

Cimarron Review

Number One Hundred Seventy-Four • Winter 2011

Contents

Joe Thompson.....“Welcome” (steel with vintage glass.
5.5’ tall, 2’ wide). Photography by
keithbetterly@betterlyphoto.com • Cover

.....Contributors • 105

Poetry

Stefanie Silva.....Becoming Something • 7
Cathleen Calbert.....The Problem with Nature • 9
Pamela GarveyMyth Maker • 11
Peter Cooley.....The Boy and The Window • 13
Paul Gibbons.....Paradise Lost • 14
Asya Graf.....I Have Remembrances of Yours • 17
Carol Brockfield.....Chewing It Over • 18
Dina HardyPoem or *Catalogue of Paintings* • 32
Silas Tsang.....Cooking Directions • 34
Mike Schneider.....Buenos Aires • 36
Tracy K. Smith.....Cathedral Kitsch • 37
.....The Largeness We Can’t See • 38
.....*from* The Speed of Belief • 39
.....Song • 41
.....When Your Small Form Tumbled Into Me • 42
Eric PankeyThe Place of Skulls • 59
Gail Rudd Entrekin.....The Benefit of Dreaming • 60
Arthur Vogelsang.....Shakes • 62
Alistair Elliot.....Florida—January 1941 • 63

Kristin Robertson	Nagoya • 64
Susan M. Schultz	From <i>Memory Cards: Wallace Stevens Series</i> • 95
Kim Bridgford.....	Taxi Driver • 98
.....	Wilder and Freud • 99
Judy Kronenfeld	In the doctor’s office, two weeks before his death, • 100
.....	Illusion • 101
Will Eaves	The Grass On The Other Side • 102
Elizabeth T. Gray, Jr.....	Holy Isle: The Third Summer of the Raids • 103
.....	The Oracle • 104

Fiction

Suzanne Greenberg.....	Remodel • 19
Richard Schmitt	Skin Tight • 25
Lisa Alexander	Lemonade • 51
Tony Tulathimutte.....	Composite Body • 65

Non-Fiction

Zac Walsh	The Valley’s Cut • 43
Phillip Hurst	Frenchy and the Toddinator • 80

Contributors

Lisa Alexander's work appeared in the anthology *Mourning Sickness* and won the 2009 UCLA James Kirkwood Literary Award. She also received an Emmy Award nomination for executive producing the TNT miniseries adaptation of Marion Zimmer Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon*. Lisa is currently an MFA candidate at Bennington College.

Alistair Elliot is a British poet, born in Liverpool in 1932, who was shipped to America as a child, during what he thinks of as "the war." His host, Charles Edward Merrill, father of the poet, sent him to Asheville School. He was returned to England in July 1945. He has published translations of Verlaine, Valéry, Heine, Euripides and others, as well as seven books of his own poems.

Kim Bridgford is the director of the West Chester University Poetry Center and the West Chester University Poetry Conference. She is the editor of the online journal *Mezzo Cammin* and the founder of *The Mezzo Cammin Women Poets Timeline Project*, which was launched at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington on March 27, 2010.

A former New Yorker, Chicagoan and San Franciscan, **Carol Brockfield** now writes from a hundred-year-old Craftsman house in Southern Oregon. Her work has been published in *flashquake*, *Women Writers* and *The Hiss Quarterly*, and she has published three chapbooks, two poem cycles, and a collection of poems about her interactions with mealworms, which she raises for wild birds.

Cathleen Calbert's poetry and prose have appeared in many publications, including *The New Republic*, *The New York Times*, *The Paris Review*, *Poetry*, and *The Women's Review of Books*. She is the author of three books of poetry: *Lessons in Space* (University of Florida Press), *Bad Judgment* (Sarabande Books), and *Sleeping with a Famous Poet* (C.W. Books). Her awards include *The Nation* Discovery Award, a Pushcart Prize, and the Tucker Thorp Professorship at Rhode Island College, where she currently teaches.

Peter Cooley is Professor of English and Director of Creative Writing at Tulane. His eight books of poetry are *The Company of Strangers*, *The Room Where Summer Ends*, *Nightseasons*, *The Van Gogh Notebook*, *The Astonished Hours*, *Sacred Conversations*, *A Place Made of Starlight*. Carnegie Mellon, his publisher, released his new volume *Divine Margins*, in 2009.

