

## AN INHUMAN RIVAL

### Third Shot

“I think I’ll try another  
kind of life,” I said mildly,

shouldering my load — light,  
I wouldn't carry much.

They brought me a dog then,  
a puppy

for companionship, protection —  
you know, those things we need. They . . .

“Thank you,” I said,  
“That was nice.”

Shot it twice between the eyes  
and left

with only my knife,  
no regrets,

no dice,  
no toothbrush.

I was afraid

*I was afraid—*  
The invitation read

In peculiar nocturnes:

*Hunger*  
*For the Abbot of the Nectarines—*

*while I wonder,*  
*ponder,*  
*to my soul's service—*

*compatriot of all the miracles*  
*of learning years*

*from Leucopoesia*

1.

It was a claw  
But for the sake of the sweetness of voices  
we called it wing

It was a claw  
which we called wing  
stroked into its scabbard

The blade of flesh  
joined to the tuberous handle  
cut the bindings of language  
rubbing in the brain

and freed the drift of long  
( long )  
silent voices.

2.

The first words she says  
after many, many years  
are these:

‘the lens/ is clouded . . .  
my glasses. . . .’

( and the words were *like* glass,  
I could see through them  
sharp words, sweetened by salt seas )

I said  
“Occupation?”

. . .

‘lightning focused here’

I said,  
“Address?”

‘number seductive’

Then I knew . . . ( ) the Queen.

. . .

‘The Queen sang zero!’ ( self-mockery? triumph? )

3.

*“introduction to a dream”*

Who nodded his head?  
The old man blown from glass,  
blue, green, white, azure, grey  
The beautiful dilution

