

English III Summer Homework

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English III is a course where we will dig into texts and begin further analysis within and between texts. This analysis, coupled with extensive grammar discussion and usage, will eventually lead you to become a better writer! This means that you'll be doing a lot of reading, and then you will be writing about what you read. While you may not always feel confident in what you are writing, it is important that you put in the effort to attempt to succeed. While it's acceptable to not immediately understand something (in fact, it's expected), you are expected to work your butt off in order to understand it. It's ok if you don't know. You just don't know... yet.

In this packet, you'll find the following items:

1. Explanation of the essay you will be completing for your summer homework (page 2).
2. Reading comprehension questions (page 3).
3. An outline for your essay (page 4-6).

If you have questions, please come talk to me during our town hall next Monday, June 8th. Or come see me in room 205 before finals are completed. Finally, if you'd like to contact me over the summer, the best way to do so is via email. My email address is

celsik@goldercollegeprep.org

I D K...Yet! 

English III Summer Homework

2

Students will read the following sections from the short story “Nighthawks,” which comes from the collection of short stories *The Coast of Chicago* by Stuart Dybek.

- Laughter
- Everything
- Killing Time
- Insomnia
- Gold Coast
- Transport
- The River

After reading these texts, you will choose **two** short stories from above that share one of the following common themes or motifs:

- Isolation
- Lost love
- Becoming an adult
- Perseverance
- Longing for a change
- Giving up on dreams
- The power of silence
- Denying one’s reality
- **If you would like to choose a different theme or motif, you must get approval from Mr. Elsik**

Next, you will write an essay that explains **how** specific literary devices, such as characterization, imagery, mood, irony, setting, tone etc., develop your selected theme or motif. Use at least 2 different literary devices in your paper. Feel free to use more than 2 literary devices if you would like.

Here are the requirements for the essay:

- Typed, 12 point font, Times New Roman
- Double - spaced
- Underlined thesis statement
- Grammatically correct
- A minimum of 2 quotations from short story #1
- A minimum of 2 quotations from short story #2
- A link for each quote that explains what the author is saying about your theme or motif

Reading Comprehension Questions

- **Laughter**
 - When did the narrator and the girl hang out?
 - What verb tense is the story written in? Why is that important?
- **Everything**
 - Who called the narrator?
 - Why did she call?
 - Why isn't the narrator engaging the woman in conversation?
- **Killing Time**
 - Why did the narrator go to the Art Institute?
 - What paintings did the narrator look at at the Art Institute? What is the significance of these paintings?
- **Insomnia**
 - What does "insomnia" mean?
 - Describe the different people at the diner. What similarity do they have?
- **Gold Coast**
 - Where does this story take place?
 - What just happened between the 2 characters?
- **Transport**
 - Where does the kiss go in this story?
 - Who does the narrator drum for?
- **The River**
 - Who does that narrator think of?
 - Why is he thinking about them?
 - What does the narrator become at the end of the story? Why is this significant?

Paragraph Organizer

1. Introduction

a. Hook:

b. Overview:

c. Thesis:

2. Body Paragraph Structure:

Theme or motif: _____ Literary device: _____

b. Context:

c. Evidence:

d. Link: Make sure you explain the connection between your motif or theme and the literary device you have chosen!

e. Transition:

f. Context:

g. Evidence:

h. Link: Make sure you explain the connection between your motif or theme and the literary device you have chosen!

3. Body Paragraph Structure:

Theme or motif: _____ Literary device: _____

b. Context:

c. Evidence:

d. Link: Make sure you explain the connection between your motif or theme and the literary device you have chosen!

e. Transition:

f. Context:

g. Evidence:

h. Link: Make sure you explain the connection between your motif or theme and the literary device you have chosen!

4. Conclusion

a. Thesis:

b. Overview:

c. Hook:

Flashes of lightning traced their outlines. The boy could sense them moving along the street and wondered if tonight was the night for which he'd been summoned awake, when the silhouettes would finally come up the alley, past the guardian streetlight now swirling and sinking, and assemble below his window, looking up at his face pressed against the spattered pane, their eyes and mouths opened onto darkness like the centers of guitars.

Love, it's such a night, laced with running water, irreparable, riddled with a million leaks. A night shaped like a shadow thrown by your absence. Every crack trickles, every overhang drips. The screech of night-hawks has been replaced by the splash of rain. The rain falls from the height of streetlights. Each drop contains its own shattering blue bulb.

LAUGHTER

I knew a girl who laughed in her sleep. She had been in the States only a year and I wondered if being foreign didn't have something to do with her laughing that way. Her eyes were a gold-flecked green more suited to cats, and ringed with the longest lashes I'd ever seen. In the right light her half-lowered lashes threw small shadows across her face. She didn't look American yet. Once I woke her and asked what was so funny. She seemed confused and a little embarrassed, and I never asked her again.