Will Eaves is the author of two novels, *The Oversight* (2001) and *Nothing To Be Afraid Of* (2005), both published by Picador. His first full collection of poetry, *Sound Houses*, will be published by Carcanet in 2011. He is the Arts Editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*.

Gail Rudd Entrekin's third and latest collection of poems is *Change (Will Do You Good)* (Poetic Matrix Press), which was nominated for a Northern California Book Award. She is editor of the online environmental literary journal *Canary* and Poetry Editor of Hip Pocket Press in Orinda, California.

Pamela Garvey, the author of the chapbook *Fear* (Finishing Line Press, 2008)—a finalist for the New Women's Voices Competition—, has published poetry and short stories in many journals including *Margie*, *Esquire*, *RATTLE*, *Spoon River Poetry Review* and many others. This is her second publication in *Cimarron Review*.

Paul Gibbons teaches, writes, and plays guitar in Merced, California. He has a chapbook, *Bray*, as well as recent and forthcoming publications with *Blackbird*, *Lumina*, and *Born*.

Asya Graf's work has appeared in *DMQ*, *folly*, *Anderbo*, *Boxcar*, *Vestal Review*, and other journals. She has recently completed her first poetry manuscript called *In the Land of Mammoth Bones*. She lives in New York.

Elizabeth T. Gray, Jr. is a poet, translator, and corporate consultant. *The Green Sea of Heaven*, her translations of Iran's mystical lyric poet Hafiz-i Shirazi (d. 1389), were published in 1995 by White Cloud Press. Poems and translations will appear in *The Cortland Review*, *Poetry International*, *The Kenyon Review Online*, and *The New Orleans Review*. She lives in New York City.

Suzanne Greenberg is the author of *Speed-Walk and Other Stories*, winner of the 2003 Drue Heinz Literature Prize. Her most recent publications include fiction in *West Branch* and *The Chiron Review*, along with the children's novels *Abigail Iris: The One and Only* and *Abigail Iris: The Pet Project*, co-authored with Lisa Glatt. She is also the co-author, with Michael Smith, of *Everyday Creative Writing: Panning for Gold in the Kitchen Sink*. She teaches creative writing at CSU, Long Beach.

Dina Hardy earned degrees from Pratt Art Institute and the Iowa's Writers' Workshop. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Agni*, *Black Warrior Review*, *Florida Review*, *Smartish Pace*, *Southeast Review* and *Meridian's Best New Poets* anthology. At the University of Iowa, she was a Maytag Fellow; from Stanford University, she received a Stegner Fellowship.

Phillip Hurst is pursuing an MFA at New Mexico State University. Raised amidst the vast and rolling cornfields of Central Illinois, he earned a BA from Illinois Wesleyan University, as well as a JD from Northern Illinois University College of Law. "Frenchy and the Toddinator" is his first published essay.

Judy Kronenfeld's second collection, *Light Lowering in Diminished Sevenths* (2008) won the 2007 Litchfield Review Poetry Book Award. Her poems have appeared in many print and online journals, including *Natural Bridge*, *American Poetry Journal*, *Calyx*, *Hiram Poetry Review*, *Cimarron Review*, *Pedestal*, and *Stirring*, and in a dozen anthologies and textbooks.

Eric Pankey is the author of eight collections of poetry, most recently *The Pear As One Example: New and Selected Poems 1984-2008*, which is available from Copper Canyon Press. A new book, *Dissolve*, is forthcoming from Milkweed Editions in 2013.

Kristin Robertson is a PhD candidate in creative writing at Georgia State University in Atlanta. Her work has appeared in *The Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Passages North*, *Asheville Poetry Review*, *Roanoke Review*, *Whiskey Island*, and *Yemassee*.

Richard Schmitt has published stories in *Puerto del Sol*, *Gulf Coast*, *Flyway*, *Marlboro Review*, and other places. His story, "Leaving Venice, Florida," won First Prize in *The Mississippi Review* short story contest, and was anthologized in *New Stories of the South: The Year's Best 1999*. He is the author of the, *The Aerialist*, a novel, Harcourt Brace, 2001. Schmitt is the recipient of a National Endowment of the Arts Grant, 2002. "Skin Tight" is a part of a novel in progress tentatively titled *My Year of Counseling*.

