

James was standing beside me. His hand almost frozen to the railing. We didn't speak of it. He was wearing blue moccasins. His toes curled up inside. Bunched up like kittens in a sack. It's a good thing we were drunk. Drunk on the very best vodka.

I remember the night. The moon. We bought the moccasins in Texas. It was a buttery Texas moon. James found the love of his life. We had crossed Texas six times in a touring car. She was standing in the auditorium. We all had high hopes. It didn't work out. She was a tall Marge Piercy. Or a short Carolyn Kizer. James said, this thing is bigger than both of us.

Now we were crossing the Caspian. It was like a symbolist poem. James pulled his hand off the railing. Sighed. He was being very cosmopolitan. James stroked his cashmere vest. I think it smelled like moth balls. I have described that vest before. His little moustache twitched. We heard the waves slapping together below us. We had The Best of Everything. Everything.

Three Poems from *Slices* / James Mechem and Ann Menebroker

please send me one telegram
was written in lipstick across her pillow

it reminded her to sheet the bed
and buy a pillowcase

the breakfast code was broken in two
he was wearing jockey shorts
a bit of corvée if you must know
he told himself
hearing her spit on the iron

she unbuttoned her white blouse
he smoked one cigarette
all his life one thing had led to another
now at the age of fifty
he was turning over a new leaf