

# 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  
ripenes 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.