Mike Schneider lives in Pittsburgh and works as a science writer at Carnegie Mellon University. His poems have appeared in many journals, including *Main Street Rag*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Hunger Mountain*, *Shenandoah* and *Poetry*. His chapbook, *Rooster*, came out in 2004.

Susan M. Schultz is author of *Dementia Blog* (Singing Horse Press, 2008), *And Then Something Happened* (Salt, 2004), *Memory Cards & Adoption Papers* (Potes & Poets, 2001) and *Aleatory Allegories* (Salt, 2000), as well as a book of criticism, *A Poetics of Impasse in Modern and Contemporary American Poetry* (U of Alabama, 2005). She teaches at the University of Hawai'i-Manoa and edits Tinfish Press out of her home in Kane'ohe on O'ahu.

Stefanie Silva graduated from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro's (UNCG) MFA program, where she was poetry editor of the *Greensboro Review*. She is currently a lecturer at UNCG. She has been published in the *Superstition Review*, and has work forthcoming in *H_ngm_n*.

Tracy K. Smith is the author of two previous collections, *Duende* and *The Body's Question*. Her third book, *Life on Mars*, will be published by Graywolf Press in May. She teaches at Princeton University.

Every sculpture **Joe Thompson** makes is created from discarded materials. He gets inspiration from objects that have been discounted and thrown away. He enjoys finding them in junk yards, pawn shops, thrift stores, yard sales and back alleys and wayside places. It's a recognition of unseen potential that he has been doing for many years. It's salvation...or forgiveness...or second chances! It's what God is supposed to do for us.....(<http://www.joethompsonart.com/>)

Silas Tsang is a seafood specialist in Northwest Ohio. He can eloquently explain the difference between farm-raised Atlantic Salmon versus Wild Caught Coho Salmon. He knows the truth behind Chilean Sea Bass, and offers easy recipes to his customers. Also, he will cook your meal, so long as you pay in advance and don't ask for a refund.

Tony Tulathimutte is an O. Henry Award-winning writer whose stories have appeared or are forthcoming in *Threepenny Review*, *Malahat Review*, *Wag's Revue*, and *Frank*. He will be attending the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop this fall to pursue an MFA in fiction. His website is at tonytula.com.

Arthur Vogelsang's *Expedition: New and Selected Poems* is available from The Ashland Poetry Press.

Zac Walsh is contributing editor of the *Arroyo Literary Review*. He won the 2009 R.V. Williams Prize for Fiction and his work has recently been published by *Alligator Juniper*, *Gulf Stream*, *Big Lucks*, *The DuPage Valley Review* and *ZAUM*. He teaches English at Chabot College in Hayward, California.

Lemonade

Lisa Alexander

The three women sit in the slim paring of shadow that should supply relief from the heat. The white, stucco wall is striped with bougainvillea, pink as a flamenco skirt. Every once in a while, a leaf detaches and flings itself into the aquamarine oblong of the pool. Just beyond the oasis of heavily sprinkled gardens, a smattering of bushes, then tawny scrub. Emily and her neighbor, Sara, have their Adirondacks safely on the genetically altered grass. On the weedy patch of concrete, close to the wall, is Louise.

"They found a mountain lion on Lachman," Louise says, her voice thin and permeable in the hot air. "That's three streets from my house. He hid behind the trashcans. The guy across the street saw his tail." With one hand, she restrains a chestnut curl springing out of a barrette. Her bra strap slips.

"How do you know this?" Emily says.

"*Palisidian Post*," Louise says. She can feel the familiar yearn for Emily's approval, so she forces substance into her tone. "The guy who wrote the article is a friend of mine. He said the cat was young. They think that's why he was so far down in a residential area."

"What in heaven's name did they do?" Sara says.

"Tranquilized him," Louise says. "The guy, the one I know, said he touched the lion. His fur was so clean."

Sara nods. "They're very clean, these creatures."

