

1980

# Hearken

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Hearken · *James Paul*

Maybe you are rowing under the bridge  
When the honeymooners' car goes over,  
And the hastily-tied knots holding  
The suitcase to the rack finally slip:  
The bag splits on the railing above you  
And explodes into a cloud of tropical clothing,  
Bright underwear, the stuff spinning, snapping,  
Then relinquishing the wind for the water.  
And after all this you look humbly around,

Sure the bounty of this moment was meant  
For others, but as it happens you're alone  
On the river, and you know this is as close  
As you'll ever get to special consideration.  
Near you the flowers bloom a moment, then  
Submit to the surface, and on the slope  
Rising out of the valley, the car climbs away.  
Your boat too starts downstream as you pause  
At the oars, everything fading to the story  
You'll tell, until you might as well have lied.