

LOVE AS A POSTSCRIPT

JOSHUA BUTTS

Envious of someone's *Sketches of Spain*
I hear playing in the next building
I wonder how then to get through the day.
I get lazy, check email, then walk,
taking pictures of trees, power lines, road signs.
I walk past Bellows Lane and end up in town.
The pool is empty. The graveyard is full.
There's a grave for one Grace Happy.
At the Landau Grill a daughter and mother do life insurance:
"Mom, you have to have it. When you die
I won't be able to bury you."
A server puts a loaf of bread between them.
The daughter is poised over her wings and a pint
of regional beer. For the mother
it's clam chowder and a small Budweiser.
If it had been Italy, it would have been a Peroni
and I wouldn't have ordered a hamburger.
The mother gives a silent refusal. Trucks and cars pass
and I try to think like a cop, who would I pull over?
Last week a man set a barn fire
before robbing a bank and leaving a stolen dark
green Honda still running on Tanglewood.
My first day in town, I thought the law—local, sheriff, state—

would be looking for me driving to buy groceries.
There they were, parked under a canopy field line, car-to-car talking.
So I reverse it. Play it. Look at that gray-beard
with the load of car parts, or the kid, seventeen,
drumming the dash of his dark green Honda
with the tied-down trunk. That's just a *little* paranoia.
There's my great-grandfather in the Thirties not wanting
everyone to go in the car, so the family wouldn't all be killed at once.
That's just fear. That's just real fear, not even paranoia. But then
one day, out in the garage, escaping the family eye
the same man was able to fire his gun. Is that a change of plans,
a contradiction? Is that just going through with it?
The bank robber was clearly prepared to risk
much more than riding to town, buying groceries.
At lunch there was even a bit of risk. Out in the sun
people were drinking water and the fry grease needed changed.
The burger was under-seasoned, a non-meal then.
And there was a place on my glass that I remembered
not to touch. With a napkin I'd wiped an eyelash away.
And the daughter's pleading carried on:
"You are not thinking about Josh and me.
You have to. If you die I cannot bury you."
The mother had a tattoo—I'd noticed it as they sat down:
"Josh & Heather / P.S. / ♥ I Love You."