

Robert Cohen

Poker Night at Mike's

Having a house but no car—
a house that was itself homeless,
a mangy orphan of development wars—
I caught the Burnside bus
plunging down Mt. Tabor,
and exited at Laurelhurst Park.
The rain left a sheen
on the darkening trees and grass
like gasoline leaves as a scar
of the human presence.
I entered the park like a dancer
on broken legs, lurching
indelicately through puddles.

O astonishment to my eyes!
A baggie of cocaine lay
under a bush, glistening,
speaking to me with an urgency
of anticipation so sharp
my nostrils sucked at air.
I threw it in my backpack
and scurried across the park
like a desperate beast
with a limited lifespan,
and pressed the buzzer on Mike's door.

I entered edgewise with a shifty
grin, reached into the pack and spread
out before the assembled players,

on the door we used as a table,
a sandwich of moldy bologna
on phosphorescent bread.

