

for Marilyn

Up in Michigan, tied by lack
Of car to town, I could not lose
Your face among the sad joys of
Tourists. Where was that place whose

Emptiness failed to match my own?
Available nymphs in Bermuda
Shorts were hardly a solution; though
A dark-haired co-ed one night did

Try an ancient answer to my twenty-
Eight year question. (I left a book
By Mann to keep things innocent.)
The town had little else. To look

Further, through queer-crowded bars,
The absurdly healthy college
Crowd on the beach, the dismal stores
Selling postcards by the yardage --

What was I doing there? Well, one
Looks to find, but place and time
Ban the secrets right next door.
With you then strongly on my mind,

I bought the place's picture and wrote
Too true: a shameless "come to bed"
Type of thing. Why not? Marriage
(If nothing else) removes that kind

Of failure. Not that we ever drew
Admiring cheers from old Eros,
But, at least, we found ourselves
There -- no need for involved evenings

Of witty sayings, wine glasses,
Holding hands: all the folderol
The unmarried are forced into.
No, come to bed, sweet doll,

I'd say ... but that, of course, is past.
And so I tore that card in two
And knew, at last, our long and rocky
Road from love was finally through.

Sunday. My last day up there.
Avoiding crowds hymning their closed
And narrow paths to joy, I set
Out down the beach trail. Some door
I sought that year was bound to open.
The walk edged along the lake,
Crossed the weed-grown dunes. Turned
Away from sand-clogged thickets, and left
Me stranded in a rout of shacks. No one
Left to sweep the night's sure drift
Of sand away from doors, pretend
That even these were somehow meant
For living. At last (I saw) we fool
Ourselves no longer, and getting out
Is all that's left. And nothing leave
But unkept promises. Yet hard
It was to slit that belly-full
Of love for you I'd always had.
Those miserable shacks whined with wind
And windows gaped in familiar dread.
However much I need your flesh,
You deserve, in all your gentleness,
More from love than I can give.
Take this poem. Take, forget, and live.
Whatever you may need, I am not.

-- R. R. Cuscaden

Chicago, Illinois

Three Senryu:

Evaluation

Old men clothed in brown
solemnly measure my worth.
Some hang upside down.