

DEAR MR. VICE PRESIDENT

Thomas Lynch

It was one cow trying to
mount the other —
“bulling” they call it hereabouts,
though in fairness
the bull was nowhere to be found —
just one black and white cow
with a pink udder
and its own agenda
trying to mount another
that fractured the latter’s hindquarters
so it lay out in the high meadow,
looking oafish and put-upon.
It couldn’t move or graze,
couldn’t make its way to water.
It made for itself an awful noise —
that low-grade plaint
cows make while calving,
but worse somehow: a hopeless case.
Squinting upland through his window
J.J. could make out something wrong.
He tracted it down into the
haggard to tend to it, bringing it
fresh grass, sups of water, carrying on
the mindless conversations
humans have with larger mammals.
For days it just lay there
shitting itself, making its lament,
J.J. hoping it might find its way
back into the brutish world
nature had assigned to it.
He spoke to the priest
and lit a candle. He called the vet
who came and had a look.
But it was broken. That was obvious.
It was going nowhere.
He sent for Coffey then

who came with his truck
rigged with a crane and length of cable.
After putting a kill shot
between its eyes, Coffey hoist it
into the gray evening air.
That moment it hung there in the sky,
Mr. Vice President,
the deadweight mass of its disaster,
its limbs akimbo,
the glaze of its eyes,
its bestial ruination pure,
the misery it was so
suddenly out of —
all of it put me in mind
of the charred corpses
of those men they strung
from the bridge that time
after dragging them
through the mob and town —
that silhouette of broken parts
twisted by gravity and damage
into misdirection.
“Ah hell,” JJ. said,
“it’s entirely fucked.”
Disconsolate,
Mr. Vice President,
that is the word
that came into my brain
when JJ. said
“Ah hell,” again,
and again, “it’s fucked.”
Then went inside
and closed his door
to everything out there
where he had been.