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The St. Valentines Day Massacre

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FIRST DATE

She wore a brand of makeup called Urban Decay. The crescent moon was very close. In one of the collapsing cardboard boxes under the table, she discovered a book of 425 poems about the death of the poet's child. Our hearts were decked in flags and banners. Pickpockets crowded around. She said she'd slit my eyelid to help me see more.

ST. VALENTINE'S DAY MASSACRE

Street fairs churned with drifters and polio. Something bundled like a baby was buried under the rose bush. The assassin missed at point-blank range, distracted by the pair of dancing mice inside his head. Paper fell out of the sky. From then on, the Valentine heart couldn't beat on its own, but only stones the size of pigeon's eggs had permission to stay.

THE PENALTY FOR TRYING

The future already here, I walk along the beach, all the way from barber's college to the coroner's office, finding only clumps of foam and a man standing in the stern of a stone boat, shouting, Row, row. The quarterback's brother had disappeared into the river – while being pursued by police, the radio said. I return home with snow in my shoes. She looks at me as a diamond merchant might, or a one-eyed cat, or a firebomb.

HIGH SEAS

We plundered the sea lanes, drinking after-shave and decrying simple civilities, the bourgeois artifice, black-headed gulls dabbing at the corner of her eye, intercourse, of course, Florida oranges falling from bridges and signs.

AFTER THE FUNERAL

The angels must have been working a double shift. Table or booth? the hostess asked. The technical term is cardiomyopathy. We were crawling on our bellies for the shelter of the pines. Drunken sex with strangers never could get olives and figs to grow. An old farmer came out to the field and poked me in the ribs with the point of his shoe. I looked up. The expression on his face said there are no winners, only opponents.