

Jon Loomis

The Past

When Uncle Chet died, they found a note
in his desk — *give Jon the videos*. A big box
arrived by UPS, fifty-seven tapes, all hard-core —

Truck Stop Sluts, Dirty Debutantes, China Silk.
I was thirty-five, just divorced. He knew
I'd watch them, the kid who'd rifled his *Playboys*,

knew I'd sit for two days straight, drinking scotch,
fast-forwarding the dialogue — a kind of wake.
Sex is the biggest nothing of all time, Warhol said,

but Chet didn't think so, alone the last few years
in his La-Z-boy, pacemaker ticking.
The women were mostly blonde, pubic hair

pruned into spun-gold strips, breasts firm
as mangoes, nipples always erect. *The biggest
nothing of all time*, I thought, half-drunk,

half-dozed on the couch: friction, hydraulics —
someone's pimply buttocks always churning.
Labial twilight out in the garden, tape whirl

in the gobbling slot. The camera wobbled,
panned out (elbow, flare of hip, small
square chin), the blurred and glistening parts

merged into a girl I swear I recognized,
she'd haunted High School's dim periphery,
dimpled and busty, pregnant at seventeen —

I called her a name once, clever boy,
and she'd cried. Nose job. Breast job.
Hair lacquered and swooped — still, I'm almost sure

it was her, kneeling, taking one man after another
into her mouth. Forget what you've planned,
what you know. Your life's veering off on its own —

brakes failed, back seat on fire. There's a dark
house ahead, everyone you've ever known inside.
Close your eyes. Drive as fast as you can.