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There was a river I walked down to & didn't
stick my hand in, and a river I only knew
in my mind flowed south of my river bank,
the river they drove the singer across only
he wasn't aware of river or bridge because
he collapsed on stage, in his copper skin,
lime green suit, black pomaded hair parted
to one side, he fell and they took him across

that river and put him in a bed in a home.
There was the river I didn't stick my foot in,
though I lost a shoe in silty blue black mud,
put the shoe back on, walked higher up
the bank, to hard ground and looked across
at trees and bushes. The singer lay in a bed,
had to be fed, moved to avoid bed sores,
as if he were asleep, he lay in a coma.

The water in my river, the color of pea soup,
only more brown than green, didn't change.
I never swam in my river, or crossed by boat.
Men came with bulldozers, steam rollers
derricks, cleared trees and shrubs, leveled
the bank on the other side for a parking lot
for a bus depot, by then I walked less often
to the bank on my side. I did other things.

The singer woke one time from coma, with
hands holding his got out of bed and walked
a few steps to a window, looked out at what
was beyond him, the brick side of a building.
I feared the water in my river, saw in my
mind rats beneath the surface, threw stones
& watched water rings ripple wider the top
of green brown water. A rat crawled up

the slick blue black mud, below the bank's
edge. I stood, looking north at the vast
macadam lot, depot small in the distance;
I looked south at hills with trees, and, higher
houses, and a brick five story building,
windows dark, shirts and sheets white
on a rope clothesline slightly slack, strung
from brick wall to brick wall, with sheets

bleached dry in the sun. The singer turned
from the window, and lying in bed again
spoke no more, closed his eyes and lay
as if asleep, ten years, while trucks and cars
crossed the bridge he'd crossed, the bridge
I too eventually crossed behind the wheel
of a white Celica. Where I lived a gang wore
black leather jackets, a River Rats decal

on back. I only heard about them. Though
I found a switchblade in the street, pushed
a button and up sprang the blade, a time
before I walked down an aisle to a row of
cushioned seats and saw the singer. He had
a strong voice, wore a lime green suit and
in black shoes glided easy across the stage.
I'd heard he boxed in the Golden Gloves.

Student Film About
Orange Juice

We were way up in New Hampshire
but you'd think it was the tropics, all
the greenery. Rocks hint a waterfall
nearby. Our juice not Tropicana,

we pick oranges from orange trees,
or give that illusion, special ed kids
from my class, two girls, three boys
and me, our juice not from a market.

We enjoyed watching our film, us,
seemingly reaping the jungle's fruit.
Two of those cute boys accomplices
to murder. I raised my hand in court,

the hand that unhooked my bra.
My luscious boobs, petite body
stirred lust in their male genders.
Those boys would anything for me.

Kill the spouse of their teacher?
I took the stand, said Pamela Smart
when asked my name. A murderer?
I brainwashed boys to act

on my behalf? I didn't want him dead.
I made a film with things from school.
I took the cutest boy to bed.
In court his hand lay on a Bible.

Mourners at the Mound

Our goodbyes are for him, not you,
that white wreath, for him
for him, our black dress,
the hole you've toppled into, dug for him.
Your cry to the dead, I'm here,
sounds joyful. Are you drunk?

Your bulk rattles the coffin you stand on.
Please respect his young widow.
A white handkerchief dabs her veiled eyes.
She looks down at him in his coffin,
at you in your skin. Respect God in heaven,
beyond the white clouds
in today's bluest sky, Cantinflas,
cease giving death your fleshy finger.

You shame our solemnity
in *El bolero de Raquel*.
You are blind to all but the sky,
deaf to our collective
You're not supposed to. This hole
is for the dead, we are here for him, not you.
What are you doing? Are you drunk?

We said, "Lay the wreath gently,
keep still as a stone."
How you struggle to climb,
your fingers clutching dirt the dead needs.
Get out! Ah, you don't hear,
busy as you are being alive.

Holiness Hair

Look at her! The big lips weak chin
but not so weak as to be unattractive.
The lips ruby red sumptuous, the lady
in the laundry detergent ad, whose hair,
not quite shoulder length, had luster,
a sheen. Still, it wasn't holiness hair.
Nothing quite like that flowing down
past the small of the back to tingle
a spine, mine at least. Holiness hair
rules lovely hair country, only thing is
baggage comes with that holiness,
snakes and such sights and sounds
casual observers observe: the long
unshapely dresses, low heel lace ups
old lady shoes my gran wore. I love
a woman's holiness hair at Walmart,
beauty in a linens aisle, or in a Quik
Stop, at night, the woman's husband
and three kids in the Tahoe, she pays
the cashier for Doritos, a Diet Coke.