

HUNGER

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Ethel, what could you need? A clue? A car?
Perhaps a wonderful secret to sell for cash?

The relevant solutions are kept private in the palm of a raccoon
that has had its opposable thumbs split broken.
"There is what we have," I once read somewhere,

and what we need was said to peel back from one's brain
the way that fortune-telling fish peel up from your palm.
The distance between the two is called "want."

I never want to know exactly where Tannu Tuva is.
That way, should Surf Nazis kidnap me and torture
my brain in order to find my secret hideout,

I will not be complicit. I will only be able to scream,
"I do not know!"

Ethel (she's my amanuensis) takes me there in the flying boat!"
When I am being tortured by Nazis of any type, I love to speak in
paren-

theses, which will always befuddle their iron fascist logic.

O Ethel, O Ethel, I now need a clue, a key cleft
so as to open the softest locks hidden deep within

the matted sweet furs of cotton candy knowledge.

Did you get that, Ethel? That's right, "cotton candy"
knowledge. I know I said "ju-ju-be" before. I have just changed

my mind. Is my appointment book fat with names, bones,
and dates I must keep?

Pencil this in: conference with Lee Atwater,
Skipper and Wonder Pup, and my left hand's palm,

re: "How to Re-Present Sinclair Lewis as a Viable

Gubernatorial Candidate, bubbling over with that Pepsi Generation
élan." Write up a provisional agenda, and fax it to the usual

cognoscenti. And pour me another bloody. I just can't beat the
feeling. Still, I fear.

Ethel, are you no longer there? My calf muscles grow
choleric. Ethel, I need the leeches, now.