

Alice Tepescuintle / from *THE YEAR OF THE  
MIRROR MURDERS — A MYSTERY*

UNRECOGNIZABLE CORPSES  
ARE OFTEN SOME(BODY) ELSE

It's an old trick:  
the face disfigured  
by a shotgun blast

On Pineapple Mountain  
a body lies in a pine glade

Back in Lagoonville,  
a missing trombone player  
walks away from a nightclub

Behind venetian blinds  
Sergeant Maple  
of the homicide squad  
looks out thoughtfully  
over the marquee lights  
of the old movie house  
on Orange Street

a body in a pine glade  
could be (any)body

At 4AM  
who remembers the face  
of a trombone player

leaving a crowded room  
or the billowing sound  
of transparent curtains  
by a balcony window  
thrown open to the night

## MURDER OF A BOOKWORM MAKES THE LAGOONVILLE DAILIES

(Captured in essence  
by a passing journalist:)

On a Friday afternoon  
Detective Barracuda  
— convincingly disguised  
behind thick glasses —

takes a stroll/ down  
to the Lagoonville Public Library

Through the double doors  
a matrix/ of hovering shelves  
obsessively organized

provides a suitable foil  
for a five-time killer

drawn by/ the natural reticence  
of the library setting

Projected crime scene  
for victim number 6  
the hypothetical “body”

a man/ believed to be the driver  
of a shiny black automobile

enmeshed in/ the heavy textbooks  
of the medical profession

At closing time  
a scent of lilacs  
drifts/ through the enormous room  
while/ out on the streetcorner

illiterate cops  
puff a dirty cigarette

unperturbed by an echo  
of approaching footsteps

## MYSTERIOUS LUGGAGE

well-travelled/ and smelling  
of seawater  
(nondescript in description)  
clangs a forgotten doorbell

— empty apartment echo  
of faraway furniture —

Defunct residence/ of  
a certain Mrs. Merle (dead now)  
who worked without complaining  
for seventeen years  
down at the telephone service

the contents in question  
in context of  
a murder investigation:

Unfortunate Arm  
of a shop window dummy  
severed/ in several places

(no piano player)  
lying negligently  
inside her torn négligé  
the attached card:  
reading “sent by a maniac”

prompting/ a killer's laughter

and the well-oiled lurch  
of a caged elevator  
plunging six stories

through the coiled stranglehold  
of a spiral staircase



## THE WOMAN WHO WENT OVERBOARD

Inside the Green Maze  
an orchestra leader  
with a head for figures  
spies an hourglass:

a blonde/ with  
a tolerance for emeralds

*déjà vu* in blue swells  
or the double-doll  
who could've been/ her twin sister

advancing advantageously  
towards/ the roulette tables

Who can understand  
the shock of recognition  
of someone so long dead  
crossing a hazy nightclub

accompanied in person  
by the split personality  
of a phony ship's captain?

"Floored by the floor show"/ or  
numbed in the middle  
of a musical number

— somewhere in the orchestra  
a trombone stops playing —

her name/ like a skip  
in a phonograph record  
sounding over and over  
inside his head



ALL BLONDES ARE THE SAME or:  
NO ONE NEEDS A MOTIVE  
FOR KILLING THEIR OWN HUSBAND

Sordid scenario  
evidently ordinary:

Sultry showpiece  
languishing in gangland  
meets a man/ lousy with money

mendacity mogul  
dressed as an alligator

A three-time sucker  
for a nightclub leg  
and waterfront vernacular

easily disposable/ after  
an impromptu proposal

Matrimony/ is immaterial  
to a hardboiled bride  
handy with a candlestick  
— remarkable *sang-froid*  
of a trademark style —

and/ a history of homicide

Women have always  
enjoyed a rotten reputation

“Hang it on the blonde”/ because  
who else would wear perfume  
smelling of lilacs

In the realm of fact/ an un-  
satisfactory conclusion

but what the hell  
— horror of a sunday  
for forlorn picnickers  
who stumbled on the body —

turns out/ she did it all  
for the ski champ

six feet of dreamboat/ and  
the only one that mattered