"And his paw was three times the size of the guy's own hand," Louise says. She holds out her palm and turns it slightly, imagining tufts of fur, claw tips, tendons flexing, yet relaxed.

"Come on," Emily says. "What if they had toddlers?"

"Frightening," Sara says.

Louise knows the two women from her daughter's artsy, yet academically challenging, private school. Sara is from Mexico City. Once Emily said about her, "But it's different with her, she's educated." She's a big woman, but stylish. Sara makes her own modernist clothes, pale linen jackets with Chinese collars and coolie pants, because she actually went to finishing school.

Emily used to be a human rights prosecutor at the UN. She approaches motherhood with the same dedication and finely tuned outrage. Both

she and Sara live in "The Esplanade," a gated community of Stepford mansions, but Emily doesn't even have childcare. She's raising her three on the Attachment Theory. As babies she carried them around like a Masai woman, in little pouches on her hip. Emily has tornado energy, and she never doubts herself. Louise isn't sure why she wants to be friends with Emily. It would never work. Louise is the kind who looks at eclipses without safety glasses, the one who wanders in the rain with no boots on, returning hours later, water streaming from her hair. Around Emily, Louise is always saying something shocking, some kind of Tourette's of the heart, a friendship sabotage. Maybe she doesn't want to be friends with Emily. Maybe she wants Emily to want to be friends with her.

The three little girls have been playing for hours by that slide. Louise's girl, Colette, twirls and sings "la la la." She had to wear that party dress, but now it flutes up like a hibiscus, and the color makes Louise suddenly glad.

"Coco loco, coco loco, coco loco," Colette chants.

"She better stop that," Emily says. "She'll get dizzy."

The heat bakes, the sky is cloudless. The brown hills, with their ridges of dusty sage, look combustible. A great, dry wind comes up from the canyon, rustling the scrubland above the chlorinated turquoise of the pool.

"So what happened to the lion?" Sara says. "When it woke up?"

"Animal control released him into the hills," Louise says.

Emily peers above Louise's head. "Did you hear? A coyote grabbed a two-year-old from the sandbox. The babysitter screamed and yanked the kid away. It was in the news." She frowns. "I'll tell you what it is, we're under siege."

Colette twirls over to the moms. "Can we do a lemonade stand? Please please please?" Her hair is a curly nimbus, her eyes bright, her freckles red-pepper flakes.

"Sure, honey," Emily says.

The moms follow Emily into the house like a line of ducklings. It's cool. The shades are drawn. Emily likes gold-leafed antiques, so the furniture glints. Somewhere there's a new puppy. Spring-loaded fences barricade the doors to the living room. Pieces of paper are taped up on all the TVs.

"Did you see about the hurricane?" Sara says. "The one in the Gulf?"

"That's why I covered everything up," Emily says. "I told the kids, but I'm not subjecting them to those images." Poor people, black, mostly, climbing to the tops of their roofs, the water rising, corpses floating by, dogs drowning, rescue not coming. Maybe it's a hangover from her UN days, but Louise sees the back of Emily's neck tense.

"Imagine what it would be like, caught in a vortex like that," Emily says.

"I was on Maui with Miles when Iniki made landfall," Louise says, forgetting once again to homogenize this. "We dressed each other in flow-ers and danced naked in the rain."

They all look at her. Emily grimaces like she's received a slight electric shock. From somewhere in the house, the puppy barks, an insistent, frantic sound. Through the picture window, the sky is laser blue, the wind shimmies the Egyptian date palms, and a dot, maybe a hawk, circumnavigates the hill. Louise remembers she has never seen Emily's husband touch her, even by mistake; then the girls run in, buzzing and giggling like a swarm of honey-drunk bees, and Louise is suddenly grateful for this.

"Well, I can't stand not doing anything. It's just not the way I'm made," Emily says. She turns to her daughter. "Why don't we give the money from the lemonade stand to the hurricane survivors?"

The girl's gray eyes go a shade darker beneath a fusillade of blinks. "Okay," she says slowly.

"Excellent," Emily says. "And Sara? Would you? Somewhere in the freezer, I've got Minute Maid."