We met at the ice cream factory where I worked the summer between high school and college. She was the first girl I was *serious* about. I felt too young to be serious—a feeling I kept secret.

She kept me a secret from her uncle Tassos.

Her uncle was the one who had brought her over and got her the job at the ice-cream factory. She worked on the bar tank line with the other, mostly foreign women, sitting before a conveyor belt and packing Popsicles, Fudgsicles, Creamsicles, and Dreamsicles into freezer cartons. At the end of the day her hands were stiff with cold and her fingers stained the colors of whatever flavors had been run.

Her uncle Tassos worked on the ore boats out of Calumet Harbor. He would be away for two-week runs, and then off work for five days straight. When he was back home the only place I would get to see her was at the factory. I was still living with my parents and began to feel ashamed for not having my own place to take her.

When Uncle Tassos left with the barges again—as safely off somewhere around Petoskey as if he'd sailed for Peloponnesus—she'd sneak me up to her one-room apartment that overlooked Halsted Street.

It was an old neighborhood that Mayor Daley, despite his campaign promises, was preparing to demolish to make way for a new university. But life went on that summer as it always had—daily newspapers printed in strange alphabets; nuts, cheeses, dried cod sold in the streets; the scent of crushed lemons from the bakery that made lemon ice; Greek music skirling from the restaurant downstairs. And once she'd let me in I wouldn't leave until morning, but sometimes, in the middle of the night, I'd have to get up and pace while the dark room filled with laughter.

EVERYTHING

A couple of months after he'd married Joan, the phone rang in the middle of the night. The phone was in the kitchen and seemed to ring through the dark apartment like an alarm. He had always been afraid of phone calls at that hour. They triggered a dread in him that something terrible had happened, and he almost believed that if he didn't answer, whatever catastrophe had occurred might be undone by morning. But this time he leapt to answer. It was better to get the news firsthand than to listen to his new wife answer the phone and then break into sobs.

"Hello," he said, trying to sound composed.

"Yellow. Guess who?"

"I know who."

"Guess what?"

"I give."

"I'm tripping on MDA."

"Oh."

"'Ecstasy,' you know, the 'Love Drug.' Whatsamatter?"

You don't read *Newsweek* and keep up?"

"My subscription ran out."

"It's a body rush. Incredibly erotic. I'm so horny—climbing the walls."

"Nice of you to call and let me know."

"It heightens memory, too. Hey, I'm still a little nuts about you. Is that Joanie flushing the toilet?"

"Yes."

"She probably wants to know who's on the phone."

"Exactly right."

"That's why you're talking to me in that funny flat voice. So quiet. Not saying my name. You didn't use to be such a monosyllabic type of guy. Well, at least say something."

"Like what?"

"Like what are you wearing? Cute little seersucker pajamas?"

"Look, I should hang up."

"You're supposed to talk people down when they're tripping. I could be in terrible trouble here. Remember that one time we did mushrooms? The night you said I turned into Cleopatra. You said it was the pinnacle."

"We were in college, for chrissake."

"I thought I'd try something like that one more time, you know, like they shout at the end of Basie's 'April in Paris'—'One more time!—a tribute to the old days. I liked myself better then. Liked you better, too.'"

"I don't want to be the one to hang up, okay?"

"You never did. Guess what I'm wearing? Guess how I look on the other end of this telephone line. Listen, I'll rub the phone down my body. See if you can hear . . . did you hear anything?"

"No."

"Well, press your ear against the receiver. You didn't hear that? You didn't hear hair? What part of my body do you think you're talking to right now? Say something soft and breathy. Blow warm air into the phone. Pretend you're a mad breather."

"It's late. You should go to sleep."

"Come over."

"I can't."

"Baby, come see me. Tell her it's a buddy with a flat tire."

"I can't."

"Baby, oh baby, baby, baby, baby, I need you so much tonight. Baby, you gotta fix my flat tire."

"It's 3 a.m."

"Please. Don't make me beg. Come over . . . we'll do *everything*."

"How many other people have you called besides me?"

"Only one."

KILLING TIME

Between job interviews, I'd wander around the Art Institute, killing time. The Art Institute was on the park side of Michigan Avenue, across the street from the towering office buildings in which the employment agencies were situated. It felt soothing to drift among the paintings. Several had begun to feel like old friends. Visiting them beat sitting over a lukewarm coffee in some greasy spoon, spending another afternoon studying not only the Want Ads, but the faces of the others at the counter who sat nursing their coffees as they grimly studied the Want Ads too. By now, I spotted their faces everywhere. I'd become aware of an invisible army armed with Want Ads, pounding the pavement, knocking on doors, hoping opportunity would answer. It was an army without the consolation of camaraderie. I'd learned to recognize its unconscious salutes, its uniforms and ranks and outposts—personnel offices, coffee shops, and stands of public phones—from which its lonely campaigns were launched. I'd been looking for a job for over a month and was beginning to feel desperate.

