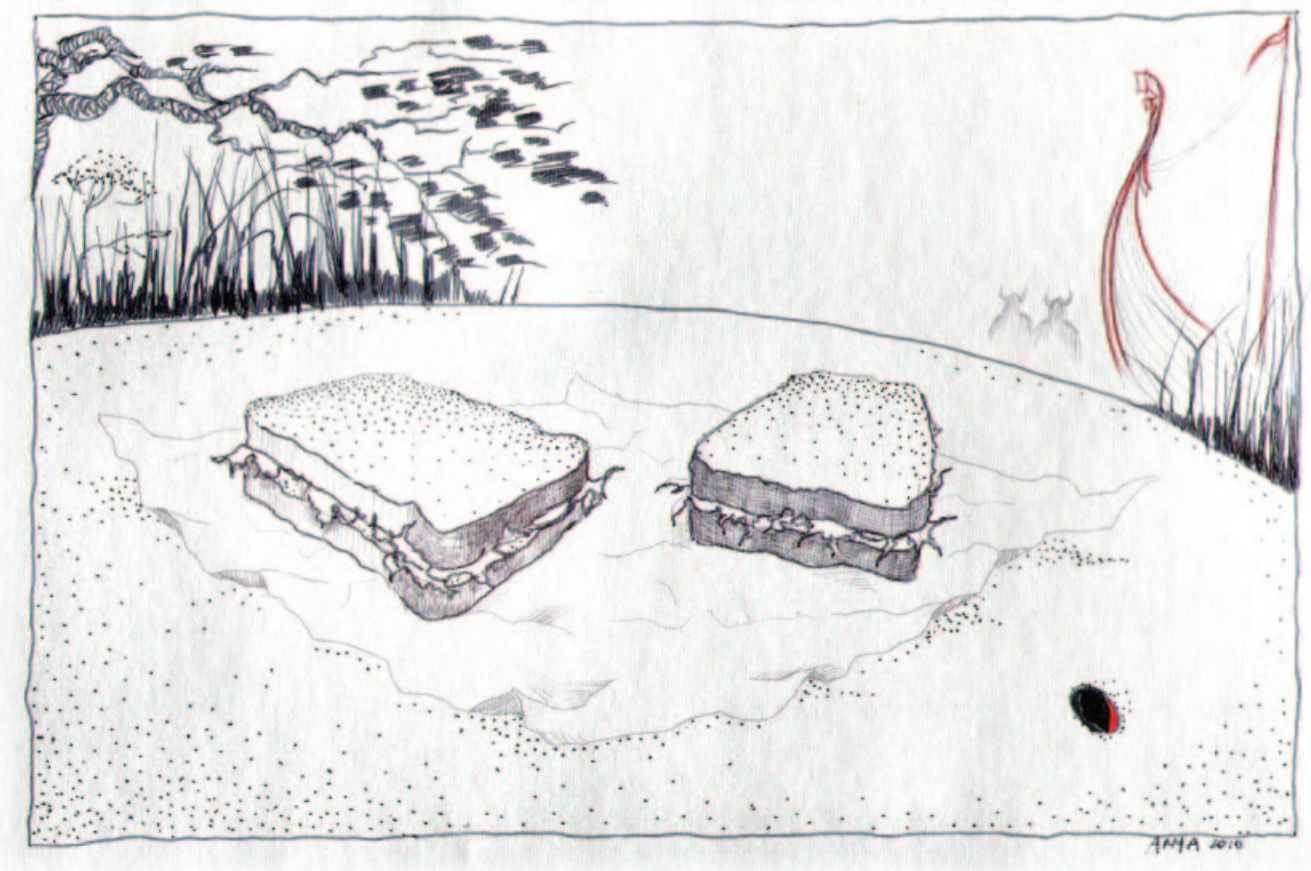


Mooring Stones



The fields wave like the ocean when the corn is up and the storm is just taking shape.

During these storms Traver comes into the house and sits at the round kitchen table and looks out the sliding glass door to the bird seed from the bird feeder blown to the ground. No birds in sight. He used to farm with his father and they'd play chess while they waited. But his father is gone. His wife is in Kansas City and his son in Seattle. Even the diner downtown has closed, so he gets his coffee at Burger King, where the lights are too bright to enjoy it.

He listens to the woman on the weather radio repeat the direction of the wind. The tall evergreen trees on the west edge of the yard bend at the waist. Beyond the trees there is a granite stone, large and loping, resting half in the ground and half turned out. There is a hole, one inch around and four inches deep, on its flat belly. After awhile Traver puts his boots back on and goes out to the stone to watch the storm clouds, to worry that it might hail.

It was here that he first practiced making love, fitting his boy's penis into the round hole. It was here that he and his father ate lunch – two ham sandwiches each.

It is a mooring stone, but Traver doesn't know that. He won't know anything about that until the man from Minnesota drives up, telling him he has counted hundreds of stones just like it, mapping out a route through South Dakota, Iowa and Kansas, all the way on in to Oklahoma. "Vikings," the man will say "Floated their way right through here. Pinned their boats to the rocks." Traver will find this impossible to believe, looking out over the dirt he has spent his life tending. But he will hold the word "moor" in his mouth, like a fish holds her eggs.