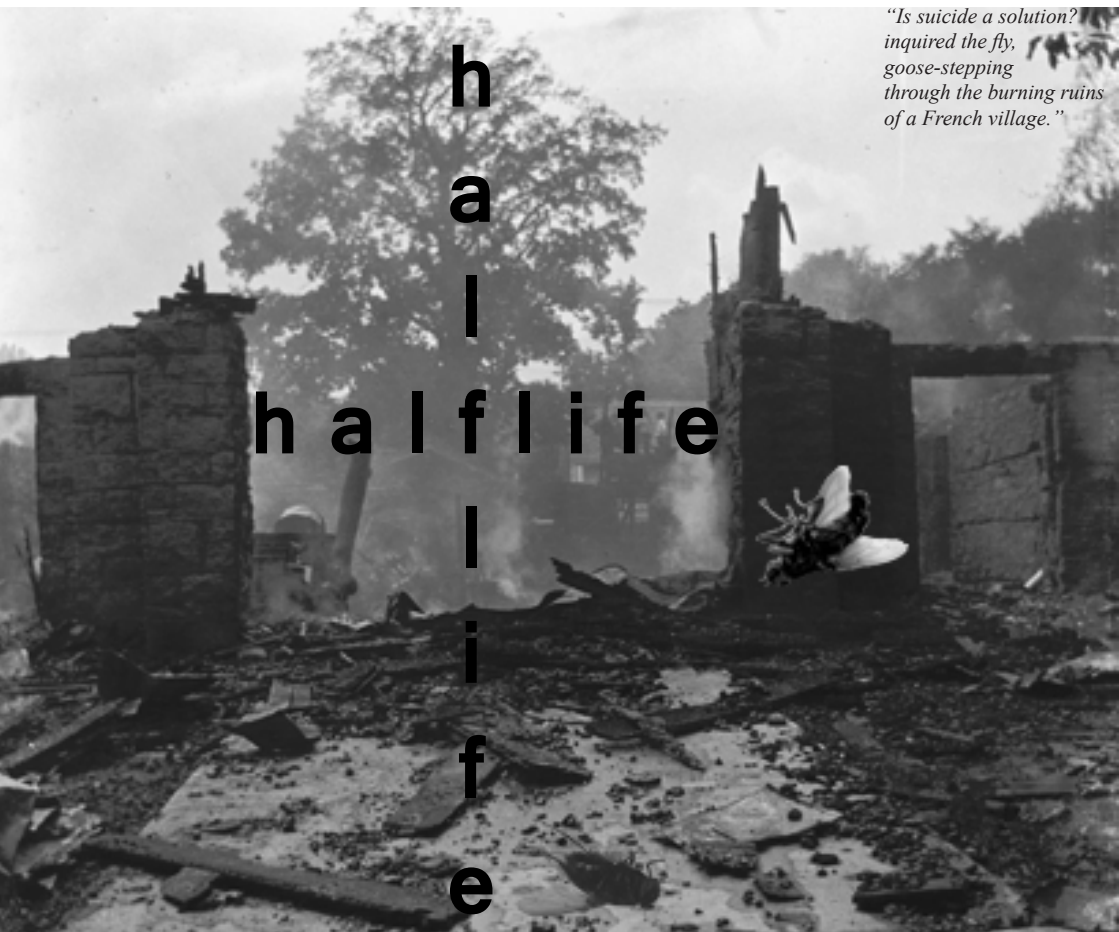


howie good



*"Is suicide a solution?
inquired the fly,
goose-stepping
through the burning ruins
of a French village."*

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and other poems

1
One
moment
he was

leaning
on a wall.
The next

he was
wondering
why

a wall,
and not
a tree.

2
He always introduced her
only by her first name.

Similarly, in the park,
she received shy glances

from the statues
of lesser known heroes.

3
Is suicide a solution?
inquired the fly,
goose-stepping
through the burning ruins
of a French village.

4
He used a camera
like a typewriter,
the page in front of him
covered with blood.

5
You see her sometimes
on the boulevard

of strip malls
and chain motels

dressed all in black

like a crow
or a sad country.

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6
The troops burst from the trenches.
The audience applauded,
her last name of no concern to anyone.

7
Some remember
additional symptoms

roaming the streets
armed.

Others say
it never happened,

only stricken
breath condensing

on windows

like the banditry
of evening.