The Art Institute was my base of operations. Its public phones were usually empty, and its restroom was modern and clean with a full-length mirror perfect for last minute inspections before heading out on an interview.

My first couple weeks of job hunting, I'd hung out at the Public Library. Unlike the Art Institute, admission to the library was free. But the longer I'd gone without work, the more an old dread crept back into me: a feeling from high school, a memory of dreary Saturdays

when, loaded with note cards for research papers that I was hopelessly behind on, I'd enter the Public Library only to end up wandering around lost, wasting the day. I remembered how, the summer before I'd started high school, my father had insisted that I spend a week at the library researching professions and the biographies of successful tycoons so that I'd have some sense of direction during my high school years and not live up to his nickname for me: The Dreamer. And I recalled how rather than doing what he'd asked, I'd only pretended to go to the library and instead had spent the money he'd given me at movies and record shops. Now, his dire predictions seemed to be coming true. My money was running out; I couldn't find a job. After a week of hanging around the library, I began to recognize the same set of regulars—people who carried their possessions in bags, or wore them all at once, who seemed to be living in the library stacks. Soon, I expected them to begin winking at me, giving me secret greetings I didn't want to recognize.

The public phones in the Public Library were always busy. In the old restrooms fluids pooled on the cracked terrazzo, and the homeless hung around inside, smoking, sometimes washing out their clothes in the plugged sinks. Even on the brightest days I began to notice the gray, gloomy cast of the marble corridors and flights of stairs. The reading rooms, dominated by the glow of green-shaded desk lamps, seemed worn as old railroad stations. There was a smell of musty pulp, of thumbed cloth covers, of too much print. At the long reading tables I could spot the displaced and dispossessed drowning over enormous tomes or reading aloud to themselves as

if engaged in debates with the complete works of Marx and Engels, Spengler, Tolstoy, Schopenhauer, while outside the windows cooing pigeons paced back and forth along the crusted slate ledges.

The Art Institute, by contrast, seemed flooded with light—not merely the light streaming from skylights or the track lights focused on paintings. The paintings themselves appeared to throw an internal light the way that oaks and maples seem aflame in fall, from the inside out. My favorite painters were the Impressionists. On days when it seemed as if I'd never find a job, when I was feeling desperate, I'd stand before their paintings and stare at them until it seemed I could almost step into their world, that if I closed my eyes and then opened them I'd find myself waking under the red coverlet in Van Gogh's *Bedroom at Arles*. I would open my eyes in a room of pastel light to find that one of Degas' dancers, who had been sleeping beside me, had discarded her chemise and was stepping into her morning bath. Or I would awaken already strolling without a care in and out of patches of precise shade, one of the Sunday crowd along the river on the island of *La Grande Jatte*. I wanted to be somewhere else, to be a dark blur waiting to board the Normandy train in the smoke-smudged *Saint-Lazare* station; I wanted a ticket out of my life, to be riding a train whose windows slid past a landscape of grain stacks in winter fields. It might be taking me to the beach of *Saint-Adresse* where the fishing boats have been drawn up onto the sand and a man with a telescope and his daughter by his side looks out to sea, or to *Pourville* where the wind gusts along the cliff walk and a woman opens an orange parasol while white sails

hardly taller than the white-capped waves pitch on the blue-green sea.

Yes, I would always end my walk through the paintings, standing before the diner in Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks*. Perhaps I needed its darkness to balance the radiance of the other paintings. It was night in Hopper's painting; the diner illuminated the dark city corner with a stark light it didn't seem capable of throwing on its own. Three customers sat at the counter as if waiting, not for something to begin, but rather to end, and I knew how effortless it would be to open my eyes and find myself waiting there, too.

INSOMNIA

There is an all-night diner to which, sooner or later, insomniacs find their way. In winter, when snow drifts over curbs, they cross the trampled intersections until they come upon footprints that perfectly fit their shoes and lead them there. On nights like this in summer, the diner's lighted corner draws them to its otherwise dark neighborhood like moths.

They come from all over the city and beyond—from farm towns in Ohio, Iowa, and Indiana, crossing the unlit prairie, arriving at vacant train stations and bus terminals, then making their way toward that illuminated corner as if it's what they left home to find—a joint that asks no questions and never closes, a place to sit awhile for the price of a cup of coffee.

From the size of the two nickel-plated urns, the place must serve a lot of coffee. And yet it looks almost deserted now—only a couple, stretching out the night, at one end of the counter, and Ray, the blond counterman, bending to rinse out a cup, and a guy in a hat sitting alone with his back to the window. It never gets crowded. They file in and out—the night shift, cabbies, drunks, sometimes a cop, loners mostly—there's never telling who might step through the door.

