The Captains of Champaign

Carl Boon
THE CAPTAINS OF CHAMPAIGN

by Carl Boon

After Kennedy fell, football continued, and we got wasted Thursday nights

at Clark Bar, scarlet-faced and scanning the blondes who came and went.

Blatz was a quarter a pint, and Marty, blonde as corn in June, motioned

with a stitched-up finger to Janey who sat with a vodka tonic, wishing

it would rain. But always the storm clouds, which peaked near Decatur,

resisted us and fell away, leaving September's heat and the dying fields.

So we went home, looking east and west, stopping at the juke box for the song

that mattered, that would take us breathing and whole toward whatever
paradise meant back then. A girl, a boy, Bobby Darin oohing and aahing and so
unlike us it didn’t matter. We were scraps of Fords in Aurora, screams
in Bourbonnais, the obstacles of mothers in Peoria. We danced a bit and, weary
of it all, went for enlightenment instead. When it didn’t come, Jesus
did, then children and grandchildren and obscene thoughts about the past.
Janey tonight—so far into the future of her—sews a granddaughter’s blouse.
Marty moves his hips across a foyer, staring past Georgia, so wide and forgiving.