

Group Session

He has an empty knife sheath on his belt. He needed protection from the police, whose years of harassment cost him his marriage, his jobs, his sanity twice. They tap the phone and put spies up in his attic. Now they've even taken the knife away. He endures it only through the power of his perfect enlightenment, the satori reached spontaneously years ago, and if we want to hear about it again, he'll oblige us. But I hear a sound from the kitchen, a complaint growing louder, so I leave the room (perhaps I'm a police spy: he watches me go), my mission to tend to the anxious cat, a tortoise shell tom—genetic rarity—pacing at the door, then rearing up to stretch toward the knob it could never turn. I let it into the cold, small prints in light snow. In the close air of the living room, the man talks about the help of God, how prayer made his bail. The voice turns on worn bearings around an armature of ego. Speech saves him from silence. We could jeer, but we know that the knife is buried deep within him.

—*Bert Almon*