Earlier this evening, when most of the stools were taken, a woman in heels and a summer dress stopped outside and stood peering in as if looking for someone. At least it seemed that way at first, before it became clear that she'd only stopped to fix her makeup in the reflection of the plate glass. There were mostly men at

the counter, and they pretended not to watch as she stroked a comb through her hair. She seemed so unconscious of their presence that watching her would have been like spying on a woman before her own bedroom mirror. Yet, though they didn't stare, the men on the other side of the glass wondered about her; they wondered who it was she had stopped to make herself still prettier for, or if she'd just been with someone and was on her way back to someone else. When she stepped away from the window, the reflection of the lipstick she'd applied seemed to remain hovering on the glass like the impression of a kiss. The men in the diner pretended to ignore this too, although in its way the reflected kiss was no less miraculous than the tears rolling down the cheeks of a parish church's plaster Virgin, that crowds will line up for blocks to see. The woman stepped beyond the light of the diner and disappeared down a street of shadowy windows. After a while, the reflected kiss disappeared too—who knows where—simply dissolving into darkness, or perhaps reappearing blocks away on the glass door of a corner phone booth, where an AWOL soldier named Choco, disoriented by grief as if it were a drug, has wedged inside with his conga drum because he has nowhere else to go. He sits dazed, as if waiting for an oracle to call, and doesn't notice the kiss on the glass door among the grafted lipsticked initials and eyebrow-penciled numbers. And when he begins to beat the booth, his open palm becoming a bloody handprint on cracked glass, the kiss vanishes again. Perhaps the kiss crosses the city, riding the blurred window of a subway, or of a cab running red lights down a boulevard of black glass....

That couple, stretching out the night at the end of the counter, has been in here before. They sit side by side like lovers, and yet there's something detached enough about them so that they could pass for strangers. It might be the way they sit staring ahead rather than looking at each other, or that their hands on the counter-top don't quite touch, but it's passion, not indifference, that is responsible for that. Tonight, at this late hour, they've wandered in feeling empty, a little drained by the mutual obsession that keeps them awake. The insomnia they share is the insomnia of desire. Walking here along deserted streets, they noticed this neighborhood of shadowy windows was missing a moon, and so they began to make up a moon between them: solid as a cue ball; translucent and webbed with fine cracks, like bone china; cloudy, the bleached white of a bra tumbling in a dryer. Now, under a fluorescence that makes her arms appear too bare and her dress shimmer from rose to salmon to shades of red for which there's no approximation, they've fallen silent. He's smoking. She dreamily studies a matchbook from some other place where they sat like this together killing time.

And Ray, he's been working here long enough to seem like part of the decor. The white of his uniform intensifies the lighting. He keeps the coffee urns gleaming and the counter swabbed. The cocky angle of the white paper cap perched on his blond head makes him look like a kid, but he's older than people take him for; friendly, but as much a loner as anyone he serves. Working nights might seem to grant him an immunity from insomnia, but job or not, he's here like the rest of them, awake. What he does during the day is anybody's guess.

He disappears behind one of those shadowed, black, upper-story windows, draws the shade, and the rising sun beats it gold. The restless sound of traffic carries up to him from the street. Perhaps it's something other than insomnia, to lie listening to children yelling as if they've re-created light; to try to dream, but succeed only in remembering; to toss and sweat in a dirty paste of sheets, while the drone of a ball game is gradually replaced by the buzz of a fly—a fly buzzing like the empty frequencies between stations as its shadow grows enormous between the shade and windowpane. Is it insomnia for a man to wad his ears with the cotton from a pill bottle, to mask his eyes with blinders, and press a stale pillow over his head, praying for another day to burn down, so he can wake into another night?

The guy with his back to the window has been sitting there a long time nursing his mug of java. Ray, stooping to rinse out a cup, avoids looking in his direction. There's something about the way the guy's hat shadows his face, about his shoulders, hunched as if braced for another blow, about his eyes plumbing the depths of his coffee, that discourages conversation. It would be like trying to make small talk with a hit man. Besides, the guy has been mumbling to himself, his mouth moving as if chewing something too bitter to swallow. If he's thinking about women, he must be counting up all the times they've cheated on him. If he's thinking about work, he's adding up the brutal ways of saying they're taking your job: *fired, canned, sacked, axed, terminated*. He's dwelling on the *lost* in "lost his job"—*lost*—as if the eight hours of sweat at the heart of each day could be misplaced. Why call it *lost* if it's been taken from you? *Lost* is a lie,

and without such lies the streets would be crowded with assassins. But his incessant tallies, his lists of lies and grievances, his roll call of betrayals, have added up to nothing but insomnia. Insomnia is a private score he has, so far, settled only with himself; it's the time he does each night for his own betrayals, his own petty offenses of failure, hard luck, desperation. And insomnia is also the threat of unnamed crimes still more menacing. After dark, he carries it beside his heart, concealed like a weapon.

