

SEARUN

Across big green flat muddy cow-plop-pocked pasture we stroll easy in rubber hipboots toward river running over smooth rocks and clear cold water and slick invisible silverbacked trout in from the fast heavy sea trying to get back home through the bends and holes of the green clean silverclear river flowing crazylike in metered direction toward that heavy green sea we walk along cowtrail next to barbed wire rotting cedar-post fence sewn together with baling wire and the small alder trees grow in rotting groves in the muddy pasture and the cows accumulate in tired herds chewing methodically in black fur clumps and watching with tired eyes their wet noses oozing and their eyes indifferent we walk quickly to the end of the fence where barbed wire meets river and we slide down muddy bankside to the smooth round river rocks and we now hear the river slur-shslarsh-sluglerrrauwgursh and we step into that cold silver flow and feel the pressure of upshore springs and snow melts against us and we press through the current over the slick rocks shifting beneath our feet and fight for balance as that clean flow pushes us back and the alder logs across the river defining holes dark and deep where the invisible-back trout go hiding in the quiet green and our poles held up out of the water and the air filled with the sound of the gurshgarsh of the evermoving flood and the sky gray and the leaves falling off the alder limbs and the small pebbles of brown deerdung prominent on the smooth white rocks and the elk trails and the herd of cows that followed us down watching and chewing with dead eyes and we cross the riverrun and stand on the smooth rocks and loose our lures and throw them into the current and let the water pull them under and push them back to the shore and we throw them again and the current tangles the shiny pieces of metal in invisible limbs and lines are cut and new lures tied and the cows chew and the river runs smooth and silver and the trout dance in the deep green holes and no sound is heard but the river shrussssh and the lures are thrown again and the silverslick trout takes and breaks the river-haven and the line is pulled again and the reel clicks smooth and oiled and the trout pulls and breaks water then darts with fast clear current then jumps and dives and jumps and twitches and lunges and the line is slack and the river still runs fast and the trout tread quietly in the green holes smooth and fast and silver and the cows are gone and the sky gets dark and the wind blows and the alder trees are black lines and the lures sail shiny and silver into the green rush and the trout grab and twist violently surging against the line and twitch into the cool air and lines pull the trout to shore and the greenback slick fish lunge on the round smooth rocks and their crimson blood shines in the twilight brown light and the riverbank a dark shadow and the pasture dark in fog and cowpies and we struggle up slick muddy riverbank the cows audible snorting walking through mud hooves scraping in the marshy mud and the dark alders standing twisted like deformed bodies and the trout becoming hard and the rum comes out warm bellied and the darkness surrounding us and the white fog on the ground our feet invisible bright lights on the highway pickup motors start cabs with warm air and rum and the smell of exhaust in the clean air dark night our eyes wild and feet cold.

(Jan/Feb 1988)

SMELLS LIKE FISH

Why continue to perform for tired smiles
And sideways eyes?

For white, soft pudgy bodies bulging in
Too small shirts?

For phony smiles, yellow teeth, and
Bad breath?

For those who inspire only indifference?

And the air smells like fish
In our yawning, industrial town;
The sky grays, the river is gray;
A cold wind begins to blow, and a
Soft, quiet rain creates an asphalt odor.

(1989)

