

1976

# What My Head Is For

Donald Finkel

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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

a head that does not settle  
in the cup of my palms like cloudy water  
a head I might strike  
on the smog-brown backside of night  
and set the blue tongues singing under my soup

## The Proof / Russell Edson

He looks from a window, leaning his elbows on a windowsill; and he is like the head of a turtle peering from the body-house . . .

Then suddenly, before he can know, the windowsill goes soft; his elbows dent down as if into fresh dough.

The walls begin to swell into melting breasts and drooping eyelids that slide to the floor.

The ceiling weighs down, and the light fixture is the umbilicus of an extended belly; a pregnancy smiling the happy, if not foolish, revelation.

The windows sag into closing ovals, as though lips of people whistling whose lips are becoming earth even before their songs are done.

Out of the tracings of windows and doors, the corners of rooms, that shimmer on the surface he emerges as from a pudding . . .

## The Shuttle / Russell Edson

I think of a village where the dying are put in automobiles . . . Where the dying slowly lift from the ground in automobiles, rising over thatched rooves . . .

. . . The old man begins to feel a little better. He yawns almost refreshed—yes, quite refreshed; he's getting younger!

The automobile changes into a four-poster bed.

He becomes a little boy sailing through the clouds in a crib.

And then, what seems a spot no bigger than a distant bird, develops into a tiny village, like those seen when traveling in snow-covered mountains.