

# Serving the Papers

*Lance Larsen*

They sit in stiff unmatched recliners,  
a faint halo of grease smearing  
the head rests. The Bishop asks again,  
Do you want your names removed?  
They nod, the husband digging  
his thumb into his Bible—one of those  
slick-covered green ones J.W.s sell.  
“We have Jehovah now,” the wife says,  
leaning over to tap the cover,  
as if she expected it to grow  
a godly mouth and declare itself.  
“Study group right here twice a week.”  
They’re thin and brittle-looking,  
dusty almost, like figurines left  
on a closet shelf above unread books.  
Fourteen years they’ve been on church rolls.  
I look around. Matted carpet,  
a half-eaten dinner of liver and onions,  
the smell of dog and standing water.  
Maybe two visits a week is a sort  
of conversion—a window opening  
inside your chest, a twist of air.  
The Bishop’s voice brushes the walls,  
licks the corners, circles their faces.  
They still want out. So we take  
their signatures and, with no ceremony  
or dusting of our shoes, ease  
into the pounding heat, already erasing  
the faces tethered to the names.