The girls set up an assembly line to roll and cut the dough, squeeze in raisins and chocolate chips. Emily's kitchen is a bright oasis of stainless steel and enamel, orderly canisters filled with SUGAR, FLOUR, RAISINS, COCONUT. There's even an ITALY shelf, framed by jars of capers, sun-dried tomatoes, cannellini beans. Quickly and amazingly, the kitchen explodes with cinnamon, vanilla, heat. Emily looks much happier, bustling behind the girls, supplying a rolling pin, adjusting the ovens, giving the batter a mix.

"Just look at this," she says. "An island of Childhood in the insanity of L.A." She hefts a jug of lemonade. "Do you think three are going to be enough? Should we make more and bring the cooler?"

"It would save us," Louise says, "from having to make runs up and down." Listening to her own voice, she can hear the faux authority, and they hear it too, because they all look at her again. It's the first thing she's said to Emily since "naked in the rain."

§

A dinosaur spine of exposed dirt twists through the brushy canyons all the way to Malibu. The girls set up at the entrance to the gate, across the ravine from the trailhead. The heat has brought out the serious hikers with their Patagonia boots, steel water bottles, R.E.I. walking staffs.

It's that time of the month for Louise, a good thing because it's scatty these days. She had Colette late, at 39, and she hasn't been regular since. The cramps wring her out like a washcloth. They draw her attention inward so she spaces out for a second, surfacing to her daughter's anxious face.

"Isn't this fun, Mom?"

"Yes," Louise says.

Colette cocks her head sideways. "Yeah, sure, Mom. Right."

People buy a lot of lemonade. Maybe they're relieved they can do something in response to the hurricane, but, in the first hour, they polish off three dozen cookies.

Sara hovers over the kids, her bulk casting a shadow in her crinkled, linen dress. "What about arranging the cookies more attractively?" she says.

Louise watches her overlap them like flower petals. In the interests of symmetry, Sara swipes a chocolate cookie and takes a meditative bite. Emily swivels on her like a submarine scope.

"Let *them* do it," she says. "This is about the girls, Sara. I think we should let *them* decide."

Sara blinks, then takes a step back. Louise suddenly wants to go to her, show solidarity, but the sight of Colette pulls her away. Her daughter is doling out receipts.

"It's charity," Colette says. "A deduction."

A hiker with red, spiky hair laughs and says, "Where do *you* live?"

The sun tips over the highest point and falls faster on the other side. The hawk takes one more pass over the canyon, and the husbands arrive. They pull up in their luxury sedans. First Dave, who belongs to Emily, then Sara's, Sam.

Dave is made of coiled wire. A producer, he wears a Bluetooth to be always reachable, though it buzzes constantly so he's impossible to reach. The first time they met, Louise said, "One of my novels was made into a film," but the curtains came down in his eyes, and his face looked suddenly so hostile, so guarded, so—what does she want from me?—that Louise swore from that day on, she'd never look at him. Privately, though, she wondered if she did actually want something. And did it show?

Sam is a handsome Fred Flintstone in designer cords and a crisp, white shirt. Louise has a fantasy of being in a room, legs spread, with her husband and many men parading through. For some reason Sam—Sara's husband—is always in this room.

He smiles at her and sits down. "How's it going?"

"Good. Good."

"I think they're enjoying this," he says. "Emily certainly is."

"I never did this as a child," Louise says.

"No?" Sam gets up with a loose movement, shaking out a pants leg, and she realizes he's moved on. They all do this. Louise will be in the middle of a sentence, and Sam, or Dave, or Emily will start talking to someone else.

"Just look at you," he says now to Colette. "How much have you made?"

Colette does a quick calculation, lips moving. "Two hundred thirty-six dollars and twenty-six cents."

"Hey. That's good."

Dave steps closer. "What's that?"

Sam turns to him. "Two hundred and thirty-six dollars and change."

"Whoa, baby, but we can do better. Huh, Sam? Don't you think?"

Sam grins. "For a good cause? I bet we could."

A car pulls up to the gatehouse, and Dave calls to his daughter, "You're missing a sale! Don't lie down on the job! Get me another hundred and I'll triple it. For charity."

The girl jumps up and down. "Oh, Daddy! You will?"

"You bet your booty, baby cakes."

