and the streets lined with maples and meters and cars, the fall streets and
winter streets and dirty-hot streets of deep summer, when everyone went
out, when lameness prevailed and the yuppies wore shorts and bought saris
for uncultured loved ones, and the record stores were too full and the
bookstores too full and there was only the corner store, where he went
for his cigarettes, with its battered linoleum and impossible selection of
foods—pasta and relish and beef stew and chocolate chips—the corner store
which he still goes to but only at night now, just before it closes, where the
Turkish man, stoic, waits on his stool, the Turkish man with his nose hair
and bent glasses frames, the Turkish man who has told him that he was a
*structural engineer after college*, which he doesn’t believe, because if you are a
structural engineer then you own a watch of titanium and a summer house
in Squaw Valley and you do not wear glasses like he wears, and you do
not run a corner store where your kids crawl on the counter like lemurs,
and if the Turkish man was truly a structural engineer then the world was a
hellscape of lucklessness, which was what he believed in the stone pit of his
heart, and on the wall behind the counter the phone cards for Africa, and
who bought those.

and the college town and those friends and those years ago, and Central
Time and the beige hum of cicadas, and maybe a song could sum it all
up, he can’t remember, he has eighteen plastic crates filled with records,
won’t buy cds, the sound isn’t warm, the sound isn’t accurate, but the Mid-
wes, back then, the attic room of a house, and bats lived in the walls the
whole winter: there was the shell of the house then the shell of the room
and between them, in those inches, the bats lived, and the claws on their
wings made sounds when they moved, a scratching that seemed to denote
sickness, and the mattress on the ground and the girlfriend he loved and the
girls that he fucked and loved also, drunk always, all of them, the dirt roads
and corn fields and the clouds on the horizon, and the moon rang with its
ring of faeries, and how did the moon and how did the bats and how did they drink and get on and buy food and have jobs and cry and laugh also, and where are these people because he can’t find them now, has tried to, has typed their names into websites where you typed your name into websites and put pictures up with your own likeness, and listed off miserably your favorite things, and your favorite people, a million shrines like these, a million intangible temples of ego, and not one person that he once knew inside them.

but now the thirties, the crush of the future, the onset of make-it-or-break-it, when one bought leather shoes and stopped smoking pot and chose a job that was like all the others, a job drenched in swipe cards and passwords and mouse pads (and Theta, the buildings were awful, the windows fractured the light and robbed it of warmth, the windows did not even open); horrible, useless, patronizing jobs, jobs that bored men to baldness, the earth of their brains depleted of food until the blades of their hair furtively loosed and washed through the grate of the shower drain, jobs built around a fervent, pornographic belief in the Federal Reserve System, in taxes of income, in which people voluntarily chose to be slaves, and someone, it was Goethe, had a quote about that, not about taxes but being a slave, and that the best kind of slave was an unwitting one, and he was paraphrasing now and did this make him a slave, and why was it called a 1040, and to counter this servitude these jobs came with benefits: protection of vision, protection of teeth, protection of one’s miles of intestine, so that one could thank god it was Friday with coworkers in sports bars, could drink draft beer and watch hockey and this was applauded, was encouraged, because if something went wrong and you got fat or sick, you’d bought in and someone would fix you, and you could go back to the sports bar and get sick again—jobs that included stock options, and these were options that one had to have, and if one existed without options of stock then one’s future was a hellscape of lucklessness, and the smells that pervaded one’s next forty years were not car leather, cologne or scallops pan-seared, not mountain air, beach air or lake air, but those of patchouli and cat urine, the peasant spices of the line striker, the smells of the left, smells that connoted a substantial lack of purchasing power, and implied a beard and ownership of a Schwinn and that you thought of the suburbs as death camps.
and every month in the mailbox more invitations, on eggshell or ivory card-stock, their fonts calligraphic, die cast embossed, please join us, please join us, please honor us, and he touched at the ridges, felt the depressions, moved his hand like the blind reading Braille, and the parties were always at places he loathed and that they said that they loathed but then supported: country clubs with duck sauce and alabaster-hued linens, and fairways for golf, and swan-shaped ice sculptures, and the ice swans were stunning and he wanted to touch them or at least just stand there admiring, but they were not to be looked at or at least not examined, not to be thought of in a critical context—they were ornament, strictly, purchased and centered and transferred to chips housed in digital cameras, where the ice swan, long gone, was immortal, was not water then dew drops and then condensation, and then fog that hung in a valley, and covered the maples and meters and streets in a deep morning silence, a fog that the senders of the invitations hoped would burn off by go-time, a fog that was somehow unlucky, and contained in its vapor the corpses of millions of previous ice swans, a fog that the bride and groom didn’t want hanging around while they said their oaths then their toasts then their thank-yous, and packed up their gifts and boarded a plane and spent a week fucking in a honeymoon suite and no matter how badly he needed the cash he was always late to return his tuxedo.

