

1976

The Picture

Arthur Vogelsang

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and between your thighs
that reddish wedge of hair
that hovered near my palm-sized face
is white with a black crease.

When you turn completely to memory
that is the shape you'll take,
reminding me each time I pass
through you into another room
that death is a short trip;
your heart stops and you're there.

The Picture / Arthur Vogelsang

In this one, we sat on the floor.
Beyond the thin glass the idea of water and thunder
Was like a seizure in God's mind
("Fresher! Fresher!" he yelled, and threw the water down)
And among our legs which smelled like salt and clean blood
We spread out the thousand photographs,

A few aunts dead, the Cartier-Bresson imitations we published,
Our cats at two months, that auditorium
Where we saw Lowell eight years ago deserted
Afterward so in our frame it looked like erosion
In a waterless desert or a hill so steep
You'd think at a sneeze someone would have somersaulted down
Over body after body into his sidekick poet
Rich's lap. The old girl friends,
The boys who had you, in snapshots
Somehow better than the 8 x 10's we were secretly so proud of and sold.

In nearly every one, of us,
There's this irony on my face and always on yours
That keeps us from being scared
At the nervelike blue light which instant by instant attacks the powerful rain
At the edge of the window.

There's a smile

In one of them that makes you look like the sweetest shark ever
And as I pass it to you a gagging cloud makes us a little nervous.
There's even some spectacular ones of a robbery—I can still hear the guns!—
And under the roof of your bare, crossed legs whiter than surf
The expensive, quiet-shuttered camera we've just dusted off
Seems ready to wink cahoots at the storm.

Near it

A color shot of my aunt crying because she'll die. Near
That, a second one in color that friends took last week
—we still seem to be in our twenties—
And we can by now look openly and decently at someone's lens.

Cover these awful two with your leg and I'll come closer.
We'll grin at the window when the blue light electrocutes it.

What My Head Is For / Donald Finkel

To keep my ears from squabbling
to pound on the door of judgment
when my knuckles are sore

to keep my nose out of the sewer
to hold souvenirs, old keys
worn yellow pebbles, a parching tongue
cracked like a cast-off shoe

to lift my eyes above my appetite
to read the writing over urinals
peek through windows, make out scrawls
in matchbooks praising black motels
I never slept in, bearing
one last match, whose rosy head
I still may strike against the dark

a head with a future, not like this one
doomed never to flower on my shoulders
destined ever to nod on its stalk
at the merest breath of reason