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The Captains of Champaign

Carl Boon

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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.