and then more invitations, the bellies of strangers, 

tumescent as springtime chrysalides,
and these were the wives, the well-kempt Anglo-Saxons, the lisas and lauras and kellys, and when they answered the doors of their suburban homes, he watched their faces with a microscope’s scrutiny, looking to see, in those milliseconds, the change from fear to full understanding, during which he, in the minds of the wives, was transformed completely, from black thug and rapist and where’s my cell phone to coworker of the person I married, and the doors opened wider, were swung open fully, and his coat was hung up and he said his hellos and sometimes the wives, shot through with guilt, overcompensated and kept bringing him things, and there was the time that he got the house number wrong, that he rang the wrong house’s doorbell, and this was in evening, full nighttime outside, and when he told the woman, fear choking her throat, that he was sorry and must be mistaken, she said that she thought that he must be right, and shut the door.
while he stood there, which was followed by the deadbolt thrown into the lock, and the scraping of the chain on the wooden door’s backside, and these actions had made him laugh uncontrollably, as he stared at the doormat that said WELCOME; and this in turn proceeded by the walk to the car he had borrowed and the continued navigation of suburbia, and then the police, and please exit the vehicle, and the rest was just a scene from a movie, but in his coworker’s houses the wives pulled up their shirts and showed to him navels near bursting, and they grabbed at his arms and placed his palms on their skin and said touch it, just put your hand there.

and he loved to skateboard and was skating now, rode goofy, could kick flip, could manage with ease the steel rails of stairways outside of government buildings, and in backpack and black sweatshirt and filthy white jeans was heading south, toward the border of Berkeley and Oakland, where they had mauled Stein’s quote about the latter of these towns the way that public art so aptly mauled everything, past the bronze here, past the bronze there, each letter block and taller than he was, south down Martin Luther King Boulevard, and now Oakland, Bump City, the place where he’d grown up, the place with the highest crime rate in California, home of black panthers and the angels of hell, home of Bruce Lee’s very first dojo, and the pavement was new and the wheels rolled in silence, very near glided, and he had a tweed cap on, and out past the airport, over toward Hayward, East Oakland, enormous, a war zone; a living cemetery, one publication had called it, and here were the ghosts of dead rappers and the men who had killed them, and in turn were killed by the friends of dead rappers, who in turn were killed by the men’s friends, and so on; and the shuttered and broken factory windows—gone was Granny Goose, gone was Gerber—and this area, until 1909, had been known as Brooklyn, which made total sense to him, was across from the glow and the flare of the City, was separated by bridge, by water, except this part of this city would never ascend, would never be pretty or rich or anything more than the part of the city one hoped to never step foot in, the part of the city that had not seen a spike in development since prior to the bombing of Dresden, and in recent years was most famous for its crack epidemic, and Felix Mitchell (and Theta do you remember the day of his funeral, we must have been ten or eleven, and people lined the streets to look at the casket, and Huey Newton was there and Rolls Royce
limousines, along with a procession of ten horse-drawn carriages, because this guy was a kingpin who had given back, who sold crack and then built children playgrounds, which we played on, and when these are your zip code’s and neighborhood’s heroes, Theta, it kind of fucks with your sense of morality), and with Felix Mitchell’s stabbing and death inside Leavenworth Prison came a sudden and drastic reduction in cost of producing cocaine in rock form in Oakland, and the east side in turn became a market destabilized, and then just an orgy of violence, the police chief agog, the paramedics like overworked janitors, and here were the sysdeshows along east 14th, the cars of the grinders spinning in circles, and leaving on the lots’ asphalt circles of skid marks, and the circle as infinity, as closed simple curves, as existing without entrance or exit.

