

on cherry hill with my martin backpacking guitar

1

three years ago

Martin began making them--

cut-down, sawn-off

easy to carry anywhere

I know an executive

Chris at the music store told me *who*
takes his to the office. This is a big seller
for men

30 to 45

half mandolin, half banjo
mellow and light so you can
feel it hum, pressed
against your ribs--
start your whole insides
to singing with one
strum

2

the first time I came out to Cherry Hill

a crack in the old

stone bridge

revealed yellowed photos torn

from *Penthouse* and *Playboy*,

sent our 8-yr-old stomachs

to our mouths--

threatened to pull us

inside-out, crotch first

why "Cherry Hill?" I asked

and Kirk told me he'd heard

all the high school girls

had lost their cherries here

we were so young

we looked for them

3

coming out here alone

with my guitar

I have developed a new

religion

or maybe an old one

the long grass on the hill

contains the spirits

of all little boys
who giggle here
and later find the world
mortared with more flesh
than any centerfold

the Spirits Temporal
graze as lost sheep
until I return, an older David
with my harp, singing
Absalom Absalom!
releasing them into the Eternal

in this ritual of adult
perspective
you must be
grass level, facing Heaven and playing
the chords to
Gone to Carolina in My Mind

4

I went walking with my 5-year-old daughter
and our feet led us
to Cherry Hill;
she wanted to stand on the
stone bridge
I'd told her about
see herself in the still creek below
she ran
here and there, collecting bits of
trash, old pop cans
oil jugs, asking, *Can we
recycle this? and Why
do people want to trash
this place?*

I wanted to tell her
want is too strong a word
but all I said was, *Don't touch --
it's dirty. Someone else will get it.*
of course, no one else would but at least
she never found
any photos

going home she asked,
*Why do they call it "Cherry Hill?" I didn't see
any cherry trees.*

and I had a thought
that today was a good day
for planting some