

LOUIS SIMPSON

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## Avalon

“There’s a place named Avalon  
where you could walk.”

She shows me the map.  
“I’ll find it,” I say.

“I’ll just drive around.  
I’ll find it. I don’t need a map.”

I have driven around  
half the roads on Long Island.

Finally I come to a dead stop  
at the sea.

I’m such a fool.  
I should have taken the map.

What will I say to her  
when I get back?

As it happens, I don’t have to.  
She says it was . . . clever,

doing what I did. Nothing  
is more beautiful than the sea.

## Sentimental Education

He first fell in love  
when he was sixteen.

To hear him tell it, she  
was Aphrodite surfing

ashore on a seashell,  
He never got over her.

Though, Lord knows, he tried,  
with others who weren't

"his type." Never again!  
Ah, the alimony, the pain!

\*

Someone has given his heart  
a jump-start.

It's running again.  
What a wonderful feeling!

He won't make the same  
stupid mistakes twice.

This time will be different.  
Anyhow, it's not as if he

were falling in love.  
What has he to lose?

\*

He used to be smart,  
liked to listen to Buxtehude,

or at least Mozart.  
Now he showers to Cole Porter.

What does he see in her?  
What does she see in him?

The peasant who pleases one  
is better off than the king

with a thousand beautiful wives  
he doesn't, said Solomon.

## Joan Crawford Was Right

Joan Crawford was right  
about the wire coat hangers,  
not to have them in the house.

They come with the shirts,  
go to the closet, and quietly  
hang on a bar. Then the shirts  
go back to the dry cleaners, one  
by one, until the last shirt is gone.

Now the wire coat hangers  
have the room to themselves.  
Then it begins . . . on the bar,  
the shuffling of empty hangers.  
They are moving from the closet

to the floor. It is astonishing  
how the pile of hangers grows,  
in twos, tangled with each other.  
You think about them a great deal.  
But you can't procrastinate forever. . . .

You sit yourself down one day  
and put wire hangers in bunches,  
the hooks all facing the same way.  
You never want to see another wire  
hanger. You have a life of your own.

So you tie them with twist ties,  
and drive them in a “Hefty” bag  
back to the cleaners. The woman  
doesn’t thank you, as if every day  
she is given hangers tied like these.