and with the honeycombed sole of his canvas hi-top he now steers the board down 53rd st., toward the old Victorian he’s lived in eight years, with its pink scalloped siding and bowed wooden porch and brocaded curtains hung over the windows, the whimsical two-level with untended yard of crab grass and deadening Albas, a house emblematic of civic upkeep’s patina, a house filled with renters and bedrooms, where hillocks of mail sprang from the sill of the foyer’s tall picture window, and stains left on the wall behind the four-burner stove had altered the wall’s very color, and lent a mélange that paid tribute to literally hundreds of meals of pasta, the long-hardened dots of maroon-colored sauce like a mind’s eye picture-game puzzle, dots representing the culinary exploits of residents both past and current, the meek indie hipsters and long-haired metalheads and post-feminist vegan subversives, who had seen the ad listed in the local free paper, and needed something short term, and affordable, and could move in if possible like maybe this week—people from other parts of the country, who had left what they’d known and fled for the coast, and its climate of progressive tranquility, where their futures were not linked to price shifts in cattle, were not dependent upon fluctuations in the bentonite industry, and they might never see, again in their lives, the outline of a grain elevator, might not be called fag in the bathrooms of bars, their forehead put hard against the urinal’s porcelain, departed places like Carbondale and Miles City, Montana, the coach’s big wheels spitting gravel, and got to the Bay and played lead guitar in a band that no one had heard of, and when someone moved out,
their narrative lost, someone else moved in on the heels of them, and in this way the story was epic in scope, contained verse upon verse upon chorus, and there was the art student who tattooed herself, and there was the girl that dressed like Zelda Fitzgerald, and the software designer and political aide and the bulimic Latina fire eater, and the throngs of wage slaves working doubles in aprons, chopping fennel at some kitchen’s station, and when the dinner rush came they plated up squab or risotto topped with shavings of truffle, then repaired to back alleys for low-tar cigarettes and bitched and cajoled and vowed always to quit and could because all this was temporary, because they could get new jobs and rent other rooms in still other Victorians, and join for a short while some other tribe of momentarily lingering nomads, who spoke dialects that were nearly their own, or close enough to foster understanding, and at night past his window the whistle of trains, headed eastbound, back toward the heartland.

and with the skateboard abandoned he ascends the porch steps and produces a key from his pocket, and the smell there to greet him in the cluttered foyer is the musk most common to the house’s interior, the scent of cooked pasta, boiled in a pot, then dumped in a colander hung from the faucet, a smell as common to the house’s inside as cut grass is in the suburbs, and on the bare floor of the near empty living room someone sitting on a rust-colored beanbag, watching the eight-inch Hitachi, the set appearing over winter on the top of the room’s only bookcase, black-and-white and rabbit-eared and with the capacity to pick up exactly two stations, a local affiliate and the public broadcasting channel, and he has no idea if the guy on the beanbag is a guest or a tenant, or is involved with the boiling of the pasta, and hung at odd angles with wire and nails, art in a wide range of mediums, paper collage and acrylic on canvas and found objects that had been spray-painted: the red of a stop sign done over in green, dolls set on fire then covered in lipstick; and paintings condemning the eating of meat, and paintings condemning all manner of consumption, that spoke out against, in ways complex and basic, the idea of commodity fetishism, art largely Marxist in nature, and this was ironic as nearly all of the art had been bought at the local flea market, and thereby debased what it sought to uphold, namely the belief of a social relationship, one that existed outside of the shackles of the Federal Reserve System, and its printing of fake paper currency, and its concurrent
demanding of a tax on income, a tax based on the ignorance of this country’s masses, a tax not supported by one single phrase contained in the U.S. Constitution, and from the tiny Hitachi a scripted game show: are you going to go for it? Bob, I’m going to go for it, and the guy on the beanbag saying you fucking zombies.

