

CANADA FERRY ●

Lisa Low

Scrawny legs strapped into Birkenstocks. Knobby knees spread wide, deliberate for standing firm. A wig of gray-brown hair, wire-rim glasses pressed to a slab of sunburnt nose. Someone thin flown in from the sixties, now probably seventy-two, looking into the fog from the ferry-boat floor. I sit in a white plastic chair beside him. To my left, a good-looking man leans on a rail with a thickset neck; a tattoo of eagles flying east-to-west on his upper arm, and the burnished lips of a god. I could kiss those lips forever. Our eyes meet briefly, but he vanishes quickly into a cruise-ship porthole, my flash-in-the-pan romance gone now, over forever. Of course, I had to find the smokers' corner. Come to the back of the boat for a bit of fresh air and find myself parked among smokers in the last-left chair. A railing in front holds the people back. They have to have a smoke. It's rude, I think, like stuffing litter in at heaven's gate. Next comes a three-year-old, held up high in her mother's arms, her shirtwaist blowing back, her face strapped into an oxygen mask attached to a clear-running tube of air. Beside her, an old woman with clumps of hard-looking hair; next, a couple; the

man, older, his free hand dropping to cup
the sagging strip of middle-aged bottom
beside him; next, a family of three.
The daughter, a beauty, ducking her
head in under the lifted wing of her
father's sheltering arm while the mother
stands back to snap the remembering shot.
The daughter smiles, unconceited, the
fiat of her pure, white smile lighting
up the world. My loneliness and her
happiness in this never-to-be-repeated
hour: unforgettable.