The hikers thin out. It's the dads' idea to move the action inside the gates. The lamps switch on. Here the landscaping comes right up to the curbs, the streets have been repaved. They're protected by an invisible safety net. The whole place is enclosed, so there's no fear from cars and missiles and things.

The girls run on ahead. The men stride after, energized. The women bring up the rear, lugging the lemonade cooler and cookie plates. When a mom or a child opens the door, the girls crowd forward. When it's a dad, the men take charge. The girls mill on the stoop while the men talk the talk Louise doesn't really understand.

"How much you got so far?"

"Two, three hundred, but Dave's doing matching funds."

"That right?"

"Yeah, whatever they get, times two."

"And then again, I'm doing whatever that is."

"Through the company?"

"Sure. Of course."

"Okay. One up on that."

Every once in a while, one of the girls runs back to the moms and fills them in—"The guy in the Tudor threw in more. And so did the basketball player—from the Lakers?—in the cul-de-sac."

They go up and down Avenue Ysidro, Bella Mare, Amalfi. The coolers are heavy; Sara polishes off extra cookies, and Emily doesn't even pipe up. When they finally get back to Emily's, the girls add up the take. Surrounded by piles of bills and heaps of coins, Colette sorts into a cash rack from an old Monopoly set, then writes a number on a scrap of paper, which she hands to Emily like a Price Waterhouse envelope.

Emily exhales slowly. "It looks like the kids made eight hundred on their own, which is great. After the dads pitched in, though, the numbers jumped."

"Yeah, like Terry Frank put up five large and got Universal to kick in a matching grant," Dave says. "And don't forget Dan Wegman. He ponied up ten grand real quick. He sure wasn't going to let that pass."

"Counting pledges, cash donations, and matching funds, try twenty-six thousand dollars," Emily says. "What a lesson for the kids. Democracy

at work." She touches Dave lightly on the sleeve, but he has to excuse himself because his Bluetooth blinks. "We should do a little ceremony. The kids should present a check. Louise knows that guy at the *Post*, so maybe we could get front page. Think ahead, ladies, this could be one for the college app."

Going home, Louise finds herself cranky and irritated. She and Miles live in a transition neighborhood two canyons over. She remembers the goats on the hill, some bright idea the Civic Association had to "go green" to crop the grass. They had to get rid of them when they ate Nancy Medina's pergola. Once upon a time her friend Joey had a big house in Connecticut with glass windows and animals—two dogs, three cats, two peacocks, and a goat. At night he used to bring everybody in but the goat. It stood there, staring in at them with wet brown eyes—you could see the mental process—wheels turning—the cats are in, dogs are in, people are in, even the fucking peacocks are in, everybody's in but me—and then this look came over its face, and it crashed through the window. There was blood and glass and bits of fur all over the place.

Theirs is a Spanish house on a quiet block behind the school. Remodels alternate with older houses with fifties crabgrass, ornamental topiary, metal wickets, lawn gnomes. Louise and Miles have tentative, unaffordable plans to expand. An architectural model is in the living room, its tiny windows and doors in painted balsa wood. One of Colette's favorite things is to get down on the floor with the model, scale herself to three inches, and go walking around. Sometimes when everybody's out of the house, Louise gets down on her knees and does it too.

Colette is full of cookies and lemonade, so Louise makes soup. She tells her daughter a story about a girl with green hair that's so complicated it puts her to sleep. Lying next to her, she tries to rise to the ceiling's Day-Glo solar system of planets and stars. And she listens for Miles.

Miles's job as an ER doc keeps him up all hours, so he's almost out by the time she gets to their room. She slips in behind him, pressing close. He smells like hot laundry.

"You awake?" she says.

"Sort of."

"We did a lemonade stand."

"Sweet."

"It wasn't. Emily had the idea to donate the money to the hurricane survivors. Twenty-six thousand dollars and change." She notices how she says Sam's phrase, "and change."

"No shit," Miles says, sleep still clinging to his voice. "Tell them to do one for us next time."

Louise tries to care less about the lemonade stand, but can't. "Dave, Sam, these guys in the development, you should have seen the pissing contest. This isn't good. This is fucked. I don't want Colette thinking that's what you can do on a Friday afternoon."

