

Strays

(For Shadow)

Some mattress of grass, a few scant belongings
hid amid bushes or in specific crannies of The Lake House,
that summer theatre depot and bum beacon—
to hang out with the ducks, a handful of mallards,
one plate of royal blue behind, for the most part,
straw-baked wings, these fingers giving crumbs
from a shore of docked paddle boats, foam-dredged algae
lapping the moon's twin, this reflected grand structure
while two almost brothers stand in shadows side by side.

It's an ordinary thing—*isn't it*—a pair of jean clad
Jacks, one still fresh from the farm although, for 12
seasons, an alert city renegade living on speed and tea, his
sight, calm, quiet, sheltered by a vision that's almost given up.
Once something repressed furnished warmth. Once.
Presently, cucumber-cool, neither unhappy or unfeeling,
the mind no retreat, the gaze, no steely visor or recession for pain,
only airy as this park is airy,
every leaf tinsel-hued for a rainstorm:

He watches and sees, sees the other pointing, a shooting star,
Orion, the new sickle moon, in the background a song,
less theatric, some woman's voice from the apartments
radiant blue with picture tubes,
this desperado's view of the planet,
He, like everyone else, a little Grown Up
except for the brutality learned, the abuse handed down,
survival a method of regarding people as dollars,
tenderness a myth when neglect provides
simply the economics of mean streets.

There's nothing different here, is there?
It's all incidental. These beings could be anyone.
So why, finally, the moon and Big Ben cloaked
an hour later as drizzle falls, does one
stray think—*stay, stay*—while the other

leaves?