Old Family Photo

A child might’ve taken it.

*She didn’t like
having her
picture taken.*

But no kids at the time.

He loved
to bust her chops.

Having it all ready.

Under the
table.

Her eating.

Film locked, flash fired up –

*One, two, three*

*Say cheese!*

Her glare back:

fixed, bold,
burned.
Holiday Cocktail Lounge

Just a regular night out.

Then some women walked in.

Late twenties, early thirties. Glanced around: no one else there except us and Stefan, the bartender.

(He didn’t own the place, the other way around.)

The women took off their coats, headed for the back room. Reappeared again up front for drinks.

My friends and I were quiet, waiting for our twenties to end (or begin).

Or for Stefan to close early, like he did every night.

He always drank too much and shouted at the jukebox for Nick Cave’s “I’ll Love You (Until the End of the World).”

(Soundtrack courtesy of Bono)

Stefan tried to match its baritone.

Legend had it a photo on the wall was a soccer team he played for.

Legend had it they made it to the World Cup.

Commotion: the women in the back moved the tables aside, added money to the jukebox.

Then passed an invitation – just for us: just for tonight.

We danced.

Brown Sugar, I Put a Spell on You, Let the Good Time’s Roll, Hard Day’s Night, Immigrant Song, Suffragette City, Heartbreak Hotel…

It went on. They were glamorous.

Got close. Then left. Settled tabs. Put coats back on.

Went out in the cold. We were by ourselves again.

With nothing left but the mirage.

And for Stefan to disintegrate.
Smith and 9th

The highway and steeple, luxury condos and more boxed-in affairs all stretch (even cramped offices, half their windows lit – or less) out their legs, surrounded at 8pm by blue – two deep, rich, different tones of it.
Joaquim Phoenix

dates a
cousin of
mine. She's
older, from
Ohio.

It's said
in the news
he's going
through something..

They stay at
an upscale
hotel, in
a room
on the
fortieth
floor. The stairs
are outside
the building
and wrap
around it.

I have
trouble
going up,
so does he.

All eyes
are on us.

My cousin
waits at the top,
looking down.

Just before
getting to
her, I fall.

It's exhilarating..

I'm no one
again.

There's milk
in the fridge.

I have no
fear of heights.

Joaquim
Phoenix
is no one to me, or I to him.
After a Friend’s Dinner

Car up ahead,
center lane,
juts over left.

It hears
the horn,
pulls back.

The damage, as they say,
is done.

We're about
to make love
with the
divider.

We brace for impact: my
girlfriend and me.

The wall's RIGHT THERE,
Then starts to recede.

One more blaze of the horn,
our driver finishes
the turn.

We're back in the rush again.
Hart Island

Was it bought with thirty pieces of silver?
The Italian Ambassador's

They wait
in the waiting room.

To see
the ambassador. Office
hours

nine-to-twelve during
the week, open
to the public

for visas; closed

on weekends. They
wait in the waiting
room. Sometimes

it's just her
attaché, or

secretary. If there's
business elsewhere: meetings

at the U.N., a conference
in Washington. Fleur-de-
lys on the carpets, lamps
with glass
shades (kept

low, but good
for reading).

They wait in the
waiting room.

The double-window

which lets out onto
the street

opened for the early
fall breeze. She's from Italy,
they think. There's
a picture
of her with the Pope.
Another
with a former
President and ex-Prime Minister.

They
all look so young
and comfortable
in the public sphere. It
wasn't taken
that long ago. They
wait in the
waiting room.

Her degrees

and awards, certificates — for excellence,
charitable work, attendance;

homemade tchotchkes
from kids and families

around the world. Pictures

of Africa — an internship,
more carefree
days. They

wait in the
waiting room.
Character (Not a Good One)

The room: a mess. Clothes on the floor, tape holding windows together, half-empty (or full) glasses lying around... the morning had no choice but to be nice, and let a big belch of storm cloud take over at noon.
Orlando

You’re not following me out
of the Brooklyn Publick House
but the Berkshires instead
in 1999, the night
your stepfather
was hit by lightning
in a fishing boat
on a lake in Orlando
casting off despite
storm warnings.

Are you thinking about it, too,
as the door opens. Your arms
on my shoulders, following
me down a trail, trial

laced with pitfalls – rocks, divots
clefs (the twelve years it’s been?)

at three or four in the morning.
Drinking Beer & Eating Oysters Alone in Malmö

I turn
the shells
face down, one
by one,
along the
edge of the
plate, the way
she does,
the way no
one else
I know
besides
her does.