

Craig Cotter

I Can't Buy my Childhood House

3937 Baybrook Drive
Drayton Plains, Michigan

that my parents built in 1963
for \$10,300.

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I dislike the color grey now
and it's a grey brick house

where I felt at home.

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Saw my dad pull stumps
from the dirt backyard
with a green and white Ford Fairlane.

He'd wrap a chain around the roots
and the car's chrome bumper,

the stumps would stick in the ground,
he'd floor it

wheels of the car spinning in place
spewing dirt jets.

He'd horse the engine
until each stump released.

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I can't live long enough
to replace oaks the former owners cut down

not wanting to rake their leaves.
Silver maples cut down.

The last time I was there one shag-bark hickory
had survived the axe.

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Watkins and Loon Lake still there,
the Clinton River through the Drayton Plains Nature Center.

Drayton Plains is gone, just a post-office,
now the mailing address Waterford.

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All the wild land across the street,
fields, woods, swamps

an ugly subdivision.

The air wouldn't smell right,
no blackberries or elderberries in bloom.

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Maybe I could keep the pool
and develop a twink harem.

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I'd have to spend billions
tearing down the hundreds of houses built across the street

to return the big swamp.

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I face it's gone—
where do I want my ashes?

That bend in the Clinton River
just south of the Nature Center.

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I wanted that house back
so many years.

There's even a goddamn sign at the Hatchery Pond now
not to feed the fucking ducks.

Christ the next time I visit
I'm bringing 27 loaves of bread,

will feed the ducks, swans, and geese
until they haul me away.

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There are fences around each yard now,
before fields of grass 200 yards wide,

all the neighbors' lawns connected,
kids ran from yard to yard.

Trilliums and hepatica each spring.

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How can California be my home?
Almost nothing here from that time.

My dad's RIT college ring in the gun safe.
Couple .308 rifles my grandfather made.

Four Old-Fashioned glasses my parents received as a wedding gift in
1959.

Me.

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Almost nothing.

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