

Monologue from
Work in Progress

LEE

It's a Sixty-three fire engine cherry-topped red Mustang convertible. And the top don't work 'cause Johnny solders its soft vinyl ~~top~~ hard against metal. He bought it in Dallas, you know, coupla months before JFK ate them bullets and the open air just didn't feel right to him afterwards. Johnny's little girl strapped in tight, a back seat baby, her daddy's such a careful driver, and he can't see enough of her in his rear-view mirror, tip-top of a pony tail, taut red rubber band riding high atop her bright blonde hair.

Eight hundred bucks Johnny says, take it off my hands Lee, can't see my baby in the back seat when I'm driving, it's a matter of protection, I got to buy me and my girl a vehicle with a right strong roof, he says, I can't stop the sky, all that sunshine, seeping through this soft top.

And I got certain responsibilities, now it's mine, got to fetch Johnny's baby girl from school, three-o'clock sharp, park tight against that curb, don't want her to have to step into some gutter to get to me, she's got feet that were born to tread on grass, and I get there fifteen minutes early, grocery bags packed tight and high beside me. Watch out for her Lee, keep your eye on the sixth floor window, Johnny says. And I do. And all at once she's there, at that window, and the hundred other baby girls flood into focus, but that taut red rubber band rides higher than the rest and I follow its progress down the stairs bob bob bobbing into view.

She's wearing school shoes, little man shoes, heavy and black, and her laces are undone, and I'm outside my Mustang now, holding open that door for her, and she's running towards me, but her laces are undone and she's got this half-open Mars bar clutched in her baby-soft fist, tiny teeth marks in mouth-melted chocolate, the hair on the back of my neck rises, a soft buzz, that electric current running from head to toe, and her laces, undone, and I got to-- I want to-- keep an eye on her, Lee, watch out for her. And she's with me now, the open car door, the front seat bent forward for her to climb into the back, but she don't wanna ride in the back seat today, I only ride in back seats when my daddy's driving, she whispers, all angel cadence, chocolate breath.