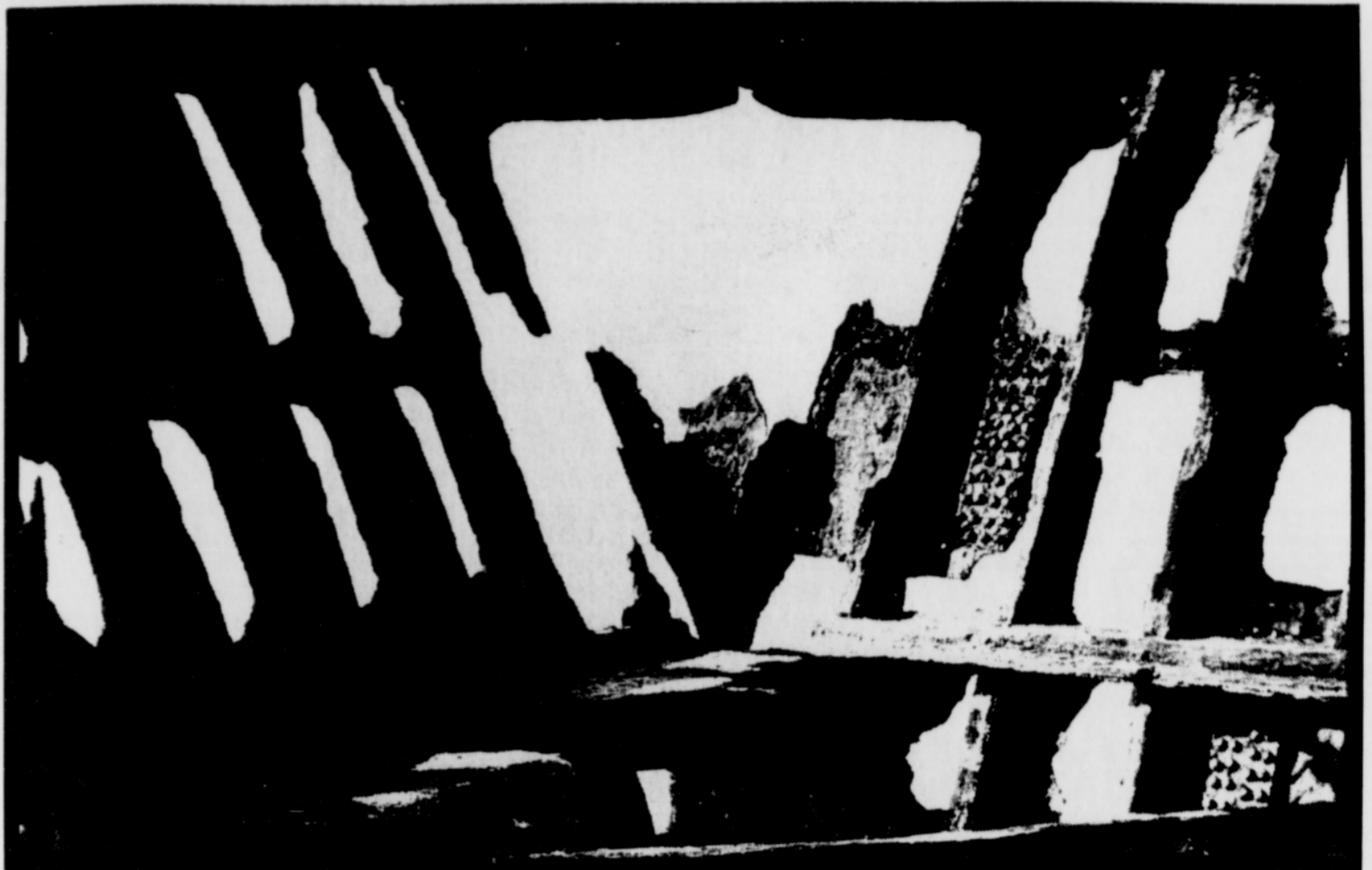


PHOTO BY CELIA FLYNN ("PETER IREDALE"), ABNORMAL TIMES 3 (1988)