and why he is here, what’s brought him by (because really he is here very little, works six days a week at a local bookstore where they pay him well under the table, and had said in the interview prior to hiring that he would only take the job if he didn’t have to fill out a 1040, and thereby avoid the illegal taxation of any and all future wages, which had happened when he had worked in an office, and the bookstore’s owner was a pony-tailed man from the suburb of Short Hills, New Jersey, a septuagenarian who did own a Schwinn and did carry about him the odor of cat urine, and this man had gotten a gleam in his eye at the mention of opposing the 1040, and instead of saying no and thanks for your time shook his hand and said you start tomorrow), is the book kept in a lockbox hidden under his bed, and the book there is none other than the big book of AA, fourth edition, the faux leather binding not quite navy blue and he’s had this book now for over five years, since a little after his firing from the job that he held at the office, the termination occurring when on a Friday he had urinated on a plant by the water cooler, when he’d come back from a late lunch had with coworkers, who unlike him had not been covertly drinking vodka all morning, and who had not been drinking vodka the evening before, and for every night for four years before that; who did not need the vodka to physically function, and thereby stave off the invisible beast known as delirium tremens, from which one’s head spun and wrists felt hollowed out, which transformed the mundane or simplistic chore to near-mythic proportions, and it was only after the daily slaying of this beast that the first thoughts of food were really possible, and that day, that Friday, by three o’clock, he was amazingly hungry because he was shit-faced, because he had filled a Dixie cup with Smirnoff for six hours straight, and now felt pretty good about things, felt well enough to realistically consider the thorough mastication of spring rolls, and since it was Friday a beer with his lunch fell in the realm of acceptable, and here were his coworkers at his cubicle’s threshold, the expats of Beta house chapters, the Aryan trust-funders who owned lacrosse
sticks and on weekends wore piqued, collared Izods, and for now were living in secure-entranced townhouses in the Lake Merritt area of Oakland, and how did Thai food sound to him; and then the elevator’s descent and the gift of fresh air and the bringing of menus to their table, and the measured expert nursing of one single brown bottle of beer of southeast Asian extraction, and when the spring rolls arrived he eagerly ate as this was his lunch and his breakfast and dinner, and would allow for, at some point in the very near future, the continued consumption of vodka, and the Beta house expats spoke of Oakland’s crime rates, and asked him again where it was that he did his college.

and by just after five the office was empty—it was a Friday in springtime—and he sat there reclined with the Dixie cup, then put the glass bottle of vodka inside his book bag and switched off his desk’s computer, and as he was leaving lingered a moment in front of the large potted silver queen, unzipping the fly of his khakis, the drive of this action unfolding from the nihilistic imbibing of Smirnoff, and as urine hit soil the elevator bell dinged, and this was the boss’s return from a board meeting, and this boss was in her 50s and an Ivy League MBA and had at Choate and then at Brown gone by the nickname of Binky (now: Rebecca), and drove a Lexus sedan and didn’t take shit, and had never seen anyone urinating in a planter in a hallway, but was transported immediately to her freshman dorm room and her own bout, as she called it, of poor decision-making, during which she had invited up to her room a scholarship student from Hartford’s inner city, and this scholarship student didn’t know when to stop and had forcibly undone her bra strap, and pinched at her nipples and put his hand up her skirt with the measured force, his boss said, of industrial machinery, of something inhuman performing a task, and she had leaned back on the bed and had kicked him, and he’d gotten up and flashed her the peace sign, and the next four years of her life she kept seeing him, and saw him in dreams, and saw him when waking, reworking the scene on the stage of her brain over and over and over, all of this flooding back, she had said, as she stared at his stream of urine, which ceased upon his recognition of the person who held tightly the purse strings, and inside her office, behind the maple-stained door, the silver queen recounting that Providence night, then saying here’s what we’re going
to do: I'll pay you out for another two months and you don't come back here, not once, not ever.

