

LUNCH

Mealtime with its little ceremonies. Listening to one another across the table. Trying not to gnash too bestially. Taking the other in, the good sight of her, the long habit of seeing. Features. Fine complexion, clear eyes. Over soup. Over *tortillas con queso*, baked. Paprika on them, or a bit of scallion. olives on them. Toward the end of lunch the dog stirs to the prospect of plates. We make plans toward the end of lunch, we are free, we shape our days. Last night's bad dreams are smoke.

Others gulp sandwiches while talking on the phone. They don't have time to pee. I speak only of the favored ones, not the ones who gulp down candy bars on the plant floor to the roaring of machines. Nor of the ones who skip meals out of need, or eat tortillas with nothing to put on them. I don't speak of those—they're everywhere—who eat nothing at all and grow gaunt and can't speak to each other because they have nothing to say, they are starving. I don't speak of the beasts of the woods—the deer in their spring grazing, the fisher feasting on porcupines and house cats. I don't speak of seeds, of leaves gorging, or plant stems straining upward for light and roots down, for the dark.

When we lie dying we lose interest in eating. *Eat this, ma, you need the strength.* No, she does not. *We need to build you up.* But no, though she feels it, the strain her son places on her, *Stay alive, ma, don't leave us now.* Still, she does try, perhaps owes this to him. But her gesture is hollow, and the food he offers sawdust in her mouth. So she passes, no longer to eat, enters the darker chapter, to be eaten. But best not think of this. We are eating lunch here. In one another's eyes, the dailiness of love. Outside our window, mountains sport nap of oak and pine.