

Look Papa I can walk, Sonja says. She takes two steps and falls down. The colonel squints his one sighted eye, helps her to her feet and they embrace for a second and third time.

You won't be neglected never again, says Colonel Cornell. I give you me word in front of the doctor. . . . Where is that big fellow?

His job completed, Mitchum has slipped out of the apartment unnoticed and down the stairs and out into the foggy Dover streets. He puts up the collar of his trenchcoat against the cold and lights a cigarette—two at once—in the shadow of The Queen's Cross.

It has been a long emotionally draining day and night for the itinerant alienist. He has loved and lost three times. Three women have entered and departed his life, leaving him with a sense of void.

Who is that bloke? someone in the pub asks someone else as Mitchum shuffles by on the way out.

I never did get his name, says the other, but that big fellow is the goddamndest mind doctor you ever want to meet.

Mitchum climbs into his rented Vauxhall and drives off past the cliffs of Dover into the muted English sunrise, another chapter of his life behind him.

POETRY / BROWNE, COOPER, SANER, RAMSEY

“Talk to Me, Baby” / Michael Dennis Browne

1

A friend at a cocktail party tells me
of being on a fishing trip up North
and meeting some men from Illinois
who showed him how to clean and filet a fish properly;
and of how, when one particular pike
was stripped almost clean, almost all of him gone,
the jaw with the razory teeth opened
and some kind of cry came from the creature,
that head on the end of almost no body;
and the man with the knife said:
“Talk to me, baby.”

2

Up in the Boundary Waters last weekend
I hooked a trout, my first, and played him.
I got him to the shallows
and tried to raise him. And the girls
got down into the water with my leather hat—
we hadn't brought a net—and I was yelling
"I've got a fish! I've got a fish!"
out into the evening, and the girls
tried to get him into the hat, and did once,
but then he was out again—a wriggle, a flap—
that fish jumped out of my hat!—
and the line, gone loose, jerked, snapped, and he was back
in the water, the hook in him.

And he didn't turn into
a glimmering girl, like he did for
young Willie Yeats,
nor was he a Jesus, like for Lawrence;
he just drifted head down near the shallows,
huge, the huge hook in him.
And Louis and Phil came up in the other
canoe, and we got the flashlight on him,
and tried to get hold of him. But then, somehow,
we lost him, drifting about, he was not there
but gone somewhere deeper into the water,
every minute darker; my hook in him.

I hooked five or six snags after that, yelling
each time that each one was a fish, bigger
than the last. But I brought nothing living up.
And the other canoe went ghostly on the water,
silvery, like a dish with two quiet eggs in it;
and the pines were massed, dark, and stood and smelled
strong, like a bodyguard of dried fish.

3

Breathing, my brother in my house,
and breathing, his wife beside him.

Breathing, my brother in America,
his body in my bed, her body.

Their tent the color of the sun in my garden.
And they are riding West.

And both of us riding West, brother,
since we swam out of the father,

heading, six years apart,
the same way.

The dog stares at me, not knowing
why I have not fed him.
The cat crying to come in.

Whom we feed, sustain us.
Who need us, we keep breathing for.

I have seen you, at supper with friends,
put your hands to the guitar strings

and bring strong music out, seen you
sit and pick out

a tune on the piano,
on a friend's penny whistle.

To hold an instrument, to play.
To hold a pen, to write.

To do as little harm as possible
in the universe, to help

all traveling people, West, West;
you are not traveling alone,

not ever; we all go with you;
only the body stays behind.

4

When I stand on my island, a Napoleon,
one hand nailed to my chest,
the writing hand;

when I can only *stare*
at the ocean, at the birds
running and turning against the light . . .

When I am
the Illinois man and his kind,
“Talk to me, baby,”

the one with the knife inside, sometimes,
the one you may meet on your travels,
the one behind you in the line to get on the bus,

the one arranging a deal in a phone booth
as you drive past,
when I become that thing I sometimes become,

I will go into
the green of this visit, the green
you asked me to try to see

after my earlier, darker poems for you—
and this, the fourth one, darker
than I meant, since the man with the knife

swam into it—O when that killer
stands over our city, our sleeping and loving places,
tent, canoe, cabin of sweet people—

I will hear with your ears
the songs of the birds of the new world
that so quicken you, and look for

their wings that flame and flash—there! there!—
among the leaves and branches . . .

5
Too often I have wanted
to slip away, the hook in me,
to roll off the bed
and into the dark waters under it;
to drift, head down,
hide, hide, the hook in me;

to roll
in the wet ashes of the father,
wet with the death of the father,
and not try
to burn my way upward; the son, rising.

I swear to you now, I will survive,
rise up, and chant my way through these losses;

and you, you, brother, whatever that is,
same blood, you who swim
in the same waters,
you promise me to make *your* music too,
whatever the hurt;

O when we are almost only
mouth, when we are almost only a head
stuck on the pole of the body,
and the man says "Talk to me, baby,"
let's refuse him, brother, both, all of us,
and striking the spine like an instrument, inside,
like birds, with even the body broken,
our feathers fiery—there! there!—among
the leaves and branches, make
no sounds he will know;
like birds, my brother, birds of the new world, *sing*.

S. Eliason 66: Double Portrait of Emily Dickinson and the Rev. Charles Wadsworth / Jane Cooper

She is just leaving the room.
He fades to a china cup.

Velocity fraught with gold,
with *menace of Light*, atomic secrets—
An aroused skin opens over the Great Plains,
October leaves rain down.