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## Talk

Richard Latimer  
*Denison University*

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## Talk

They will tell you that we learn to love each other  
in the barest of rooms, with a spartan lightbulb  
and folding chairs, our conversation clinging to us  
like sand. They will tell you about drunken fistfights  
in Charleston, South Carolina, where men embraced  
and struck each other in passing seconds.  
They will tell you that you are inconsolable,  
and they will teach you how to bleed,  
not wistful like a spinster's tears, but rigid  
and unyielding, a fist of emotion.  
They will tell you about white tiled walls  
and the sound of a windshield shattering.

They will tell you that desire is a brittle word,  
and you will believe them – because yours is a  
country  
of thin lines and small promises, where men  
who gave their backs and broad shoulders for the  
frontiers  
now sit in lame silences, in steel town bars  
and coffee shops everywhere. You have never felt  
the way a man's hands will ache for a beer  
and sympathy. There are words, Katrin,  
you have no definitions for. This, for instance,  
is what we call progress. Tell me what you know  
about progress. You wrote me stories about desire  
and the Mississippi, moonlight on the grey Hudson.  
When you see a river, you imagine its ocean,  
and dream of fictional deltas. I only see water.  
They will tell you all this. You will believe them.

*Richard Latimer*