren visits us," said Jessica. She drew a cartoon of pigs wearing overalls eating ice cream sodas. In the basement room, Lawrence the gay lawyer spoke on the phone about Mozart as if no one else had ever heard of Mozart. In the kitchen Lawrence liked to use the phrase "quality cookware." The night he announced that he was gay, everybody had to act serious. They were learning to live together. Bill pointed out to Mark that he often neglected to wash the bottoms of dishes and pans. Bill read a murder mystery soberly, missing no clues. The living room was surprisingly pleasant with a sand-colored sofa and Lawrence's quality lamps. All of this, all of this, Jessica with her brown eyes so awake, all of this was significant, all of it vibrated just below consciousness with a strong significance. Or was it only life? Only life? Mark ate celery with cheese and then joined Jessica upstairs. She was joking on the phone, something about Simone de Beauvoir telling Jean-Paul to straighten up and fly right. Mark meant to read something about Vietnam but he was sleepy. Jessica mocked him for singing "Please Please Me" off-key but when she hugged him life was good. In the morning a pigeon patrolled the windowsill very near their sleeping heads. All significant. And God put it all in a cloth bag and swung it around and tossed it lightly into the river.

Larry Fondation

DEPORTATION AT BREAKFAST

The signs on the windows lured me inside. For a dollar I could get two eggs, toast, and potatoes. The place looked better than most—family-run and clean. The signs were hand-lettered and neat. The paper had yellowed some, but the black letters remained bold. A green-and-white awning was perched over the door, where the name "Clara's" was stenciled.

Inside, the place had an appealing and old-fashioned look. The air smelled fresh and homey, not greasy. The menu was printed on a chalkboard. It was short and to the point. It listed the kinds

of toast you could choose from. One entry was erased from the middle of the list. By deduction, I figured it was rye. I didn't want rye toast anyway.

Because I was alone, I sat at the counter, leaving the empty tables free for other customers that might come in. At the time, business was quiet. Only two tables were occupied, and I was alone at the counter. But it was still early—not yet seven-thirty.

Behind the counter was a short man with dark black hair, a mustache, and a youthful beard, one that never grew much past stubble. He was dressed immaculately, all in chef's white—pants, shirt, and apron, but no hat. He had a thick accent. The name "Javier" was stitched on his shirt.

I ordered coffee, and asked for a minute to choose between the breakfast special for a dollar and the cheese omelette for $1.59. I selected the omelette.

The coffee was hot, strong, and fresh. I spread my newspaper on the counter and sipped at the mug as Javier went to the grill to cook my meal.

The eggs were spread out on the griddle, the bread plunged inside the toaster, when the authorities came in. They grabbed Javier quickly and without a word, forcing his hands behind his back. He, too, said nothing. He did not resist, and they shoved him out the door and into their waiting car.

On the grill, my eggs bubbled. I looked around for another employee—maybe out back somewhere, or in the washroom. I leaned over the counter and called for someone. No one answered. I looked behind me toward the tables. Two elderly men sat at one, two elderly women at the other. The two women were talking. The men were reading the paper. They seemed not to have noticed Javier's exit.

I could smell my eggs starting to burn. I wasn't quite sure what to do about it. I thought about Javier and stared at my eggs. After

some hesitation, I got up from my red swivel stool and went behind the counter. I grabbed a spare apron, then picked up the spatula and turned my eggs. My toast had popped up, but it was not browned, so I put it down again. While I was cooking, the two elderly women came to the counter and asked to pay. I asked what they had had. They seemed surprised that I didn't remember. I checked the prices on the chalkboard and rang up their order. They paid slowly, fishing through large purses, and went out, leaving me a dollar tip. I took my eggs off the grill and slid them onto a clean plate. My toast had come up. I buttered it and put it on my plate beside my eggs. I put the plate at my spot at the counter, right next to my newspaper.

As I began to come back from behind the counter to my stool, six new customers came through the door. "Can we pull some tables together?" they asked. "We're all one party." I told them yes. Then they ordered six coffees, two decaffeinated.

I thought of telling them I didn't work there. But perhaps they were hungry. I poured their coffee. Their order was simple: six breakfast specials, all with scrambled eggs and wheat toast. I got busy at the grill.