And finally, what about the empty water glass set on the counter before an empty stool? No tip beside it. Not that anyone but Ray paid any attention to the person who sat there and ordered merely water. Only Ray recognized immediately that a sleepwalker had entered the diner. They wander in occasionally, and Ray has learned to recognize their habits—how they order nothing but water, and never tip. At first, Ray would serve them only what they asked for, but now sometimes he buys them a coffee on the house. He isn't sure himself whether he does it out of kindness or cruelty. He'd like to think it's kindness, that if it were he who was wandering the streets asleep, he'd be grateful to anyone who tried to help. But Ray's not certain. He's heard it can be dangerous to tamper with sleepwalkers, that their souls can leave their bodies, and so Ray always braces for that moment when the steaming coffee first touches their lips and they wake.

The sleepwalker's eyes roll open. He glances around wildly as if he doesn't realize what's happened or even that he is awake. Fluorescence scalds his pupils as the coffee did his lips. The diner seems frozen in the blinding

pop of a flashbulb that refuses to fade—a glare as stark as the illumination of certain dreams, brighter for being framed by night. In that paralyzing light, the sleepwalker sees the lovers at the other end of the counter, with their bleached-out, hawk-featured faces staring straight ahead as if they're in a trance; and Ray, glancing away, caught in the act of dunking a cup under the counter as if disposing of evidence; and the hit man in the shadowy hat, mumbling to no one. Stunned as he is, the sleepwalker can feel the paralysis of the diner drawing him in as if he belongs there too. With a half spin, he shoves away from the counter, rises from his stool, and, leaving no tip, staggers for the door. And as he pushes out, something snaps him fully awake—maybe the night air, or the slap of a patty hitting the grill, or his soul returning to him from shadows. He stands outside the diner, within the perimeter of its aura, and stares down a street of dark windows, wondering which way he's come from, which way to go. In the diner's almost phosphorescent glow, the deserted street looks like pavement might on the moon. Above the roofs, he can see the moon the lovers at the end of the counter left behind, no longer newly minted, surrounded by the same aura as the diner, waiting faithfully like a dog for them to reemerge. In their absence, it's gone through phases, diminishing like a stalled traffic light in the rearview mirror of a taxi. Now it's less than a crescent, less than a smudged thumbprint of mother-of-pearl—only a shimmer like the glint of neon on the surface of a cup of black coffee. The bitter taste of coffee still burns his tongue. He can feel his nerves jumping and his heart starting to race as if that mere sip in the diner has stoked

him with the stamina of caffeine, and converted him from sleepwalking to insomnia. From somewhere in the sky above the diner, he hears the screech of a single nighthawk, and suddenly he's happy. It seems to him enough to simply be awake like that bird soaring in the darkness that sleepers have abandoned, to be walking away from the lighted corner, down the empty, silent streets they've left to him, whistling as he passes dark windows, not sure where he's going, and in no hurry to find out. It's the middle of the night, and tomorrow seems as if it's still 93 million miles away.

GOLD COAST

They wake simultaneously in a hotel room on the thirty-seventh floor, neither of them sure of the time, both still a little drunk, a little numb from the silence that has grown between them.

"Look at the sky! Look at the light!" she exclaims.

He's already seen it—how could he not? The enormous bed faces a wall of windows. They've left the drapes open. The wall of windows now seems like a wall of sky, almost indigo, shot with iridescence as if veins of a newly-discovered precious mineral have been exposed. It isn't dawn yet. It's still a gradation of night, but night with tomorrow already luminous behind it like the silver behind the glass of a cobalt mirror.

He can see the sky reflected in the windows of all the surrounding buildings that tower up to form the glass cliffs of the gold coast they've drifted to. He knows that every city has such strips, and he distrusts them. No matter how authentically elegant they might appear, he thinks of them as illusory, removed from the real life of cities, as places that are really no place, reflections floating like illuminated scum on the surface of a river. He remembers how, as teenagers, he and a buddy spent their nights exploring the gold coast in the city they'd grown up in, and the mixture of awe and contempt they'd felt toward it.

He no longer feels superior to gold coasts. He wonders how many of his fellow sleepers are sitting up as he is, silently peering out of highrise rooms in which the drapes have been drawn open on tremendous win-

dows, windows for giants, scaled to encompass the winking horizon of the city. He both envies those still sleeping peacefully and pities them for missing this nameless, early sky which he knows already will be more unforgettable than any dawn he's ever seen. He wonders which of those two emotions the future will reveal as the more accurate. Once, shortly after they'd become lovers, she told him, "I'm not sure if meeting you has been the most lucky or unlucky thing that's ever happened to me."

