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 tractored 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," J.J. said, "it's entirely fucked." Disconsolate, Mr. Vice President, that is the word that came into my brain when J.J. said "Ah hell," again, and again, "it's fucked." Then went inside and closed his door to everything out there where he had been.