Howie Good

#### ABANDONED BUT STILL BURNING

What's with the defeatist attitude? So you found a crow's wing stuck under your windshield wiper. How many birds do you think visit major American cities each year? At least you weren't beaten by the drunks in the bleachers for wearing your funeral suit. Then you would've hardly heard the singing or seen the line of refugees from the famine. I'm telling you, Relax. The candlelight we're carrying between us like a sheet of glass is the very light we need. And if the German wolf pack happens to return to prowl the sea lanes, we can always wave goodbye to them with the other hand.

#### **LAP DANCE**

Last night I went to a movie at the Upstate, Marisa Tomei was in it, she played an aging stripper,

but without the cellulite and droopy ass, who worked at a club in Jersey called Cheeks,

black walls, myopic lighting, loud music, the graveyard of empires, where a lap dance

in the VIP Room cost you 60 bucks and the vinyl siding salesmen from Rahway

got hard as she gyrated on stage in a G-string, her eyes strangely dead, the boarded-up windows

of a once-prosperous downtown appliance store, I wanted to shout, Oh, Marisa, don't be sad,

you're beautiful, instead the guy sitting behind me kept crossing and uncrossing his legs

and kicking the back of my seat.

### THE INVISIBLE WAR

The sirens startle us. We sit up in bed, only to lie back down. It's five in the morning. Our faces are next to each other, close enough for a kiss. We exchange medieval looks of fear and doubt. When we wake up again, the sun is screaming. The daytime drinkers glare at us through the window as we walk past Sal's Place holding hands. Unless it isn't us they're seeing, but the gunships pounding over the rooftops, the infant later found crawling in the rubble in a harness like a seeing-eye dog's.

### **RIGHT-HAND MAN**

I was small, very small, too small

to remember, but they'd look down

at me while I slept in the dresser draw

and shake their heads. Where they came from,

pickpockets and firebugs were left-handed.

I'd pick up a ring of lost keys

in my left hand, and they'd always take it

and put it in my right. Now sometimes

when I start to reach for what I want,

I'll stop suddenly and quietly wonder

whose hand this is.