He had laughed.

"I wasn't kidding," she said.

"I know," he said. "I'm only laughing because that's exactly what I was thinking about meeting you."

"See. Maybe that's what happens when it's fate. One always feels what the other is feeling, at the same time, together." She laughed too.

"Kind of emotional telepathy, eh?"

"'Emotional' makes it sound too *glamular*," she said, rolling her eyes, speaking in the teasing way she had that made for private jokes between them. "I'm not talking about something in the *glands*; I'm talking about something in the stars."

Now, beside him in bed, she whispers, "Why did we have to see this together?" It isn't said cruelly. He understands what she means. She means they've seen this unsuspected sky only because of each other; that it's something more between them to remember. And he knows that he doesn't need to answer, that it's as if he's merely overheard her speaking to herself, almost as if he isn't there any longer, as if she's awakened alone, at an unknown hour, along a gold coast.

TRANSPORT

A kiss crosses the city. It rides a glass streetcar that showers blue, electric sparks along the ghost of a track—a track paved over in childhood—the line that she and her mother used to take downtown.

A kiss crosses the city, revolves through a lobby door into a rainy night, catches a cab along a boulevard of black glass, and, running red lights, dissolves behind the open fans of wiper blades.

Rain spirals colorlessly out of the dark, darkens all it touches and makes it gleam.

Her kiss crosses the city, enters a subway tunnel that descends at this deserted hour like a channel through an underground world. It's timeless there, always night, as if the planet doesn't turn below the street. At the mouth of the station stands a kid who's gone AWOL and now has nowhere else to go, a young conga drummer, a *conquero*, wearing a fatigue jacket and beating his drum. He has the pigeons up past their bedtime doing the mambo. He leaves his cap of small change behind him on the pavement and steps onto an escalator that carries him down in time to the tock of his drum. The more fervently the *conquero* drums, the deeper the escalator conveys him. He has it doing a rumba, a cha-cha, a *guanguanco*, and finally, possessed, unable to fold back upon itself, the escalator becomes a staircase flowing like quicksilver, a shimmering waterfall, an anaconda slithering through the kingdom of sleep. It will transport him deeper than sleep, deeper than dreams, than nightmares, than the nod of junkies, than comas,

until he steps off onto the platform where the newly dead, their souls still shaped like their bodies, mill about in confusion, waiting to be taken to their next destination.

"Is anyone in charge here?" the *congaero* asks, the way a foreigner in a city might seek directions. Despite the mob of souls, his voice echoes as if he's called into a void. He drums now to invoke whatever spirit governs this place, a beat so compelling that the arrhythmic dead begin to sway as if they feel the accompaniment of their own hearts again.

"*Iku la tigwa un bai bai*," he chants over his drumbeat, magic words in an ancient tongue that, he's been taught, will beckon the *iku*, his dead ancestors, who might intercede for him. But the only response is the hollow silence that his drum continues to punctuate.

The loss of the woman he has descended here to find has taught him that eternity is not a presence, but an absence. His drum shapes silence into time, keeping time where there is none to keep. Time is his song and his power. Drafts from the tunnels swirl about him. In spite of the bone-deep dampness, he's begun to sweat. Sweat, impossible here as tears, patters the drumskin that he leans above with his eyes closed and drumming hands nearly invisible.

The dead file by dancing jerkily like marionettes, but he doesn't notice. They stream around him like a rush-hour crowd past a street musician, a musician so absorbed in his intricate rhythms that he's forgotten the street, and worse, has forgotten how dangerous losing one's street sense can be. Possessed by his own drumming, he's become infused with forgetfulness. He has forgotten to drum in supplication to whatever spirit governs this

place. He has forgotten to drum for the *iku*. He has forgotten to dedicate his drumming to his patron saint and guardian, Ellegua, whose necklace of sacred cowrie shells he wears under his fatigue jacket, entangled with his dog tags.

It is for Ellegua, the trickster, Master of Doors and Crossroads, that he should be drumming. Instead, he now drums solely for his lost love, the girl, who, legends say, falls endlessly. One of her perfumed, black nylons is knotted around his head like a sweatband. He has refused to allow his longing for her to turn to grief. The rhythm he weaves for her has never been played before—a slap and swipe of fingertips and palms on the drumskin that evokes the sounds their sweating bodies made against one another. Its ebb and flow is like the lilt of a melody.

His drum song is amplified by the tunnels. Its echoes return delayed almost as if someone far off is at last responding. His *conga* answers its own echoes. His blurred hands pound still faster and the echoes multiply, first, into a trio of sacred *bata* drummers, and then into a corps of drummers. He disperses his drum corps in search of her. Their frenzied drumming reverberates down every tunnel as if time is pulsing through the underground like blood, and finally, still dazed, she steps summoned from shadow.