Then the elderly men came to pay. More new customers began arriving. By eight-thirty, I had my hands full. With this kind of business, I couldn't understand why Javier hadn't hired a waitress. Maybe I'd take out a help-wanted ad in the paper tomorrow. I had never been in the restaurant business. There was no way I could run this place alone.

E

There a jaguar jumped the juggler, and afterwards, mortally mauled the animal trainer, and the shocked showpeople disbanded in dismay and horror. In the confusion the bears went their own way. Without a master, they wandered off by themselves into the wilderness on those densely wooded, wildly windy, subantarctic islands. Utterly away from people, on an out-of-the-way uninhabited island, and in a climate they found ideal, the bears mated, thrived, multiplied, and after a number of generations populated the entire island. Indeed, after some years, descendants of the two moved out onto half a dozen adjacent islands, and seventy years later, when scientists finally found and enthusiastically studied the bears, it was discovered that all of them, to a bear, were performing splendid circus tricks.

On nights when the sky is bright and the moon is full, they gather to dance. They gather the cubs and the juveniles in a circle around them. They gather together out of the wind at the center of a sparkling, circular crater left by a meteorite which had fallen in a bed of chalk. Its glassy walls are chalk white, its flat floor is covered with white gravel, and it is well-drained, and dry. No vegetation grows within. When the moon rises above it, the light reflecting off the walls fills the crater with a pool of moonlight, so that it is twice as bright on the crater floor as anywhere else in that vicinity. Scientists speculate that originally the full moon had reminded the two bears of the circus spotlight, and for that reason they danced. Yet, it might be asked, what music do the descendants dance to?

Paw in paw, stepping in unison . . . what music can they possibly hear inside their heads as they dance under the full moon and the Aurora Australis, as they dance in brilliant silence?

Francine Prose

PUMPKINS

There is a terrible accident. A truck full of Halloween pumpkins is speeding around a curve and fails to see another car unwisely making a U-turn. In the car is a young woman, married, the mother of three, who, when the vehicles collide, is killed.

Actually, she is beheaded, her body thrown from the car and decapitated with such force that the head sails through the air and lands in a pile of pumpkins spilled out onto the road.

Her husband is spared this detail until the next day, when it appears in a front page story in the local paper.

F

This newspaper is bought by a woman about to leave home on a trip. The tragedy so unhinges her that she rushes off the train and calls her husband at work. When she mentions the pumpkin-truck accident, he says, Pumpkin-truck accident? precisely like their five-year-old son saying, Bubble gum on the couch?

The woman begins to tremble, realizing now what she should have realized (and because she is in therapy, she thinks, she *did* realize, no wonder she was upset!). The accident occurred more or less exactly in front of the house of a woman with whom her husband had a love affair but has promised he has stopped seeing.

She senses that her husband knows about this accident—and not from reading the newspaper. That is why he sounds guilty. Perhaps he was with his lover when it happened, perhaps this woman called him for comfort, just as she is calling him now. As she confronts him with this, her husband keeps interrupting to answer questions at his office.

The next morning the woman sees her therapist on an emergency basis. She tells him the whole story, from buying the paper and reading about the pumpkin-truck to calling her husband to her husband moving out again last night.

The therapist says he is sorry; he cannot talk about this. He tells her that, coincidentally, one of his patients is the husband of the woman killed by the pumpkin-truck. It is, after all, a small town. The therapist says he has been dealing with this tragedy for two days—on a *real* crisis basis, a *real* emergency basis—and frankly he cannot stand to hear it treated as another subplot in this woman's continuing romantic imbroglio.

The woman bursts into tears. The therapist apologizes for his unprofessional behavior; he says the whole thing has unnerved him in ways even he doesn't understand.

That night the therapist tells his wife about this. For ethical reasons he leaves out the names. Still, he repeats what the woman told him and what he said and what happened.

Except that this time, instead of saying "pumpkins," he says "Christmas trees."

"Christmas trees?" says his wife.

"Did I say Christmas trees?" he says. "How funny. I meant pumpkins." Naturally he realizes that this slip of the tongue is a clue to why this incident so disturbs him.

Later, in bed, he considers his mistake. And before long it comes to him. Because for once the truth is not submerged, but bobs on the surface, like a buoy, tied to a time he often revisits in looking back on his life.

