

REVERSE NOIR

Bruce Lader

Pre-dawn glow, fleeing to the border
both realize they've been poisoned, fatally;
she slips hand in blouse, pulls Derringer,
keep driving and don't try anything funny—
a roadblock, then blast of a demanding honk,
headlights barreling at them in the rain, he
swerves onto shoulder, precipice a stowaway.

Suspicions turn paranoid of ulterior motives
to eliminate the other, abscond with briefcase
containing antidote, possess a piece
of that elusive golden light, take it along
an unmapped road of shadowed entanglement,
a dream losers triumph, bask in a jackpot,
redeem blundered affairs, loves trifled.

If it weren't a dangerous risk to trust an exile,
his dubious resources, her covert contacts,
they'd split the loot, wallow in happiness
at the husband's expense in exotic settings
beyond the law, have a foolproof racket
devised on a nifty scheme with the traveler
whose lonely craving flesh duped him.

He wagered his last dollar she was hooked
all the way down when she had *him*
in her palm, took the enthralled pigeon
for a ride head over heels in a lair of hungry
promises, reneged with counterfeit talk,
the net of deceit dropped, every link
tightened on the drifter desperate for a job

in a town tyrannized by the husband,
a wire-pulling lothario jealous of the world,
aloof from the spell-binding woman
who endorses a deal with the wanderer,
treats him to a salad bar and movie,
sidles over in a bookshop, plants a seed
of intrigue that germinates a dilemma.