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In the Kitchen after the Funeral

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was the final obscenity, and the old man got down beside me and I heard his heavy breathing and thought that now I too am old. It has been thirty years since a death like this one, my friend who was getting it all together. He too was the hope of literature and the arts and he left us on a Winter’s day under a sky grey like a disease—another one gone now in the filthy snow and cracked ice on tarmac leaving me with not the slightest idea of what to say to widows and old fathers and these women who appear out of nowhere, perfumed and beyond consoling, sitting off to the side.

IN THE KITCHEN AFTER THE FUNERAL

“Only by drinking of her could he fly.”
—James Agee

John is just as they knew him. Eyes are laughing, you can see, as he stands before a great banana tree in the rain forest, and the hand holding the picture is the hand of the girl whose hand belonged to John and now is careful not to wet with her tears this picture which is about all she has left. She shared with him the Amazon river, a jungle and hammock swung between trees, and this body of gold turning to lead with its breasts gone suddenly cold.