At five he suffered a case of mumps which turned into something more serious. He remembers running to his parents' room, his cheeks swinging like sacks of flesh from his face. He remembers falling. After that he was sick for months—from autumn through early winter. The symbolism is so obvious: pumpkin time when he became ill, Christmas when he recovered.

Now his wife gets into bed, but he doesn't notice. For he is feeling, as never before, how much of his life has passed: all the years that separate him from that swollen-faced boy. He thinks how sweet that period was, the rhythm of those days, sleep, radio, chilled canned pears, the kingdom of the blanket, the kingdom of ice outside it.

For an instant he nearly recaptures that haze of safety, confusion and boredom, when he fell asleep looking at pumpkins and awoke seeing a Christmas tree, when nothing scared him, not even time, it was all being taken care of. Then it recedes like the plots of dreams he wakes up already forgetting.

It is like the experience of speeding along a highway, and some

broken sign or ruined cafe will suddenly recall his past, but before he can tell his wife, they have already driven by. He knows that if he turns and goes back, what caught his eye will have vanished—though perhaps he may catch a glimpse of it, fleeing from him down the road.

Richard Shelton

THE STONES

I love to go out on summer nights and watch the stones grow. I think they grow better here in the desert, where it is warm and dry, than almost anywhere else. Or perhaps it is only that the young ones are more active here.

Young stones tend to move about more than their elders consider good for them. Most young stones have a secret desire which their parents had before them but have forgotten ages ago. And because this desire involves water, it is never mentioned. The older stones disapprove of water and say, "Water is a gadfly who

H

Italy

DINO BUZZATI

The Falling Girl

Marta was nineteen. She looked out over the roof of the skyscraper, and seeing the city below shining in the dusk, she was overcome with dizziness.

The skyscraper was silver, supreme and fortunate in that most beautiful and pure evening, as here and there the wind stirred a few fine filaments of cloud against an absolutely incredible blue background. It was in fact the hour when the city is seized by inspiration and whoever is not blind is swept away by it. From that airy height the girl saw the streets and the masses of buildings writhing in the long spasm of sunset, and at the point where the white of the houses ended, the blue of the sea began. Seen from above, the sea looked as if it were rising. And since the veils of the night were advancing from the east, the city became a sweet abyss burning with pulsating lights. Within it were powerful men, and women who were even more powerful, furs and violins, cars glossy as onyx, the neon signs of nightclubs, the entrance halls of darkened mansions, fountains, diamonds, old silent gardens, parties, desires, affairs, and, above all, that consuming sorcery of the evening which provokes dreams of greatness and glory.

Seeing these things, Marta hopelessly leaned out over the railing and let herself go. She felt as if she were hovering in the air, but she was falling. Given the extraordinary height of the skyscraper, the streets and squares down at the bottom were very far away. Who knows how long it would take her to get there. Yet the girl was falling.

At that hour the terraces and balconies of the top floors were filled with rich and elegant people who were having cocktails and making silly conversation. They were scattered in crowds, and their talk muffled the music. Marta passed before them and several people looked out to watch her.

Flights of that kind (mostly by girls, in fact) were not rare in the skyscraper and they constituted an interesting diversion for the tenants; this was also the reason why the price of those apartments was very high.

The sun had not yet completely set and it did its best to illuminate Marta's simple clothing. She wore a modest, inexpensive spring dress bought off the rack. Yet the lyrical light of the sunset exalted it somewhat, making it chic.

From the millionaires' balconies, gallant hands were stretched out toward her, offering flowers and cocktails. "Miss, would you like a drink? . . . Gentle butterfly, why not stop a minute with us?"

She laughed, hovering, happy (but meanwhile she was falling): "No, thanks, friends. I can't. I'm in a hurry."

"Where are you headed?" they asked her.

"Ah, don't make me say," Marta answered, waving her hands in a friendly good-bye.

A young man, tall, dark, very distinguished, extended an arm to snatch her. She liked him. And yet Marta quickly defended herself: "How dare you, sir?" and she had time to give him a little tap on the nose.

