

Rehabilitating Joseph Adams

They caught him with the pictures—
drawings in ink
he'd done during free hour
holding the notebook up
close to his face like
he might be
writing his mother
or doing homework

The pictures had come
that night
after the first session
with her
he couldn't forget her
fingers, the one nail
broken, and he'd wondered
how she broke it
that's what he was thinking
when she asked him
*Would you like to talk
about why you're here
Joe?*

*Joe, not Cadet Adams
not Private
but Joe*

and he couldn't talk but
he met her eyes
her blue eyes her
soft smile
and the pictures just
came to him
all night
and he tried pressing them
out of his eyes
with his palms
but he loved
the pictures
in which he loved
her
and she, him

so he placed them

on the paper
during free time
so he could return to them
whenever
so they wouldn't
be lost
and he wondered again
how she broke that
fingernail, some tenderness
swelling his throat,
he planned to take it gently into
his hands, kiss her
knuckles
smell the perfume
of her closeness
and hold her

so he wrote at the bottom
Miss Hayes, Ma'am
this private loves you
Ma'am,
this private dreamed
all night of you
Miss Hayes, Ma'am and
this here is what he
dreamed, Ma'am
could he see you
sometime
Ma'am?

They've caught him with the pictures
Drill Instructor Brucker
shouting, *What is this*
Cadet Adams?
M-m-m some mighty pretty
pictures—
You think I should give
these lovelies
to Miss Hayes?

No Sir

No Sir, Cadet
No sir-ee
I think you should
give them to Miss Hayes
Don't you Cadet? Don't
you think an

*invitation
should be hand-delivered?*

*No Sir
Please Sir, this Private will throw
them away
Sir, he was
out of line, Sir*

*and Brucker lowers
his voice
through a smile, chuckles
You're damn right Joe, out of
line*

*and Brucker turns, moves to
the door
But I think I will
show them to her, after all
Miss Hayes'll get a laugh
out of a prick
like you, Adams*

*and Cadet Adams,
still at attention
closes his eyes
sees no more pictures
of Miss Hayes—
only Brucker
Brucker laughing
Brucker turning
Brucker blood-red
Brucker, Brucker, dead*