

TO EAT A PEACH

by JOHN PEALE CARDINAL

NEW AND REDISCOVERED POEMS

"Do I dare to eat a peach?" -- T. S. Eliot

THE QUESTION

Who cares, really,
what the question is
about women?
whether they're vain
or silly or foolish,
badtempered, quarrelsome,
unfaithful or dumb --

all I know is,
the bottom line
about women
is that I've been
looking at a lot
of them, and
I like the
bottom line.

COOKIE POEM

When she goes to sleep
each night
she turns into a giant cookie
dashed with cinnamon and cloves
full of raisins and chopped nuts
and lots of dark brown sugar
sweet and spicy and warm
delicious to nibble

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THE ALFA ROMEO

She is an Alfa Romeo
standing in a yardful
of rusty cars

bright and new
glittering in the starlight
blazing in the sun:
s beautiful example
of the finest model
of the best year.

Men cut through the fences
night after night
to steal the rusty cars:
they haul them away
in the dark
one by one.

But day after day
night after night
the Alfa Romeo
stands in the middle
of the yard
regally alone
among the rusty cars

a beautiful example
of the finest model
of the best year:
ever bright and new
as the seasons pass:
glittering in the starlight
blazing in the sun.

PEACH POEM

She's discovered:
the peachstone
in a world
of peachfuzz.

FLAMINGOS

Exquisite. Twin whorls
of sunrise peeping
through gauze. Two pink
flamingos flushed from
dark covert while I

searched for lilies
in the reeds of
the ruffled pool (lost
in a wilderness that
no one dares). What was

I searching for more
to be prized than
this? One imagines
moons for mockingbirds
to sing to, and instead

bright tropic birds
flaring from the dark
and sunrise in the night
where dawn was looked for

but never so exquisite.

PLUMS AND FLOWERS

I decided to write
another poem
for her
but all I could think of
to write about
is that she wears
plum colored corduroy
slacks and she's
tattooed all over
with flowers

GETTING OUR FEET WET

[12 July 1974]

Dear Betty:

When we drove to Pacific Palisades
To visit (as you said) Paul Getty,
I looked in vain for mermaids.

Of swimmers and surfers there were many,
Disporting in the warm green water,
But of mermaids, there weren't any,
Only a whale, a dolphin, a sea otter.

And we were creatures of the land,
Wandering a little beyond our turf.
We walked a careful line on the wet sand
Beside the froth of skimming surf,

Disdaining the embrace of her, our Mother,
Until, to round the Whole complete,
And make us creatures like every other,
The sea surged up and washed our feet.

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