

## **I'M AN EAVESDROPPER**

You're not listening

No I am

This is what's being said at the table behind me

I'm eating alone as usual

And eavesdropping; I'm an eavesdropper

He goes on to say something about options contracts and other assorted derivatives

Something about spreads stretching out

Which causes my eyebrow to cock

I can't follow and neither – given her silence – can she

But he's pleased suddenly – I can tell by his voice

He's speaking *animatedly*

So maybe her silence is enough

Maybe her eyes and quarter-smile are enough

Maybe enough (plus the brush of gloss

not to mention the ankle

like a cool blue heron, the wrist)

She's listening at least

She doesn't know what the hell he's talking about

But she's there

Chin angled in the saffron light

Leaning in

## **SIMPLETONS**

And by god it was just that simple

Like Dora and Mack and the Doc situation on Cannery Row

A trip together

A new language

A new adventure

A new life

## **THIS TIME NEXT YEAR**

Each fresh rectangular

Of butter

Is a chance to do better this time

A chance to not hack away at things

Like we do

A chance to keep it all clean

It waits, the butter

On a white plate edged with blackberries

Cold and sharply angled

Wary of our dull carelessness

Our inattention to detail

Our mindless hurry

Nevertheless hopeful that

We might – this time - select a proper knife

Approach with steady hand

That we will - in short – live up to our potential

That we will skim

With focused strokes

Ribbon

After pale ribbon

After translucent ribbon

Until we achieve a perfect vanishing  
Until we leave only gloss  
On a white plate edged with blackberries

### **THE SUMMER SHE TURNED EIGHTEEN**

The Riesling year began  
On the cool veranda  
That overlooked eighteen

The green undulating  
Like the thin sweater Mrs. Bishop wore  
When she played bridge

Emma loved the way  
She held her cards  
In that upside down fan

Emma did the lunch service  
She brought the plates of chicken salad sandwiches  
The cucumbers and the cream cheese and the crusts gone the way of handwritten letters

The bridge girls they called themselves  
They ordered a bottle of Riesling for the Rubber  
Is how they would say it

They always left at least a glass  
Emma would hold the bottle  
To the fluorescent kitchen light

And nod when the span

Was more than her thumb and forefinger  
Could bear

The first time she stole a bottle  
Did not count  
Because her paycheck was short (not to mention the tips)

But when she counted a theft  
A day for a week  
It gave her pause

She examined the smooth  
Taper of the bottle  
The green glass like a lagoon

Her glass paused on its unrelenting  
Arc to her thin bloodless lips  
Which formed the words

Sweet Riesling cheap Riesling  
Over and over  
Without sound

### **A CLASSIST TALE**

A little less of him returned each spring  
We never saw him past Halloween  
It was a slow diminishing  
Imperceptible  
Until the pictures were ordered  
Like white crosses on green grass

He wintered a leper I guess  
An ear falling? A finger?  
Governed by a ruling decay I guess

A winter house  
He must have owned  
On an uneasy beach of unbalanced sand

Not that we cared  
Or gave him much February thought really  
He was our summer funny man

Fuck him and his red rubber nose  
His missing fingers  
His missing toes