

1975

# In Bed

David Shapiro

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Who's supposed to be me. But if they think  
Of me at all, it isn't me.

## In Bed / David Shapiro

We would sail away in this big conversation  
Take it in our heads to go into the financial purse together  
Find only empty islands so our tears would patter on rivers  
    like tins of kerosene  
And when I saw you I would gobble up rivers, matchboxes and all.

When you are asleep I will appear and do that some more  
And pass the winter like Caesar in Gaul  
So I race after you but you put up the storm windows  
I lie in bed like the happy book in the library,  
    in spite of poverty and pain.

And one day a dry wind blows fractions of a postcard at my feet  
The wind that likes to whisk you out of bed  
And cover all the space it can reach, swerving  
Carefully away, into the black like the balls in the tennis court.

There was no lead in the lead pencil.  
There is no bone in whalebone.  
In bed your tissue-balloons exploded and Louisa May Alcott  
    and the long-hoarded dimes  
And you came to give orders to your devoted subjects,  
    who shivered into pieces.

This was our game for the old pack of opponents  
And it could be played flat on your back.  
You twirled the old cards and aimed right for my head  
You advised me to draw the lines lightly, so they could be  
    easily erased.

Now I see your pictures of a goose presence and rabbit identity.  
Each of those creatures must be and is threatened with  
    insanity.

Dropping to your knees, you protected my old mirror  
    from the lunging air  
In it, your own face was white, like candles on the Christmas tree.

When we were tired out we fell among fishermen  
You and I swore on sunny seaweed that this penny would be

eternally hidden under the rocks  
You enjoyed the quietness of the raindrops falling into the pans.  
Each drop has vengeance in it. We sat all night  
speculating on the baleful spray.

We floated on the big bed like crystal madness.  
You liked the flights of those lost pencils and fluid  
and wind between your lips, stinging and drinking it in  
Now we will overlap like the ancients with their chains  
Shaking them each day, as they are tightened more strongly.

And the fountain ran on, step by step freely falling  
And we loved the swath of the evening  
You against the balustrade of detested tin  
And I leaned against the riddled curtain of your breast.

You hid beneath the grillework roses with a hundred fears.  
You suggested to your little patient that I judge the  
height of these roses.

You tore and tore and buried your teeth in me, but  
I couldn't let go.

Under the rainy rainbow we would lie and struggle like sparks.

## The Phone Calls / Joan Swift

I want to sleep a whole night  
but your voice comes wearing its hood  
and the quick dark shoes of three a.m.  
to wake up the sky like lightning  
swinging its whips.  
Each night you arrive with your black dahlia.

You send hate, you send hate  
like a vine up any wire.  
Your words race from pole to pole  
toward . . . toward . . .  
do you know why it is me?

The walls of my room are no solace.  
You writhe out of the plastic and into my brain  
like smoke through a crevice.  
Night is your pond to fish in.  
Your bait is a bell tossed overboard.