

# Sammy Parker

## Trout Fishing

I.

*—sunlight through  
slow, rippling  
watery slants of  
the high mountain's river,  
muted light off  
small, variegated bottom rocks,  
like the faint, gauzy swirling of  
harbor lights, far away, through  
evening fog*

*early morning's  
pine- and green-leaf-sharp air,  
the droop of  
wind-bent trees at  
bank's edge,  
gentle limb-spun eddies—*

II.

The cast lands firm, precise,  
halfway across  
the river's narrow expanse,  
just above a large, half-submerged rock,  
winding around, then downstream  
just below  
the water's pale-green,  
small-white-rapids surface,  
the spinner turning rapidly,  
it and hook catching  
river-bent sunlight,  
drawn taut against  
water tension, monofilament  
spooling inward,  
line hissing quietly at  
each handle turn.

III.

When he'd left at daylight,  
they all were still asleep.  
His 41<sup>st</sup> year began alone in  
the truck's cab, briefcase still in  
the passenger seat, the smell of  
coffee and a sense of  
growing unease in  
the close, quiet air.

IV.

He liked the feel of  
the familiar steering wheel and  
the forest's grainy highway,  
sharp curves and upward angles,  
close, irregular walls of  
tall trees, occasional steep drops, and  
higher peaks beyond.  
He realized how much he liked  
driving away from  
the house and toward  
the river's seclusion  
though  
all of meaning and importance  
stayed behind, sleeping in  
safe, secure, subdivision warmth.  
He stopped at Saturday morning's  
deserted ranger station,  
poured some bourbon in  
the cooling coffee, stared at  
the sun's rising above  
tree-topped ridges, thinking,  
*What's not right?* because  
he knew all *was* right, all  
the way it should be,  
the way, yes, he wanted it to be—  
still, the unease, a question with  
no words or form or reason, and  
he couldn't find the source of  
what made the good maybe  
not quite  
good enough—

He needed the river, so  
he drove again toward  
a different right and good.

V.

*—the flick of his wrist,  
the hook and spinner catching  
the morning air,  
they and he and the water  
the only movement,  
the dirt beneath his booted feet,  
brush behind,  
sandwich and thermos on  
the truck seat,  
Smith & Wesson .38 Special in  
the clutter of  
the unlocked glove compartment,  
the sun arcing slowly overhead,  
he in the center of  
all that paid him no mind—*

*he cast again and again,  
the beauty of routine,  
knowing that he needed this like  
Hemingway needed Key West and  
Cuba and Paris and Africa and  
knowing, too, that Ernest decided  
all of that and all of everything else  
were not enough because, well,  
maybe nothing is enough, but  
maybe that's ok—*

*later,  
driving down  
the familiar winding road in  
the sun-rich warming air of  
near noon,  
he locked the glove compartment,  
sipped the last of  
the coffee and the half-pint, and  
knew he'd take the subdivision and  
the forest, feeling good about  
heading home,  
knowing that  
they'd be glad to see him and*

*hoping that  
he'd catch more trout  
next time he fished by himself in  
the center of  
all that paid him no mind,  
the exact way it was  
supposed to be*

**Sammy Parker** taught English at Western Carolina University and the University of Tennessee, Knoxville and had poems published in multiple editions of the literary journals at both. He's a U. S. Air Force veteran and worked in technical publications at Oak Ridge National Laboratory. Poems of his have been published in multiple editions of *Belle Rêve Literary Journal*, in *Red River Review*, and forthcoming in *Appalachian Journal*.