FORKED HORN

Driving up those slow gravel roads john the gasstationman james and i in the front of my pickup on the cold november morning and its still dark and the sky dark and the stars white and the gravel crunching under the tires and the air from the defroster cold and the redman hot in the mouth and the headlights shining ahead of us and us watching for those shiny deer eyes our guns barreldown leaning against the seat james chewing gum don't want no redman man tastes like heck and john the gasstationman laughs and looks straight ahead at the road and the woods dark the silhouettes of the trees black and the space between them black and shadowy and i shivering cant this damn heater get hotter john gasman hollers james popping his gum me still shivering we turn down youngsriver gravel linemain in crown z heading toward wauna mainline in the middle of nothing but black sky and woods the headlights shining a little ahead of us and james saying watch for em i know they're here we saw a bunch of em in here last night and i driving slow a little bit of warm air coming from the heater john mangas tapping his foot on the floorboard to keep it from freezing he says and i still driving slow and a teeny glow of light beginning to form in the early morning november sky but the sky still dark and the stars still bright watch for em james says its this time in the morning when they wannah cross the roads and get back to their beds why the hell do they need to cross the roads to get to their beds john asks why don't they just stay on the other side of the road and sleep in their beds over there why do ya think deer always gotta cross the road james they just do thats all james says now be quiet he continues this is the time of morning you see em me still driving slow the cab beginning to get warm that faint light becoming barely brighter in the still dark sky we getting further and further away from people and houses and further into deer country in their neighborhood where they know where to run and hide and stay alive and us up there in a truck chugging around what a comedy i think it getting still barely lighter a silver glint appearing in the east the stars getting just barely dimmer dammit james hollers we should've seen one by now they were all over up here last night when we were spotting well maybe james john says they haven't decided to cross the road yet or maybe they're crosstin it behind us have you thought of that james turned around and looked out the back window at dark morning and the black outline of the road the sky getting even brighter you can see the trees now and the stars getting dimmer still and me still driving slowly and the gravel still crunching under the tires and john quit tapping his foot and me yawning and james popping his gum twitching in his seat and the silver light in the east getting more westward and the headlights shining into the brighter morning and the cab hot turn that damn thing off john hollers my foot isnt frozen anymore so i turn the heater off RIGHT THERE james hollers the quick barely perceptible

outline of an animal runs in front of the truck all i see the white tail flash for a second-tenth stop this damn thing james hollers and i stop and james out the door with his gun and john follows him and i turn off engine and headlights and grab my gun and walk slowly around the rear of the truck and into some heavy salal along the side of the gravel road and i stand quietly and i can hear john and james walking slowly through the tangled woods and can hear the thin brittle twigs snapping and i step slowly and quietly into the woods and walk for ten feet then stop and listen and its light enough now to see through the trees and salal and to shoot a deer if you saw one so i walk another ten feet and stop knowing how slick those blacktails are he's probably standing behind me out on the road looking at me i think i take another ten steps the brittle twigs snapping beneath me the woods full of a thick dewy musty smell and the fir needles throwing off the christmastree sappy smell and i standing quietly getting deeper into the brush and trees i don't hear gasjohn or james anymore then up in front of me quickly a brown shadow jumping sideways sailing through the wirytangled salal coming down lightly without snapping anything i lower my gun level the shadow jumps again i fire the blast sounding like a bomb in the early morning the salal thrashing ahead of me snorting sounds and legs flailing i walk up to blacktail it jumps up suddenly leaps again falls to its side its legs moving trying to kick me i hear movement behind me crunching through the brush i standing over the deer it writhing in the tangled shubbery its eyes the definition of abject terror blood running from its nose it trying to rise again but falling back to its side johngasman standing beside me thats a big forkedhorn he says i aim the barrel at its ear and fire another bomb blast crashing through the peacefulness of the early morning remote almost humanless section of the tall tree woods the deer still now lying like a pet dog sleeping james now beside me good shootin ricky he hollers as he gets out his pocket knife want me to gut it sure james do it i sit on a rotten windfall and watch him slit the neck and pull out the windpipe then fold out the guts and shove them under the dead tree i was sitting on then i grab the deer by the horns and pull him out to the road it was full morning silvery light now and james is standing there with bloody arms and john and i lift the deer into the back of the turck and i look out over the canyon and i can see the road we came up on below us and i see another rig coming up the road one down two to go james says cmon get in the truck lets go i know they're up here but we're gunna have to drive em out now its too damn light they're all bedded down and those shots spooked em we get into the truck and drive on hardly three wisemen bearing gifts.

(March, 1988)

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