

Never such innocence again

by STEVEN McORMOND

I

While friends laughed and drank by bonfire
she walked into woods to urinate, was buttoning Levi's
when they cornered her, closed in, with laughs
like growls of animals. Whispered: Slut and whore
and come on baby, fuck me. Their words, the forking tongue
the fist in the face. Too frightened to scream,
she was creature caught in headlights, Prey
mesmerized by the serpent's eye. No escaping
the man-hard hands hooking for soft places
of her body, thighs and breasts and vagina

She tells this story. Says man and woman will never
be equal because man will always be the stronger...
she could not fight them. Will not let me hold her

II

I know women's anger: I want to hunt the hunters

take their heads off with old Reggie Jackson
Little League bat. Want to trap them,
stretch the fear out like a rubber band, snap it
in their eyes

I know women's anger. But can they know my shame?
My sex, my strength, become stiff fingers
groping out of darkness. Become a young woman's
worst nightmare. I curse every man, I implicate myself
in their crime, because I have watched pornographic movies
because to have left the room would have meant losing face
among brothers. Because I have been a man of wolfish eye
Because I have looked at a woman and seen only the flesh

In nightmares, I become those boys circling in woods
violating other women their minds call whore,
bruising finger marks in arms of wives.

I am too much my father's son,
too much every father's son
Pretending the rhetoric of feminism
lying and believing myself

In the pit of my nightmare

I am just another cheap manipulator
with designs on the woman I hold
Just another patriarch
thirsting head

