

## The Snake

*For a long while  
he could not manage  
to bring himself  
upward  
to the surface  
of the world*

*the world of fragrance  
temptation  
and torture  
the place where the great snakes  
lay coiled in waiting*

Steve: Sure, I had stuff, lots of it! Sure! A house, wife and kids, and all kinds of things I brought to the house that made noises and broke down. Sure Lots of stuff!

Doug: What happened to it all?

Steve: What happened? I threw it away, that's what happened! What do I need that crap for? I don't need crap!

Doug: What do you need?

Steve: What kind of question is that? What do you need? You need something, go out and get it. That's what they told me. I got it alright. Lots of crap, is what I got. Why bother to name it. Shut up! What the hell do you need?!

Doug: I don't need a fuckin' thing!

Steve: Well good.

Doug: But don't tell me to shut up.

Steve: Then don't ask me.

*A snake wound itself around him then*



*of cascading waters  
where nothing matters  
like broken platters*

*“Maybe it was once  
a small beautifully shapen thing....”  
He said this to himself  
because his friend  
had gone off  
and he was satisfied  
to keep his own company  
and not listen  
to the snakes*

*“Maybe a carved figure  
of some sort  
Painted maybe  
Anyway  
delicate  
sure  
you can glue it together  
but it’s in pieces now”*

*The man held his hands  
palms up  
open  
in a gesture of emptiness  
and futility*

*“Broken pieces.  
A beautiful thing like that.  
broken. Why, I’m askin’? Why?”*

He decides that he must stand up and tries to use the brick wall for support,  
and then stumbles forward propelled by the unsteadiness of his legs.  
“What am I doin’? What’s goin’ on?!”

*and reaches for the wall  
so he does not fall  
A pigeon lands next to him*

*It flutters closer  
and pecks  
at the man's shoe laces  
before flying away  
The man gestures flamboyantly  
with his hand  
as if painting  
with a brush  
"Go away bird"  
he says  
"Get the fuck lost"*

He sits down again, hard on the stone pavement, and then falls over onto his side. There is a newspaper with the headline and date spinning around, like in an old B movie. And then a calendar with the pages of the month peeling off, and floating away.

Cut to: Interior of a café'. He sits at a table over his ham and eggs, coffee, and shot of rum. He is well dressed, and younger looking.

A waitress approaches.

Doris: (Refills his coffee) How's it goin', Doug?

Doug: Doin' fine. Doin' just fine. How's yourself, Doris?

(He twists the shot around with the palm of his hand.)

Doris: You gonna drink that, Doug?

Doug: Nah. It's my torture, Doris. It keeps me straight.

(He reaches for the coffee instead, and continues with the ham and eggs.)

There is a phone call from his mother:

"Douglas, where are you? Douglas, where are you? Douglas, where are you....Douglas!"

There is a slam across the soles of his feet, and at the base of his spine.

“Douglas, the police are here. They want to know why you are not responding. Where are you, Douglas? Douglas!”

*The police are hitting him  
with their clubs  
and telling him  
to move along  
but he can't move  
and is losing his hold again  
on the surface of the world*

*He hears  
the steam hissing  
sound of the snake  
and can feel  
its icy scales  
crawl  
all over his face  
and legs  
and back  
There is icy laughter  
that must be coming  
from the snake  
his aching legs  
and pain  
at the base of his spine*

Steve: You didn't resign. You didn't resign, my friend, you were fired!! They fired your ass!

The phone is ringing.

“Hello? Douglas!” his mother says. “Your father wants to know why you don't pay attention. Your father wants to know why, Douglas. Why? Sit up and pay attention....”

*and after awhile*



*the snake again  
and he is just riding that serpent  
throughout the history  
of the world*

Doug: I know! I know all that. I've been there, Doris.

Doris: Where have you been, Doug?

Doug: I don't know. All over. A million places.

Doris: Gosh. I'd love to travel.

Doug: Not me. I'm stayin' put. You can run, Doris, but you can't hide.

*Doris puts her hand on her hip.  
"You can say that again"  
and inclines her head with a nod  
They turn in unison  
to glance out the window  
An ambulance passes by  
splashing the puddles of water  
from the glaring street light  
reflections  
and disappears  
into the night*

The phone rings again.

"Hello, Douglas, it's your mother. Your father says you can use the car. Isn't that great? Yes. Like in that story by Hemingway, about the young man. What was his name? Krebs. Douglas? Douglas! Are you there? Are you listening?"

They have gotten him to his feet, but the pain is too much, and he falls again. The ambulance arrives. He wants to reach for something, but has forgotten what.

Doris: You gonna drink that shot, Doug?

The hissing of the snake begins as the ambulance drives off across the city streets, and into the night.