

BIRTHDAY AT THE STATE FAIR

From a distance

The mineral display hostess made him remember

Water colors and fine paper from England he used to "borrow"

From his mother. They didn't make the kind anymore.

He sidled along booths blinking back Day-Glo,

Examining dried corn, frowning down his hurry,

Handling when he dared, asking the bearded man about bees

Which triggered a recirculating pump filling him with more

About bees than he wanted. Feeling on command

Their warmth through the glass, he nodded on cue,

Shuffled sawdust. Someone else came, a drone. He

Escaped as the hairy pump turned.

He drifted toward her between jewel walls of jams and jellies—

She was leaving! But she moved back through amber, her wavy

Effigy passed into magenta, paused, fused with shadows,

Then emerged above the jar rim. He straightened,

Ambled carefully into her shine. Her voice was cerulean,

Highlighting crystal formation for Boy Scouts, making

Smooth small waterfalls over the glistening spikes in her palm.

He pried doors in his head that trapped him so often,

Pretended to turn his back on one; it popped open as he hoped.

He cleared his throat: "Say, that looks like calcite."

cont.

She smiled right on him, viridian eyes, soft green wash;
 Her blue fountain upheld him. The boys so slowly moved on.
 He must see to it she understood he was not some clod,
 He knew things, he was polished like her obsidian, he offered
 His thoughts on geodes waiting eons to be opened,
 He talked of earth, edged toward philosophy.
 She called him poetic, rich blue ran over him like ointment.
 He stuttered a little, rummaged for a witticism,
 Drew his lip over the tooth vacancy. Presently
 He would pun about her fossils and tell her he was 83 today
 And she would not believe it, but first there was so much
 To say about life and other people were coming