

with a smile

we had been talking for most of the flight
before he introduced himself
hi, i'm Larry
a large man, heavyset, in his seventies
thin white hair, gnarled hands, varicose veins
and a self-described bad back and bum knee
he and his family were on the way to Jamaica
he had never been in first class and was uncomfortable
polite, friendly with an endearing genuineness
Larry was from Sioux Falls, born and raised
forty-six years working in a packing plant slaughtering hogs
we used to kill 300 per hour; they are up to 1100, he said
he was proud of his work; his son now a manager
we talked about the military base in Rapid City
the B-1 bombers leaving contrails in the sky
i pointed out the cloud formations, tall fluffy white columns
my favorite scenery at 31,000 feet
we talked about my business
that his wife shopped at the local natural food store
bringing home mostly supplements
we talked about his bone cancer
i think it's too late for me, he said, with a smile

tomorrow

they stood close together
their hands at their sides
on the edge of the highway
just having come from the condos behind
not minding at all the cars passing
her hair neatly pulled back
his curly and full, a bit unkempt
perhaps challenged by the humidity
they kissed quickly one two three times
was this goodbye
the end of a day together
a languid afternoon making love
one more quick kiss and a hesitation
as if they were not ready to part
then with her head turned slightly
only their mouths touching
a long final passionate moment
i smiled and kept walking
on the other side of the highway
not seeing what came next
i am thinking only of you
knowing that tomorrow
we will be together
and that feeling will be ours

angels

the Hell's Angels are going to Miami
or perhaps Chicago or LA
not all of them, just a few
in their ponytailed, tattooed glory
and sweat pants
that somehow don't quite go
with their sleeveless vests
proclaiming loudly that they are
New Jersey Hell's Angels
i have no doubt on the open road
they are mighty and fierce
but today they seem strangely docile
trudging through airport security
just like the rest of us

distractions

they hardly talk
just sitting and drinking
wine by the glass
both beautiful and well dressed
a real power couple
him with his perfect hair
greying at the temples
her with a crisp suit jacket
and manufactured nose
checking their iPhones
every twenty seconds to see
what is happening in their lives

Janine

she wouldn't have made the effort to find you if she didn't care
if she didn't want you to be part of her life somehow
if she didn't want you to know her children

but why now? after all these years?, he said
why not three months from now, when i'm cleaned up
or three months ago, when things were better?

life doesn't always happen the way we want
does it?, i said
she just wants to know who her father is

i did too, he said; i searched for mine for years
all my mom could tell me is that he worked at the Food Fair
she was such a whore, he said smiling; leaning his head back

aren't we all?, i said
aren't we all?