

## OLLIE

OLLIE WAS DYING, WHEN I MET HIM,  
OF CANCER  
IN A HOSPITAL BED.  
HELL OF A PLACE  
FOR A MAN LIKE THAT  
TO DIE.  
HE CAME UP HERE IN THE EARLY 1900'S.  
DID A LITTLE GOLD MINING,  
SOME CONSTRUCTION WORK.  
WAS A MEAT HUNTER  
FOR THE WORK CREWS  
BUILDING THE ALASKA RAILROAD.  
HE FINALLY SET UP A TRAP LINE  
UP AT BEAVER  
WITH HIS PARTNER.  
HE LIVED HIS LIFE AND LOVED IT.  
IN HIS WAY,  
AND IN HIS TIME.  
BUT THEN IT WAS CANCER  
AND INCURABLE.  
HE WANTED TO DIE AS HE LIVED,  
AND IN HIS OWN CABIN.  
BUT HIS 'FRIENDS' KNEW BETTER FOR HIM.  
BROUGHT HIM DOWN TO FAIRBANKS, TO THE HOSPITAL.  
KEPT HIM ALIVE FOR FIVE OR SIX EXTRA WEEKS.  
ALIVE AND BEDRIDDEN.  
DRUGGED AND FETTERED BY TUBES AND TAPES.  
MOST OF THE MAN DRAINED AWAY THROUGH PIPES AND BEDPANS,  
ONLY EIGHTY POUNDS NOW.  
BUT IN THE END HE FOOLED THEM ALL:  
ESCAPED INTO HIS DRUGGED DREAMS, BACK TO BEAVER.  
AND HE HEARD THE WOLVES OUTSIDE, HOWLING.  
AND ONE BIG GRAY WOLF, EYES FLASHING TEETH SHAPPING,  
BROKE THROUGH THE WINDOW OF HIS CABIN.  
AND OLLIE DIED AS HE LOVED AND LIVED.  
IN HIS WAY, AND IN HIS TIME.

she was drinking freely  
of a mountain spring  
and as she sees me,  
hides her shame  
for her damp hair and splattered blouse  
behind a blinding smile