

Tourist

Sanford Fraser

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First Edition

Set in New Baskerville

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Tourist

My head,
prayer-bent over a folded map

my eyes, walking
lines

of streets
I don't have time to see

I look up
somewhere lost

among
strangers

I've known
all my life.

Plymouth Rock

Older than the natives
it is slowly stolen

by pilgrims in buses
trains and SUVs

chips of it taken
to distant suburbs

to mantles
above cozy fires crackling,

crackling far from the sound
of cold waves breaking

of ships arriving

chips of history
somewhere dry

among shells
from other shores.

Homecoming

Your father and mother
your wife and child
the child you've never seen
in front of you.

Everyone quiet
like strangers
posing for a photograph
their eyes on you.

Your hair, crew cut
your uniform pressed and spotless
a rack of ribbons on your chest
your right arm missing

you take their picture.

O Say Can You See

My cousin's a pilot in the war.
He sends me pictures of bombs dropping.
At school we bracket verbs and search
for dangling participles. Up there
he cuts the sky and buries bones.

Off Humarock Beach subs are sighted.
The long hands of the sea
so flat and still in the distance
bring K rations to the shore. We raise our arms
like wings and drop stones into the sand.

Each day I walk to the bus stop.
Gloria's there, her breasts already bursting,
her hair too red for Humarock.
My Great Dane Jack paws the dirt
struts his stuff in the morning light.

At school we sing the Star Spangled Banner.
Miss Graham stands while she plays the piano,
pulling the keys like weeds. Old Granite Face
we call her, daughter of the American Revolution
her gray hair and long dress, quiet as stone.