He leads her back from the underground. She follows each beat of his *conga* as if retracing the footprints of a complicated dance step. The way they walk to the rhythm makes it look as if their hips are leading them. Death has not disfigured her beauty, and yet she wears her youthfulness like a mask. Beneath it, her eyes seem glazed, gazing inward as if completely self-absorbed in

her still new, utter lack of self. She is serene and silent as he's never seen her. What's been done to you already? he wants to cry, but says nothing. Having glanced at her once, he can't look back at her again until they have returned to the world of sunlight and substance—a world where sparrows twitter in the sapling that has insisted on sprouting from the rubble of a vacant lot, and the only shadows are those of green awnings unfurled above stands of fruits and flowers.

Even in high heels, she floats so lightly that her footfalls aren't audible above the scurrying of rats. Yet, he can't look back to be sure she is following, perhaps because with each step her renunciation of death makes her more terrifyingly beautiful. Or perhaps he doesn't dare to meet her inwardly gazing eyes for fear they will distract him from the steady, urgent domination of his beat. If his faith in his power to keep time here in the confines of eternity is shaken and his beat disrupted for even a moment they will both be lost.

Think only of light, little dove, he wishes to tell her. Open your memory as if you've just awakened and are slowly drawing a window shade up on noon. You'll return to who you were that moment when I first saw you standing in a doorway, sunlight streaming through your dress, illuminating your legs, the lace petals of your underclothes. In broad daylight, I could see the shadows of your breasts as if my eyes had special power.

But when they reach the knot of tunnels, the confluence of steel and slime where subway track and sewers interconnect, he stops. Still drumming, he stands otherwise motionless at the junction where sinkholes bottom

out, and dry wells, abandoned mine shafts, and caverns intersect, then burrow off in all directions. The corridors are dark, a labyrinth of catacombs dropping into chasms and black canyons. His drumbeats collide with blind alleys and dead ends, and the cacophony of so many ricocheting echoes overwhelms him. Suddenly, his hands are confused, he's not aware at first, that they've dropped silently to his sides. The drumming continues without him—incessant, chaotic, shattering time rather than keeping it. Where is his guardian, Ellegua, Master of Crossroads, who should have been his guide? If one's patron saint is a trickster, must his blessing be a trick? He looks back to tell her he's lost, but she's no longer there behind him. And when he turns again, she is standing before him as if she has been leading them, as if she is the one who has led them here. He follows her now, his drum dragging behind him, his eyes on her back as they move off deeper into the twisting passageways. Slowly, he begins to realize that from the start he has not been the one who has done the summoning.

The kiss, blurred on the window of a subway car, rockets by them down a tunnel lit by cobalt switches. The tunnel walls are stained with seepage where the train crosses beneath the river. The conductor's voice of rattling static calls out the stops where memories disembark and passion and desire are left behind. The walls of the stations the train rushes by are graffitied with names, dates, and epitaphs. The train hurtles past the station where those who died before their time now stand patiently waiting, and past the station of those who waited too long to die. It passes the station of those who

died for love, and the jammed station of those who died for lack of love. A cavalcade of shadows open their eyes an instant and reach out to touch the kiss, to catch it on their extended fingertips—fingertips from which the prints have vanished—but the train is already gone, leaving them behind. Tonight, there's no stopping for loneliness or grief. The third rail, stretched thin, tuned like the string of a violin, senses the ineffable weight of the kiss and seems to shoot forward. Charged with current, the third rail does not belong to the kingdom of the dead, and the kiss follows its path as if tracing a silver thread out of a maze.

A kiss crosses the city. It travels along streets named for coasts—North Shore, Lakeside, Waveland, Surf—that echo as if paved with wet tile. Above the streetlights, nighthawks wheel, yiping like gulls. Beneath windowsills, the shadowy mark of the last tide fades like an impression of elastic on a bare waist.

A kiss crosses the city, floating facedown like a reflection over the dreamers gazing up from a neighborhood of flooded basements and attics. Behind grated shop windows, the mannequins are mermaids; each night they reenter the sea as if drawing a zipper down the spine of a blue-green gown.

Her kiss crosses the city along a bridge arched like the bluest note of a saxophone, an unfinished bridge extending out over a night sea of sweet water. The beacon revolving at its end may be the dome of a squad car or the lantern of a fisherman. Trailing less shadow than a fish, her kiss slips undetected past lamps, past the flashlights of night watchmen, past

gates, alarms, curfews. Not even the lips it's meant for feel the secret entry of her tongue, the scrape of her teeth, or, when she pulls away, the clinging thread of briny spit.

