

# “A READING IN UNLOVE”

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Once on yellow paper with green lines  
He wrote a poem  
And he called it “Chaps” because  
That was the name of his dog,  
And that’s what it was all about.  
And his teacher gave him an “A”  
And his mother hung it on the kitchen door  
And read it to his aunts  
That was the year Reverend Tracy took all  
The kids to the zoo  
And let them sing on the bus;  
And that was the year his baby sister was born  
With tiny toenails and no hair  
And his mother and father kissed a lot  
And the girl around the corner sent him a valentine  
And signed it with rows of X’s  
And his father always tucked him in bed at night  
And was always there to do it.

Once on white paper with green lines  
He wrote a poem  
And he called it “Autumn” because that  
Was the name of the season,  
And that’s what it was all about.  
And his teacher gave him an “A” and told him  
To write more clearly.  
And his mother never hung it on the kitchen door  
Because it had just been painted;  
And the kids told him that Reverend Tracy smoked cigars  
And left the butts in the pews.  
That was the year his sister got glasses with  
Thick lenses and black frames.  
And the girl around the corner laughed when he went to  
See Santa Claus at Macy’s  
And the kids told him why his mother and father  
Kissed a lot.  
And his father never tucked him in bed at night  
And got mad when he cried for him to do it.

Once on a paper torn from his notebook  
He wrote a poem  
And he called it "Question Marked Innocence"  
Because that was the name of his girl  
And that's what it was all about.  
And his professor gave him an "A"  
And a strange and steady look.  
And his mother never hung it on the kitchen door  
Because he never let her see it.  
That was the year Reverend Tracy died  
And he forgot how the end of the Apostle Creed went  
And he caught his sister necking on the back porch  
And his mother and father never kissed anymore  
Or never even talked.  
And the girl around the corner wore too much make-up  
And made him cough when he kissed her.  
And at 3:00 a.m. he tucked himself in bed,  
His father snoring soundly ....

That's why on the back of a pack of matches  
He tried another poem  
And he called it absolutely nothing  
Because that was what it was all about  
And he gave himself an "A"  
And a slash on each damned wrist  
And hung it on the bathroom door  
Because he couldn't reach the kitchen.