and then the writing of the check and giving over of swipe cards, his shame very near to congealing, and the next fifty sixty or seventy days were akin to a device in screenwriting, where the screenwriter must show that much time has passed, and must do so rather quickly, so that the audience gets a sense of time passing only through glimpses, and these glimpses, were they specific to him, might show a black kid alone in the bedroom he rented and a futon encircled by bottles, and records lying flat on their white paper sleeves, which in turn rested on record covers, and ashtrays erupting with clumps of tan butts, and night and day passing unnoticeable, and the stirring of the black kid, on some random May date, at four seventeen in the morning, and thinking the single word vodka, and sitting up from the bed and checking the bottles, etc., ad nauseum; and then the abated eating of food, the mitigation of solids and subsequent vomiting, until the feel of bile corroding his teeth became rather standard—a series of scenes pieced together with washouts, a cinematic collage bathetically steeped in addiction, and then the waking one morning to the cadence of finches, and deciding to throw out the bottles, and with the bottles thrown out the grim meeting rooms of the hopelessly lost and delusional, of the drunk who had turned his life over, and here were the worn dirty floors of church basements and the aroma of crystallized French roast, and if you need a sponsor please raise your hand, and that we alcoholics cannot manage our lives and that god could and would once we sought him, and that first year an epiphany, a deep cleansing breath, and he did get a sponsor and then his sponsor moved and then he found a new sponsor, a subcontractor, a libertarian, who informed him of the lie that was income tax, and told him to work the steps harder, and then had a heart attack in the cab of his Ford (and with death conquered fully his addiction), and all that was over a year ago, and since the death of this sponsor his own attendance at the Monday ten-thirty had dwindled, and then ceased entirely, and tonight wouldn’t be any different, because where he is going involves no house of worship but does in some ways consider the fourth step, the taking of a personal inventory, and with the box locked and room locked he then leaves the house, skating slowly south, out toward the ghetto.
(because Theta there are so many ledges to manage—narrow and shelf-like, projecting—that the concept of structure is all but lost among all of this balancing, and there are so many parts I can locate no sum, and there seems to me no way to solve this equation, and on a bench in a Laundromat someone reading a book, as next door in a pawn shop a man pleads with the clerk, and at the intersection of Macarthur the filthy motels and slicked glow of fast food enterprises, and the hookers (all black) done up with drugs, and fake eyelashes bought from a Walgreen’s, and Theta, dear twin sister of mine, I want you to know I’m wearing the cap that you sent me last Christmas, the one made of wool with the snap on its bill, the *derby of cream and tan herringbone*, and sister in truth the cap fits rather poorly, and how is the suburb of Arlington Heights, your village northwest of Chicago, is it the same as it was when I came to visit, and met your white husband and my nephew and niece, and breathed in the air that fills your tax bracket, and saw parked in your driveway the green Cherokee and sleek white Mustang convertible, and Theta I know a surgeon’s hours are long, that the man that you married, while married to you, is married to the work he does also, and what do you do, twin sister, all day in that house, while your kids get called ugly names at their grade school, and what will you do when you take your kids downtown and they begin to more fully comprehend where this country keeps its surfeits of black people, because I know you remember when one of your suburb’s cops saw us walking last autumn near sunset, and turned his car down the street and then matched our gait, the cop rolling down the car window, asking could he help us—asking us, twin sister, *if we were lost*, to which I replied *almost certainly*, after which the cop applied his car’s brakes, and Theta do you just shrug this off all the time, build it in to the cost of your gabled Tudor.)