The beautiful people, then, were interested in her and that filled her with satisfaction. She felt fascinating, stylish. On the flower-filled terraces, amid the bustle of waiters in white and the bursts of exotic songs, there was talk for a few minutes, perhaps less, of the young woman who was passing by (from top to bottom, on a vertical course). Some thought her pretty, others thought her so-so, everyone found her interesting.

"You have your entire life before you," they told her, "why are you in such a hurry? You still have time to rush around and busy yourself. Stop with us for a little while, it's only a modest little party among friends, really, you'll have a good time."

She made an attempt to answer but the force of gravity had already quickly carried her to the floor below, then two, three, four floors below; in fact, exactly as you gaily rush around when you are just nineteen years old.

Of course, the distance that separated her from the bottom, that is, from street level, was immense. It is true that she began falling just a little while ago, but the street always seemed very far away.

In the meantime, however, the sun had plunged into the sea; one could see it disappear, transformed into a shimmering reddish mushroom. As a result, it no longer emitted its vivifying rays to light up the girl's dress and make her a seductive comet. It was a good thing that the windows and terraces of the skyscraper were almost all illuminated and the bright reflections completely gilded her as she gradually passed by.

Now Marta no longer saw just groups of carefree people inside the apartments; at times there were even some businesses where the employees, in black or blue aprons, were sitting at desks in long rows. Several of them were young people as old as or older than she, and weary of the day by now, every once in a while they raised their eyes from their duties and from typewriters.

In this way they too saw her, and a few ran to the windows. "Where are you going? Why so fast? Who are you?" they shouted to her. One could divine something akin to envy in their words.

"They're waiting for me down there," she answered. "I can't stop. Forgive me." And again she laughed, wavering on her headlong fall, but it wasn't like her previous laughter anymore. The night had craftily fallen and Marta started to feel cold.

Meanwhile, looking downward, she saw a bright halo of lights at the entrance of a building. Here long blacks cars were stopping (from the great distance they looked as small as ants), and men and women were getting out, anxious to go inside. She seemed to make out the sparkling of jewels in that swarm. Above the entrance flags were flying.

They were obviously giving a large party, exactly the kind that Marta dreamed of ever since she was a child. Heaven help her if she missed it. Down there opportunity was waiting for her, fate, romance, the true inauguration of her life. Would she arrive in time?

She spitefully noticed that another girl was falling about thirty meters above her. She was decidedly prettier than Marta and she wore a rather classy evening gown. For some unknown reason she came down much faster than Marta, so that in a few moments she passed by her and disappeared below, even though Marta was calling her. Without doubt she would get to the party before Marta; perhaps she had a plan all worked out to supplant her.

Then she realized that they weren't alone. Along the sides of the skyscraper many other young women were plunging downward, their faces taut with the excitement of the flight, their hands cheerfully waving as if to say: look at us, here we are, entertain us, is not the world ours?

It was a contest, then. And she only had a shabby little dress while those other girls were dressed smartly like high-fashion

models and some even wrapped luxurious mink stoles tightly around their bare shoulders. So self-assured when she began the leap, Marta now felt a tremor growing inside her; perhaps it was just the cold; but it may have been fear too, the fear of having made an error without remedy.

It seemed to be late at night now. The windows were darkened one after another, the echoes of music became more rare, the offices were empty, young men no longer leaned out from the windowsills extending their hands. What time was it? At the entrance to the building down below—which in the meantime had grown larger, and one could now distinguish all the architectural details—the lights were still burning, but the bustle of cars had stopped. Every now and then, in fact, small groups of people came out of the main floor wearily drawing away. Then the lights of the entrance were also turned off.

Marta felt her heart tightening. Alas, she wouldn't reach the ball in time. Glancing upwards, she saw the pinnacle of the skyscraper in all its cruel power. It was almost completely dark. On the top floors a few windows here and there were still lit. And above the top the first glimmer of dawn was spreading.

In a dining recess on the twenty-eighth floor a man about forty years old was having his morning coffee and reading his newspaper while his wife tidied up the room. A clock on the sideboard indicated 8:45. A shadow suddenly passed before the window.

"Alberto!" the wife shouted. "Did you see that? A woman passed by."

"Who was it?" he said without raising his eyes from the newspaper.

"An old woman," the wife answered. "A decrepit old woman. She looked frightened."

