

Jamey Dunham

PRAIRIE DOG TOWN

I am the last black-footed ferret in this prairie dog town. I have a striped wool sock slung through my belt loop and a black toy mask over my eyes. As I nose my way down the street I toss a dime in a blind man's cup and suddenly all eyes are on me. People everywhere begin pointing at me and barking in high-pitched chirps. I run to the curb but the cabs won't stop, they barrel past like buffalo with their heads between their fenders. By now the barking is deafening. People are leaning out of windows and popping up through manholes just to chime in. I race around the corner and duck into an alley. A coyote crouching in the shadows over a dead chicken, casually stands up and lights a cigarette. Says he thought my kind was extinct.

DUSK FALLS ON THE KITCHEN

The mouse has made off with the cat's ear, leaving a ransom note smeared along the baseboard in cheese. The cat now spends its days sliding along the floorboards with a shot-glass to its temple, listening for sounds of laughter from the crawlspace below. I sit at the kitchen table shooting gin and mourning the loss of my favorite glass. In the mesh of the screen door I trace the outline of raccoons scurrying across the yard. They've been meeting behind the garage, finalizing a plot to block out the sun. The spider in the window above the sink has similar plans. Everyday it weaves another layer of skin over its web, dimming the room to a premature dusk.