

1975

A Voice

Michael Cuddihy

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A Nest in the Wind / Gwen Head

Stuck up under the eaves, shiny and black
as a barn swallow, her muggy room smelling
of Florida water and crumbling linoleum, Marie
lolls in a mess of chenille and sweaty newsprint.
She wears tattered rayon panties. They are pink
and slick as an open gullet. Her haunches are solemn
and ravenous. In her telephone voice she reads
out loud from her dream book. The bed is a nest in the wind.

—*Champagne and caviar. A man with a mustache—*
Listening is black and banal as a cave.
The girl likes caves. It is hot. She would like to swim
in the cold underground.

—*Oh, but Isabelle, adored—*

A Voice / Michael Cuddihy

It is late and no moon's out.
I'm alone here, in this metal chair, listening:
My car, a few yards away
With the lights off. Stars.
The river's empty.

Trees face me on the far bank
With a darkness older than myself.
Here. This ground I pretended
Was home. Like an arm I don't
Use, never noticing
How it waits. If I cross here
I can rest. In the foliage
The sky looks big enough for a man
To walk through, discover
Himself, his own star.

Huge trees I can almost
Touch, lean out at me. Fear.
My legs rooted in it. The self
I won't let go of, ever.

An elf owl. His voice
Calling out
Like a rare, old coin left years ago in an attic
A large one cent piece, green and moldy
In its dark wooden box—
Uncomplaining, like the blind woman who gave it to me.

She said I was going to be famous
Some day.

I can hear him, the elf owl, his voice nearer now
Calling and calling.

Onlooker / Michael Cuddihy

Hours
Slouched in my car
I've watched through the barbed wire
The horses. Their quiet
Feeding me.

In pairs, tails sweeping
A neighbour's
Face. Horseflies,
Whole swarms of them scattered.
The lean flanks
Twitch, the faces, each one
So close.

The sun's
Acetylene now—
Steel welts on the new Harvester
With its plough attached,
The oats moist, golden
like old gold churned in among the dark furrows,
Enriching them.

Seven years.
The feelings we discover
No words for. Listen.