

Where We Come From

by Daniel Crocker

Where We Come From (ver. 2.0)
(Leadwood, Missouri pop. 1,200)

I

Matt lit a joint here
driving beneath the arms of dying trees

The moon shone through in jigsaw puzzles
that we could never quite figure out

Gravel crackled like leaves in fire
beneath the weight of tires and restless boys

And we scattered beer cans
in no particular order
across the floorboard

Annette had just broken it off with him
and he beat drums out on the dash
a blue bandanna stretched tight the veins
collapsing in his forehead

And the September air held the smell
of burning trash in the tips of her fingers
somewhere far away

We liked the looks of our faces
basked blue in electric light
the call numbers of a station we had not tuned to

Eventually high
we rode back into town
two cowboys and a whiskey bottle between us.

II

Old timers sit staring from their porches
no job to wake up to
they watch potholes for clarity

A future for the boys passes on the tailgate of a Ford
ripens like a soft apple and falls away

Graduation 1991
we ride past the foundation of the old movie house
burnt to the ground in '52

Glen had once stood naked there on a dare

A fake gold cap is twisted from a bottle of cheap champagne
handed palm-to-palm with no comment

Mandy passed out hours ago
her jeans smooth against her thighs
bone white under the moon
we whooped it up like only good old boys can do.

III

The chat dump is waste spilled
from the great lead mines of the 20's

Our grandfather's worked there

grew old and died
and left our grandmothers with nothing

The chat dump
(sand and lead dust pumped from the earth)
looms over the town

Its sprawl is endless
a hand clenched tight
it covers everything here
like a curse

Sometimes men in suits come from the city
and test our water

We know it's not safe, but what can you do?

My mother had sat me down in it
when I was an infant

She cast her spells under the toenail moon
chanted words men were never meant to hear

and accomplished nothing

IV

The chat dump is where fires burn until dawn
kegs empty quickly
and twenty-somethings with nothing else to do
ponder the possibility of iron and steel

The chat dump is a desert in the heartland
Budweiser cans and cigarettes

stomped out in mid-smoke

Nothing grows here.

The chat dump
the half-shell of some cosmic turtle
the size of a domed stadium
the silence of death falling silently through our hands

Matt and I tried to climb it once
in his Daddy's Chevy
half way up the tires stuck
then, backing down, we nearly rolled her to our deaths.