and toward Oakland’s downtown the turn on to West Grand and ahead of him *damned tidal waters*, where a convergence of streams greets the bay’s gray saline, and creates the brackish lagoon named Lake Merritt: an urban lake, a lake surrounded by a city, a lake at one point used as a grave for the corpses of gang members, their wrecked bodies pulled from the dark trunks of cars and dragged over the grass to the shoreline—a cruel task performed in the heart of the night (and Theta do you remember how the applica-
tions cost? that there were processing fees and we had no money?), a task
done with urgency, the legs lifted first, grabbed just above the black hi-
tops, legs left to rest on the chrome of the bumper while the body’s torso
and shoulders were worked on, and this taking time as the body was stuck,
was wedged up against the spare tire, and then purchase gained with a yank
on the neck, and the body in turn rolling over (and Theta has your sur-
egon husband told you that a corpse harbors breath long after the lungs have
stopped working, because at times, on good days, I can forget his face—the
scar on his jaw, the uneven sideburns—but what won’t go away is the scent
of that breath, an odor matching exactly cooked pasta, and I wonder some-
times about his last meal’s specifics—did he sit at a table, was he watching
TV, did he finish eating and then use a napkin, some thin paper thing that
he crumpled up, telling a brother or sister of his own, I’m going out, I’ll see
you later, which he wouldn’t), the air filled in by fog, the body exhaling
postmortem, and with another pull the body toppling out of the trunk, half
on the street and half on the sidewalk, sprawling grotesquely over the gutter
then dragged over sod that was covered in goose shit, and rolled from the
ped path and into the lake’s lapping water, as the instructions had been to
not weigh the corpse, as the instructions had been WE WANT MOTHER-
FUCKERS TO KNOW US, and twin sister you should see what the lake
looks like now, how pretty it is, how it has strings of lights strung around
it.

and with the shoreline beside him the backpack unzipped, the skateboard
not losing momentum, and here the drawing out of two things at once,
the big book of AA and a can of malt liquor, the six-pack bought from
the Turkish man just before closing and the former thrown into the water,
gone forever, the cheap glue of its binding dissolving, the faux leather cov-
ers, not quite navy blue, fanned out and now slightly bobbing, as he pops
the can’s top then pedals faster, around the ped path to the west side of
the lake, past the Beta house expats and their slumbering wives, past the
dreaming lisas, lauras, and kellys, who’ve been assured by their husbands a
house in the suburbs, and their own toddler toddling, who know just like he
does that down East 14th lie all manner of problems—that this street heads
south for miles—runs past 29th and the tidal canal and the bridges that con-
nect Alameda, runs past the braid shops and bus stops and dark dirty bars,
runs just west of his decrepit alma mater, that high school where he spent four years of his life while living with six different relatives, in six different houses, an institution to which he was bused fifty blocks because his neighborhood had no high school to speak of, was south of the airport and sports coliseums and the warehouses’ wrecked broken windows, a locale with main streets sometimes traversed by one or both of his parents, in the years post-Felix Mitchell, a time when crack was much cheaper, a time when his neighborhood was an open-air market for the selling of cocaine in rock form, a market that’s still alive to this day, a market that’s very much thriving, and twin sister since this is your story, too, do you remember seeing them from out of the bus window, the people who raised us, who once had had jobs and owned cars and paid in to the Federal Reserve System, and then didn’t, as there weren’t any more jobs to have, as industry flattened and they got their pink slips, and if life is a ledge then here the mis-step, the loss of all balance, and the appearance of grim men on our porch in the nighttime, men wearing black sateen Raiders jackets, and one car was sold then the other, the cupboards bare and lawn dead and then disappearance, the absences longer and longer, until a CPS agent showed up with a clipboard and *juice boxes*, because we were malnourished and now pity cases, and repaired that very day to an uncle’s, and Theta was it maybe once every three weeks that the bus would drive past them, our parents, as they searched through a trash can or smoked in an alley, and how many times did they show up at the home of an aunt and hug us and then steal money, or food stamps they’d sell to the corner store owners at a highly depreciated value, because food stamps cannot buy *cocaine in rock form* but hard cash is fiscally omniscient, and with cash one can pay rent or buy drugs or a six-pack of tall cans of malt liquor, and with cash one can stand in line at the post office, looking at mug shots of felons, and wait to exchange three hundred in twenties for ten different money orders, to five different colleges, institutions that promised, in so many words, we’ll give you money if you give us money, meaning, twin sister, there were *processing fees*, and surely at some point you put this together, that the money didn’t come from an uncle or aunt or employ of our school district, that if we were us (and sister, are we?) and seventeen and past poor and quickly in need of three hundred dollars, there was one demographic to turn to, and this demographic could be found oftentimes on a roof out on 98th Avenue—a roof that I’m now
heading back to—and were happy to part with some of their funds if in turn one did them a favor, because Theta hard cash is the key of the skeleton, and there are so many doors it can open.

