

I remember when Albert was shot to death by a drug-crazed goon. Drug death in a small town, by violence is a shattering experience. Albert bled to death in the alley between the taxi company and the Chinese food joint. From one in the morning 'til four in the morning Albert was alone in the chilly Fall night, bleeding to death, in the center of a small town. Nothing is moving then, only the steady drip of Albert's red blood into the dust. With it dripped all the wisdom Albert had accumulated, all the old fishing spots, then and now, all Albert's gift for geography, knowing when the rain will gully up and hit the floodplain, all his reflections on scope and dimension, how it filtered to us that small towns are dying. He laid out in the ordinary language of memories, the extraordinary. How the light at dawn affects the darkness on the lake. Then, as now the talon of drugs snatched at small town eyes. Most of us left as fast as we could. Albert stayed behind. Small towns can kill you in many ways, break your heart, small your face, tear out your ability to reach, foil your need. Small towns ate up Albert and we were left to bury him. We took him, in our canoe out to the lake, where the wind waited.