

Killing Time

"The Zoo Story," high school,  
bad nerves, I was Peter, the rock,  
a well-meaning accidental murderer.  
My acting career lasted fifty minutes:  
Stanislavsky made no sense,  
I failed to rein instincts,  
and I scattered deliveries  
like a pitcher bathed in LSD.  
Butterflies ricocheted backstage;  
muffled coughs became laser insults;  
stage right staggered, then swallowed  
lines like an African desert.

Worse stage fright came those days  
when I saw dad; to get keys and cash  
I made up a world of softball  
and bowling leagues, of pals  
named Al and Butch. I, in fact,  
had to get over to Linda's house,  
She was black, older, and her volcanic mom  
cooked gumbo that scalded my innocence.  
Thank God experiments were in the air:  
I played the role of rapt pupil,  
Juliet to her campy Romeo,  
and learned how to dance, to duel  
and dine, to ignore wounds.  
Dad worried about the laughter  
in my grey, trophyless room.

(cont)

("Killing Time," cont., with break)

Luckless Linda came to opening night  
and in me--jacketed and hair greased back--  
she saw future husbands, mystery men  
flying back and forth  
between the two coasts, and wept  
at my staged epiphany: Men kill easily.  
She often calls now. She figures  
our two years means 1/20th of her life  
went for a drifter, an amateur actor  
and lover. Not that she's angry  
or lamenting--outside of Aspen,  
twice widowed, she lives off  
her husbands' drug royalties  
and rarely goes out. She sits around  
in men's underwear and drinks vodka  
and watches the moonlit skiers  
stab her backyard earth, acting  
as if they'll never fall or be cold.