and sister the doors that it opened for us—the first black twins in our college’s history—and how many times were we asked by those friends I can’t find so who’s the good one and who’s the bad one, and Theta for me the jury’s still out, and you really should write home more often, because those uncles and aunts never went anywhere, and they clothed and fed us, and right now a plane going by overhead, the sound of its engines enormous, a sound that could fill up your suburb’s quaint silence, would mask wholly the hum of your pool filter, a timbre entirely afforded to you by my disposal of a victim of gang members, men met on a roof over ten years ago at an hour very near this one, and who lived in the walls of my attic room, and on every dirt road and in every cornfield—lived everywhere, Theta, in all that I saw, were sewn into my vision’s fabric, and for me stand always on the flat granite top of a long-closed Grocery Outlet, and Theta I’m sorry for so much disclosure but in some ways you were always unlucky, left-handed and clumsy, the dog that Mom bought you run over, your best friend from third grade shot accidentally, also a victim of gang members, and Theta it seems implied by your actions that you’re not interested too much in history, but you should know that your name, the eighth letter in Greek, was used by judges Hellenic, and that in ancient times these men wrote down this letter when prescribing death under penalty, and I’m sure that our parents just heard it somewhere and knew nothing of its implications, were unaware it dealt largely with closure and doom, and also with stock options, as your name, twin sister, in regard to investing, is a measure of the decaying of options, that as time progresses decay tends to grow, and will keep growing larger and larger, until expiration, and Theta I’m now out on 91st Avenue, where the rate of decay is unchartable, where the stone edge of this city wakes up and looks at itself and sees only a hellscape of lucklessness, where the streets are not lined with maples and meters and cars because there’s no soil for trees to grow in, and the meters have all had a hacksaw taken to them, so that addicts can get at their quarters, and cars parked here past midnight are gone before morning, stolen and taken to chop shops, and the church lots’ chain-links are all topped with barbed wire, and there’s not one single bookstore...
to speak of, just corner stores, gas stations, and check-cashing places, and a
black kid riding a skateboard, and shifting his weight and steering the board into the mouth of an alley, the pavement gone rougher, a beer can thrown down, the board’s wheels coughing out bits of gravel, and Theta, it’s quiet, there’s no one around, and half of my tall boys have yet to be opened, and here are my hands on the fire ladder’s rungs, and here is the roof of this building, so answer me, sister: if you have falling dreams, too, what is it you do to wake yourself from them.