

## How We Talk

Greta Cunningham

I wonder why he's called "*The Drifter*"  
If it is his eyes,  
*drifting* down the page  
Looking at the cup of coffee on the table  
Or the short cropped nails,  
Perched on the corner of his eggshell white frame.  
*Maybe he's the bird*  
Maybe he's wondering what dirt is under those nails  
Tiptoeing along the plot of paper where he grows  
I'd like to know where the dirt under his are from  
*Where he's been*  
*What he's done*  
I keep my nails there,  
Poised,  
Debating what I want to say next,  
I'm not sure if I've gotten to know him well enough,  
"*The Drifter*,"  
I wonder why his collar is twisted  
Like the corners of a kite in March,  
And what's making him smile.  
*Is there something in his hands,*  
*Out of my site?*  
Crossed in his lap,  
Shoulders curving like a mountain,  
Is there something swimming in a pool at its base?  
But,  
I think it's time  
*To say goodbye to "The Drifter,"*  
And let him *drift* away.  
I flip through pages like writers erase words,  
*Not quiet right*  
Until I find him,  
The man in "Grape Wine,"  
Not cherry or strawberry.

The taste on his lips is not sweet,  
It does not speak of summer  
Or the lyrics of folk song  
On the alternative radio's  
"Acoustic Morning" Sundays,  
It tastes of stale breath  
And the sent that lingers in cellars,  
I wonder what grape wine did to him.  
His eyes are red and watery,  
Like strawberries picked too early in the spring  
They want to weep  
Like strawberries what to bleed sugar,  
But his tears are not sweet enough  
To caress the calico face in his portrait.  
Whatever makes his eye lids fall  
Like oak leaves in autumn,  
Raised his under eyes to be beds for his weary peepers,  
Wasn't worth the martyrdom of his ocean,  
But somehow I feel for this man,  
Buried under his  
Title  
Grape wine,  
And I want to share him.  
Maybe my dad will know why he is crying,  
And why his tears don't reach his cheeks  
But I want to share him  
Because that's how we talk,  
Through the people in this book  
Though silent,  
They can say so much more  
Than the two of us.