8
They fell asleep side by side
on a bed of curled pencil shavings.
For long moments at a time,
the bicycle wheel ceased to stammer.

9
Attempts to contact
the dead with eyes

half-shut cannot
explain the sparks

and the darkness.

10
Then snow began to fall,
ringing cowbells slowly,
oh, so slowly, as if unsure
that it should.



misanthropy

Birds scuff for dark crumbs
under the sidewalk tables.

A police spy in the corner
notes the time. Everywhere

there are sons of bitches.
In a dingy rooming house

boarders come and go unseen
except for the burnt matches

they drop in the hall

coming attractions

As mourners do,
I'll cover the mirrors

before I go out
and still arrive in time

for the last showing.
The seats around me

will all be empty,
but toward the end,

when even the music stops
caring what happens next,

the heavy-set usherette
will prowl the aisles

of another gloomy day.
She'll be there and then

she won't, and she'll shine
her stinging light in my face.

has-been

In a rage
he dragged

his piano

out to the lawn.
He had once

been married
to Zsa Zsa Gabor.

Also her sister.

He hacked
at the piano

with an ax.

All those
white teeth

grinning.

history teaches

Shades half-drawn
against the sun.

Rows of empty desks.

Faint shrieks floating in
from the playground.

Streaks on the blackboard
of what may be grease

or may be blood.
The classroom globe

turning in the corner.



1			4
It's more of an effort than it should be			The kind of room set aside by the state
for you to go from one room			for poets to die in girlie magazines
to the next A dog wearing	i n		winking from the floor and a raucous
	into the des t ructive element		
a human expression follows you out	o t		but insolvent crow riding on your shoulder
Someone notices the sound of crying	h e		
disturbing the leaves and the light	d e		5 Your door was open so I glanced inside
on the crumbling ledges of clouds	s t		but all I could see was a stupendous blur
or doesn't	r u		as when the universe gets rushed off
	c t		ding dong in a paddy wagon
2 "Into the Destructive Element. . . that is the way"	i v		
scribbled on a bank deposit slip	e e		6 Even with your head on Dexedrine fire
Your face like a broken plate hastily glued back together	l e		beautiful women give you encouraging looks
	m e		
3 Wine at night and gin from a jam jar during the day and your dead mother outside the window holding out a shriveled black raincoat to you	n t		All art you tell the least damaged ones constantly aspires to the condition of light and then leaves shiver silver in the sun

(Written after reading Delmore Schwartz: The Life of an American Poet by James Atlas)



one night stay

An old man with eyes like dead sparrows
is telling a story at the next table

in the restaurant of the Quality Inn
in Lebanon, Pennsylvania, something

about the price of scrap metal after the war.
Suddenly he lowers his voice. The Jews,

he mutters. My wife and I look at each other.
Meat hooks. Gas chambers.

Our daughter notices. What? she asks.
I shake my head. We finish eating

and go up to our \$74-a-night room
and all lie on one bed and watch TV.

The studio audience is laughing.

RSVP

Make up
some excuse

why we can't -
flooding

along the coast,
or the puppy

gets car sick.
Or just say

I'm watching
a moth ricochet

around the room
like a Chinese acrobat

and waiting
for it to finally

settle somewhere
so I can kill it.

in the region of the heart

Four on a gloomy afternoon.
Noisy birds only contribute

further to the clutter
of her parents' bedroom.

Loneliness. Solitude.
It's difficult to explain

the difference
if you have no French.

We grasp at each other
Like orange traffic cones,

emergency vehicles.
Afterward, I walk back

under the shrugging trees,
my heart startled worse

than a bashed-in headlight.

I should never have thrown
away the box it came in.

at the breakfast table

Bombs Kill 95
the headline says

beside the sunflowers
in a milk bottle



gifts for the end of the decade

I give you burning towers
as a source of light.

I give you green troops
to plug a gap

that mutinies and desertions
have torn in the line.

I give you a Christmas tree farm
that is continuously crying.

I give you expired pills,
a book on death,

something machine-made
but sexy to wear.

I give you another day
of me explaining

night with my hands.



escape plan

I speak consciously
in obscurities.
For extra warmth,
I stuff my shoes
with rejected poems.
I disregard the goddess
who says who can
and who cannot go.
I stare at the map
on a diner placemat.
I think of my children,
the ones I never had.
I leave a goodbye note
where they won't find it.

浪人吟

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