THE RIVER

In the rain, the alley becomes a river that winds through sleepers. Lovers listen to it flow through the dark—or so a man unable to sleep imagines. He can almost hear the river too, although he knows that listening for it may merely be a way of occupying his mind, which should be dreaming. There may be no lovers at all. Even if there are, they may be asleep with mouths opened and backs turned to each other.

It wouldn't be the first time he's measured his life by imagining lovers. He remembers, on a morning when he was younger, standing at the window of the copy room in the high-rise office building in which he worked, and gazing across the busy avenue at the shade-drawn windows of an old hotel that still retained its elegance. Even now, he recalls the surprising rush of emotions when it occurred to him as if he could sense it that, while he stood listening to the clatter of Xerox machines, lovers were waking just across the street. Perhaps he'd only imagined the lovers then as well, but at that moment their presence behind the shade-drawn windows seemed so palpable that his own life felt insubstantial beside it, and he was filled with an ache for something he couldn't name but knew was missing. If they were only a daydream, then it was the kind of daydream that sometimes precedes a revelation. That was the morning he'd become certain that he wasn't right for an office job and needed to change the direction of his life while there was still time. A week later, he had quit and returned to school.

Tonight, he senses their presence again. He'd rather

feel the presence of lovers, imaginary though they may be than the absence of the woman he's separated from. If only for a night, they're a respite from the conversation he carries on without her, addressing her as if she can hear him. The lovers are silent. They lie listening to the river, and with his eyes closed he can almost hear it as they must: a high-pitched echo of sewers, a sound of darkness laced with flowing water. Every crack trickles, every overhang drips. Each drop encases its own separate note, the way each drop engulfs its own blue pearl of light.

Between wakefulness and dreaming, with his eyes closed he can see the light reflected by the falling river of rain: fogged streetlamps and taillights streaked along the Outer Drive, a downtown of dimmed office buildings and glowing hotel lobbies, acetylene sparking behind blue factory windows, racks of vigil candles in the cathedral, always kept open, across the street from the neon-lit bus terminal. If he were to rise and walk along the river, he'd see the shades raised and curtains parted, and find himself in a neighborhood where the dark buildings, as he's always suspected, are populated by lovers. Their silhouettes stand undressing, framed in windows, naked and enigmatic like the lovers on a tarot card—men and women, men and men, women and women, embracing. Lovers in the present appear superimposed over lovers from the past so that it's impossible for him to tell who is a shadow of whom. The rooms, parked cars, all the sites of their private histories, glimmer as if their memories have become luminous as spirits. Even the loners are visible beneath single bulbs, appraising their desire in mirrors. The El clatters by above the roofs, its lighted windows like a strip of blue movie.

Nearly asleep, the man listens to the clatter of the El train, fading over viaducts, merging, as it grows distant, with the sounds of sporadic traffic and occasional sirens, all swept along together in the rush of the river. Listening to the river is another way of thinking about the woman. He's drifting on a flood of night thoughts—thoughts he may try to dismiss in daylight, the way dreams are renounced and forgotten, but his restless nights have begun to inform his days. Almost dreaming, with the river flowing beside his ear, he understands why the lovers have been summoned: because the memory of the woman is becoming a shadow, one he carries like a secret, close to his heart; because beside this memory he has grown insubstantial. It draws him along behind it like a shadow—a shadow of a shadow. It has made him dark and incomprehensible even to himself. The lovers from the present have appeared, as they did when he was younger, to remind him that there is only so much time to change the direction of a life. The lovers from the past have appeared because it may already be too late, because it may be time to release his memories so that they can begin to assume a life of their own.

And what about the memory of the boy left at the window, staring out past his own spattered reflection? The boy could disappear behind a single breath fogged on the glass, then wiped away. The room has fallen asleep behind him; the bed, without his weight, is light enough to levitate. Downstairs, the Ukrainian kid, a maestro now, has begun to fiddle a nocturne to pacify the dead. Across the alley, prayers rise like an attar of roses from a basement flat. Love, rain has replaced

nighthawks. It drums on the helmet of a blue light. Each drop contains its own blue bulb, and when they shatter they collect into a blue river that continues to gleam. The river, the same river sweeping them both away, is all that connects the boy and the man. It flows through the inland city, down streets it submerges, to the slick highways that bank a black sea of prairie. It empties by the rivers where the rusty barges are moored along the ghostly coastline. From his window overlooking the alley that has become a river, the boy can see this. He can see the blue of that single bulb diffused in the sheen of breakwaters and distant winks of pumping stations, in the vague outlines of freighters far out on what, come morning, will be a horizon. He could glimpse the future passing, reflected in the current, if he weren't watching the streetlight slowly sinking as it swirls into the vortex of a sewer, if he weren't still waiting for the silhouettes to come for him. He doesn't realize—he won't ever know—that, like them, he's become a shadow.