



Allen Itz

the night I got chased out of Mexico

this
is a story
about the time
I got chased out of
Mexico
by a posse
of Mexican taxi cabs

I was a young guy
just old enough
to get a taxi license
and I was driving
cab
on the Texas side
of the border

I picked up a fare
outside
one of the hotels
who wanted
to go to Mexico
and I said
hell yes
cause it was about
35 miles
and at 35 cents
for the first mile
and 10 cents a mile
thereafter
it was a pretty good
pay-off

of which I'd get
a third
which never was
a helluv a lot
most nights
but better for a
trip
like this

so we headed out
down 281
for Matamoros
through Brownsville
and across the bridge
from where I knew
how to go two places
boys town
about which we
will speak no more
and the central plaza
which was close
to the mercado
and lots of good
nightclubs
good food
music
and floorshows
with sometimes
naked women
and that's where
the fella I was
carrying
wanted to go
so we went there
and I dropped
him off at the plaza
and while he paid me
I noticed all
the Mexican cabbies
giving me the eye
and I noticed
when I left
some of those
Mexican cabs
started following
behind
and then I noticed
I had ten to fifteen
Mexican cabs
riding my back
bumper
and I said to mysel
oh shit
I screwed up

and the way
they were following
close and honking
it looked pretty clear
that they were
pissed
about whatever
it was I did
so I took off
for the bridge
as fast as I could
trying to remember
as I flew
which of the many
one way streets
in Matamoros
were going my way
and which were going
to either get me lost
of back to the plaza
where more trouble
was sure to be
waiting
and when I reached
the bridge
I tossed my 8 cents
to cross
to the Mexican
border guard
without
hardly stopping

when I got back
my dispatcher
told me the rules -
cabs don't cross
borders
fares are dropped
at the bridge
where they can
walk across
and get a local
cab
so
I really felt dumb
and never did that
again
though one time
I did pick up a guy
at the bridge
who had been in
jail
in Matamoros
for three days

and was beat
all to shit
and bleeding and
barely conscious

I took him home
and dropped him off
at the hospital
and his friend
who had gone
to Matamoros
to get him out
of jail
and had ridden
back with him
gave me a \$3
tip
which was pretty
good
for the time

what are we to do, they're smarter than us

there are 600
million
housecats in the
world
spread
from pole to pole
from all the way
east
to all the way
west
and they all
descend
from one of five
female
wildcats who
in the barely
historical
mid-east
noticed
that filthy-
living human-kind
were vermin
magnets
and that living
off the vermin
who lived
wherever
humans lived
was a helluv
a lot easier
than trying
to chase down
prey
in the wild

and
thus did
the cat
domesticate
itself
on its own
terms
&
conditions
and thus
did little
puss
and
boots

assume her
smart-ass
air of feline
superiority
and
if you know
the whole story
it's hard
to argue
with
them

volver

dinner
at Casasol
tonight
chili con queso,
crispy taco,
margarita
on the rocks,
the stuff I like,
and at the other end
of the room
some kind of party,
with mariachis
playing my favorites -
"Volver" y
"Yo Soy El Rey" y
"Jalisco" -
reminding me
of the years I spent
working further
south
and the parties
at the end
of every month,
men only,
bbq and lots
of beer
and singing,
always singing,
gathered around
Gus, the guitar player,
full-fed,
some-drunk,
and singing
all those wild
and mournful
Mexican songs
of love,
loss, and
revolution

tides

october blue
gives way
to november
gray

and you can
feel
the tides
of an old
year
turning

this old bed

I sleep
on the bed
where my father
was born
one hundred years ago
this summer,
second child of Celeste
and August
amid the rocky hills
and pecan and flowing streams
in the little
Texas-German town of
Fredericksburg

I sleep
on the bed
that has slept my family
through two world wars
and multiple wars of lesser scope,
through eighteen presidents
of the United States,
some wise
some not
some equal
to the needs of their time
some not,
through musical
genre's
from ragtime to
hip-hop,
though prohibition
and the era of bathtub beer,
through
the gilded age
the jazz age
normalcy
firebombing
atom bombing
getting bombed
in the suburbs
and getting sober
with AA,
through six presidential
assassination attempts,
death
in Dallas
death
on the launching pad
death
in near earth orbit,

kitty hawk
to a man on the moon,
the cries of the dead
from famine
from genocide
from indifference
of the ruling class
from incompetence
of the ruling class,
through Bull Connor
and his police dogs,
through King
and his dreams
and his death on a
motel balcony,
through the triumph
of good
and the reemergence
of evil,
the cycle played out
over and over again
in the days of yellow
journalism, through
Murrow and Cronkite
and Brinkley and Huntley
on radio and tv
and now new messengers
on the web
Wikipedia fact
and Wikipedia fancy,
truth swaying
on a tumbling pedestal,
lies flying in the wind,
opinonators
blowhards
conspiracists
and fools,

through it all,
all the times of
reaping and
sowing,
the bed
has calmed the nights
through three generations
of sleep,
sex
and midnight dreams,
waiting now
for the final sleep
of this generation
and the lying
down to rest
of the next

the devil can find you anywhere

it's part of living in the city
we think
the noise of sirens
the fire trucks
the ambulances
the police cars
their supercharged engines
whoosh of air
and power like a bear's
long growl
as they cross the creek
just down the road;
all the little murders
the little killings that come
so often it begins to seem
like a stream of blood
passing
a flood of blood
passing on weekends
the nude woman found
in a drainage ditch
shot dead
the baby in her crib
shot dead as a drive by
bullet penetrates the thin wall
she sleeps by
bar fights
that lead to shootings
in parking lots
blood on oily asphalt shinning
in the flashing lights
domestic disturbances
that rise from desperation
separation from hope
unhappiness
and too much to drink ending in rage-deaths
(I had a friend when I was thirteen, killed
by his father, shot as he tried to protect
his mother) so many
that we loose count and it's just another
half inch story on the back pages
and when we think of it at all we
shake our heads at the viciousness of it all
imagine quite places
where the sirens don't wail
all night, where murder and tragedy and rage
only happens on tv and we daydream
like this until something happens like happened

this week and we realize the devil can
always find you anywhere
and we see that
death
comes to
quiet places too