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Still Life

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Winter Strawberries

When I ate the seedy flesh of strawberries,
My mouth, burning with the bitter-sweet pulp,
Moved into a sorrowful puckered grin
I shared once with a man, fateful child
Of God's country, that flat river bog
Where mud quickens to sinking limbs
And weighs down the salty lustful
Let loose from faded blouses worn thin
At the breast and brown at the seams.

Whose consenting mother, or what angel
Deserted us in the sterile beds of others,
The interim: his soft and steady breath,
The heat of his neck in the thin bend
Of my arm, and I beheld with conjected soul
That pale fragility of sleep, his closed eyes
Pulsing with the gentle, intangible dream
To shatter with a waking kiss, tender and red
As the fruit for and, now, of my flesh.

—Katy Rudder '93

