

1972

# We Are Awakened in the Middle of the Night

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## THE PETITION

Everything is evidence that things are unfolding. I grow a mustache, have no choice, shave it off. My daughter excuses herself for burping at the table, something she has never done before. I am not certain whether or not it will do her any good. I try to remain calm when our cat is run over, when old people express great serenity in the face of death. And then there are days when everything infuriates me, when I would rip up the desperate garden I had planted and abandoned but which is still growing right to the edge of the snow and through it. A neighbor has come around with a petition for new streetlights on our street. She is a strange woman herself, she may even sing in the shower, she may wash her left hand first and then her right hand, she may put on her stockings before she puts on her make up, her husband may work hard and hate his job or love it, and the streetlights may actually be installed at no direct expense to us citizens, but I sign it anyway, who am suddenly moved to write my name on something.

## WE ARE AWAKENED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

We are awakened in the middle of the night by the beating of our hearts. You put your hand over your mouth, so that you would not scream in horror, but it passes immediately and is replaced by how we think we are thirsty, and we go to the kitchen where the water is and it is warm, and we become worried again that there might be something really the matter that our hearts, in their easy habits, can detect, but then the arm of sleep is heavy on our shoulders, and the lightswitch we could throw that might clear up so much, is out of reach, so we go back to the land of sleep like creatures to their barns where they will stand up all night and wait for morning.