

# Notes from Matrimony, # 9

*by* Sean Lovelace

**1.**

For my fortieth birthday, a fellow professor gave me a copy of Kafka's diary. Here is an entry from 1910 I read while idling in a parking lot downtown:

**19 July:**

"Sunday, slept, woke, slept, woke, miserable life."

**2.**

I arrived Sunday evening to a darkened house. Everything unplugged. Even the fuses from the breaker. Meticulous, this undoing. Silence has a sound. Cold has a voice, a pearly cigarette whisper. It says, "Metaphor?"

**3.**

Late last night, I took an orange bucket of thawed meat (burger, sirloin, a sopping gray bag of shrimp) and dumped them into the woodlot behind the house. This morning I sat hungover at the kitchen window and marked up stories written for Introduction to Creative Writing. One story of masturbation. Several of heartbreak, alcohol, suicide. One young lady wrote about tying a Barbie Doll to a Popsicle stick and setting it on fire. I sipped my oily coffee. Something flickered and caught my eye. Crows. Black crows filled the trees. They plummeted and soared, then perched regally on arthritic winter branches. What a scene! Shimmering black crows! The gray woods and low fog. Vivid bright spears of pink dangling from their beaks.

**4.**

I think I can honestly say my marriage has been the loneliest period of my life.

**5.**

I told my class how I stood in the wet grass and watched a coyote slinking along the edge of the backyard. A student raised his hand and asked, "Did you shoot it?" Now, why in the hell would I shoot it? I almost shouted. But calm, calm...and I said softly, "No, I didn't shoot it. Now I have to dismiss class early for an appointment. I want all of you to write a story with its protagonist an actual coyote. Think: Where is this coyote going? The story must be exactly 811 words long (a trick to minimize wordiness in beginning writers), and I will not accept any suicides."

**6.**

A sparrow just flew from the nearby feeder and into the kitchen window as I type. An awful thump. Its fault, or possibly mine. The bird shakes it off, hops along a withered row of loblollies, and out of sight. The garage door opens. A screeching of rust. I suppose it's time.

**7.**

**1911, 16 June:**

"Are the woods still there?"

"Are you desperate? A little inhabitant of the ruins."