"It's always like that," the man muttered. "At these low floors only falling old women pass by. You can see beautiful girls from

the hundred-and-fiftieth floor up. Those apartments don't cost so much for nothing."

"At least down here there's the advantage," observed the wife, "that you can hear the thud when they touch the ground."

"This time not even that," he said, shaking his head, after he stood listening for a few minutes. Then he had another sip of coffee.

Translated by Lawrence Venuti

United States

STUART DYBEK

Death of the Right Fielder

After too many balls went out and never came back we went out to check. It was a long walk—he always played deep. Finally we saw him, from the distance resembling the towel we sometimes threw down for second base.

It was hard to tell how long he'd been lying there, sprawled on his face. Had he been playing infield his presence, or lack of it, would, of course, have been noticed immediately. The infield demands communication—the constant, reassuring chatter of team play. But he was remote, clearly an outfielder (the temptation is to say out*sider*). The infield is for wisecrackers, pepperpots, gum-poppers: the outfield is for loners, onlookers, brooders who would rather study clover and swat gnats than holler. People could pretty much be divided between infielders and outfielders. Not that one always has a choice. He didn't necessarily choose right field so much as accept it.

There were several theories as to what killed him. From the start the most popular was that he'd been shot. Perhaps from a passing car, possibly by that gang calling themselves the Jokers who played 16 inch softball on the concrete diamond with painted

David Foster Wallace

EVERYTHING IS GREEN

She says I do not care if you believe me or not, it is the truth, go on and believe what you want to. So it is for sure that she is lying, when it is the truth she will go crazy trying to get you to believe her. So I feel like I know.

She lights up and looks off away from me, looking sly with her cigarette through a wet window, and I can not feel what to say.

I say Mayfly I can not feel what to do or say or believe you any more. But there is things I know. I know I am older and you are not. And I give to you all I got to give you, with my hands

and my heart both. Every thing that is inside me I have gave you. I have been keeping it together and working steady every day. I have made you the reason I got for what I always do. I have tried to make a home to give to you, for you to be in, and for it to be nice.

I light up myself then I throw the match in the sink with other matches and dishes and a sponge and such things.

I say Mayfly my heart has been down the road and back for you but I am forty-eight years old. It is time I have got to not let things just carry me by any more. I got to use some time that is still mine to try to make every thing feel right. I got to try to feel how I need to. In me there is needs which you can not even see any more, because there is too many needs in you in the way.

She does not say any thing and I look at her window and I can feel that she knows. I know about it, and she shifts her self on my sofa lounger. She brings her legs up underneath her in some shorts.

I say it really does not matter what I seen or what I think I seen. That is not it any more. I know I am older and you are not. But now I am feeling like there is all of me going out to you and nothing of you coming back any more.

Her hair is up with a barrette and pins and her chin is in her hand, it's early, she looks like she is dreaming out at the clean light through the wet window over my sofa lounger.

Everything is green she says. Look how green it all is Mitch. How can you say the things you say you feel like when every thing outside is green like it is.

The window over the sink of my kitchenette is cleaned off from the hard rain last night, and it is a morning with sun, it is still early, and there is a mess of green out. The trees are green and some grass out past the speed bumps is green and slicked down. But every thing is not green. The other trailers are not

green, and my card table out with puddles in lines and beer cans and butts floating in the ashtrays is not green, or my truck, or the gravel of the lot, or the Big Wheel toy that is on its side under a clothesline without no clothes on it by the next trailer, where the guy has got him some kids.

Everything is green she is saying. She is whispering it and the whisper is not to me no more I know.

I chuck my smoke and turn hard from the morning outside with the taste of something true in my mouth. I turn hard toward her in the light on the sofa lounger.

She is looking outside, from where she is sitting, and I look at her, and there is something in me that can not close up in that looking. Mayfly has a body. And she is my morning. Say her name.

Michael Delp

DRAFT HORSE

When he was a kid growing up in Fargo, he used to walk from the barn to the house, thirty below, his breath steaming out and then flowing past his face. On those mornings he could hear the way the cows seemed to brush together in the cold, and imagined he could hear them at night when the temperature dropped even lower. From his bedroom it sounded like their hides were made of metal, how each hair had frozen on their backs and was rasping against the others.

And he remembered the way the sun used to look coming in