

## TRUE STORY

Me & Jim & Jeannie are eating meatloaf stoned  
when this black dude in a shiny green suit  
slides into our booth. Right next to Jeannie.  
Says Hey Kids Wanna make some money?  
Pulls out this fat green wad & we laugh  
till he reaches for his armpit like he's gotta  
itch & says Wanna see my gun? So we laugh harder  
& he starts in about his Princess, his wife,  
his white lady, he loves white ladies.  
The truth is she's a saint.  
The most beautiful lady in the world.  
O.K. So now we know he's drunk, right?  
But the sad part is he don't know where she is.  
She won't tell him. She don't know  
how much he loves her. Nobody knows  
how much he loves that girl. You wanna know  
how much he loves her? There was this man.  
He was putting the make on his princess  
& you know what he did? He bit-off-his-nose.  
His eyelids roll up & these two bloodshot  
bull'seyes sorta quiver & about then  
I notice Jeannie's keys on the table  
right next to his long pink & brown fingers:  
a golden horseshoe key ring with two red  
jewels at the tips—you couldn't miss'em.  
So I get sly, see, I think this dude's  
*distracting* us so he can snatch Jeannie's keys.  
So I pretend to listen to his murder record,  
but slowly, oh so slowly, I edge my hand  
over the formica. I'm nodding, he's bragging,  
& my fingers are crawling slowmotion  
toward the keys & just-like-that  
they're in my fist. I reel'em in slow &  
slip'em in my pocket. Boom, we're up,  
we're outside, we're into the snow

coming down yellow under the streetlamp,  
the sighs curling up over our heads.  
I feel real cocky & show Jeannie my catch.  
Her forehead crinkles & out of the pocket  
of her silver furcoat she pulls a golden  
horseshoe key ring with two red jewels  
at the tips—you could miss'em.  
We stop & stand there in the snow, too afraid  
to turn around, listening for the gunshot.  
Slowly, oh so slowly, I follow our snowprints  
back, clutching the keys in my wet hand.  
I open the door. He's at the counter, his back  
to me. I say Hey Man, you forgot your keys.  
He turns. He smiles—a big white smile.  
He takes the keys. He says Hey. Thanks.  
He shakes my hand. You Kids are allright.  
When I get back they wait for me to  
say something. I can't. So Jim says,  
I see you still got your nose.

### THE ASTRONAUT

You'd think a hero could complete a sentence.  
Not this one. I couldn't coax a decent take  
out of him. He'd stutter & stare down the mike  
like the barrel of a gun. Finally, I told the engineer  
to give us an hour & we walked to this Mexican place  
where this round brown woman was hosing down  
the walk under a tattered green canopy. Inside  
we turned down two chairs & she kept an eye  
on us through the kitchen slit. She must have  
recognized him: butch, caved-in eyes, white shirt,  
plastic penholder with 2 bics. He needed to talk.  
I needed him calmed down. I listened.