Miles turns over, arranging her in the crook of his arm. "Why? It's how the world works. A lesson in supply-side economics. 'You got a problem with that?'" He likes talking in Siciliano.

Louise extricates herself. She pulls on her robe.

"So where are we going now?" Miles says.

"I can't sleep."

"We could do it if you want..."

"No." Louise smiles in the dark and kisses him gently. "Is that all right?"

No answer. Sleep.

Louise checks on Colette. She lies like a baby, arms flung above her head. Louise imagines a cone of blue light around her, so she'll be safe, so they'll all be safe in this sleeping house, then goes downstairs.

The kitchen is so bright it makes the garden black. The palm fronds clatter in the wind. The bamboo by the gate is big and spread out, because this year Louise decided not to cut it back.

Something's there. Moving around. Two eyes catch the light from the inside and glow. Then disappear.

Louise gets to her feet. She stands for a long time. Then goes outside. The backyard is bare all the way to the hillside. One tall fig tree stands in the corner; otherwise, low flower borders and a few shrubs. The sky is deep violet. The hills, mauve. The sage shows as dark clumps. Far off, the ocean has a narrow rim of orange. Nights like this it smells of herbs and raw red earth, so different from the East Coast. Eucalyptus. Rosemary. Fennel. Clay. It still seems magic that she can step outside in her nightgown and bare feet and be in the wild. Telephone poles spike the sky. She can hear the hum of the traffic on Pacific Coast Highway, a low and constant vibration, as if all the cars run together into one streak of sound. The grass is wet from the sprinklers. The hem of her nightgown is soaked when she reaches the open gate. It creaks slightly as she pushes it open and walks through.

The lion stands about fifteen feet away. He is young. Maybe five feet. One hundred fifty pounds. His tail seems unnaturally long. The muscles bunch under the sleek hide. He picks up his paws delicately as he takes two steps toward her and stops.

At first she's conscious only of a strange hyperawareness. She's had cats all her life. She's *good* with cats. It makes her happy he is here, this wildness so close. It's suddenly thrilling that the Daves of the world, the Emilys and the Sams, haven't subdued and controlled everything, everything's not contained in these cubicles and boxes, and this big, powerful animal with the huge paws and clean fur comes in and among them at night. Louise finds she can focus on the most minute events in her body—her ribs swelling with each inhalation, the breeze in her hair, the knock of her heart, the saliva on the back of her tongue. A piece of information clicks into place. The Civic Association. Their goats cropping

the grass. Goats equal lion. Of course. It takes a full minute before it occurs to Louise to notice the tension in the lion's shoulders, how his ears are back, how his belly is so low it grazes the grass. His big, yellow eyes fix on her. The pupils contract. Everything goes empty and eerily silent, and then she is afraid. She searches for information, directives, instructions. Be big. Show him who's the boss. But these seem irrelevant. And untrue. She waves her arms.

"Ha!" she says.

The lion lowers onto its haunches.

She walks backwards slowly. "Go away!"

The lion takes her in. To him, she must be one of many things. Tree. Sky. Woman. Bird. Car.

Louise reaches the six-foot gate and backs through. She pulls it closed, relieved at having this solid, manmade barrier between them. The ground slopes down steeply into the yard. She forces herself not to react as a sharp stone digs into her bare foot. A tire squeal from Pacific Coast Highway. A blaring car horn. The lion lopes easily to the gate and clears it in one jump.

This didn't occur to her. Stupid. Of course.

The lion stands firmly planted, head lowered, pupils black slashes in a field of concentrated yellow. Eight feet. Seven. Six. The lion looks at her in that neutral way. He makes a low, huffing sound in his throat. His tail swishes back and forth.

She opens her mouth to scream, but nothing comes. She shuts her eyes. There is blood beneath her smooth skin, blood between her legs. She trembles. Her teeth click together. *Prey*. And she has wants, so many wants. To press herself against her husband's back, dance naked in the rain, eat bread with her child. The air changes slightly, displaced. A twig breaks. A leaf sifts to the ground. Wet fur. Meat. Leaves. Soil. The smell grows dense and sharp as something passes, just brushing her arm.

When she opens her eyes, the lion is gone.