

JILL MCDONOUGH

FIRST DAY

In law school, first day, in the movies, the prof says *Look to the left of you. Look to your right. One of you won't be here next year.* He's in a corduroy jacket, suede elbows, picking out the girl he's going to fuck. Susan asks if I do this first day of poetry school. Look here, I say: look to the left of you look to the right look up look me over now reach. Reach out, hold open your new friends' dear hands, press your cheek to dry knuckles, kiss their sweetly lined palms. Really *look*, though, to the left and look over: Lord, overlook each of us each of our faults. Keep looking, just *looking*, you know? Don't stop. Look to your left on the Red Line; practice enchantment. Pretend you're in love. Pretending enough you can feel this, fresh tenderness for each, then all of the time. Look to your right, reach your hand out: look like you're on acid, like you've never *seen* a human hand before! What's the hand *feeling*? What's it like to speak *Hand*? Look to the left of you, the hard right now. Look forward, don't you ever look back. Except for with anger, or something. Look back to take notes on what-all you sailed through, and on the what-all you flunked. Look back on the sofa you puked on: your mom picked that upholstery out. Your mom worked so hard! Paid some off every week! You loved that old sofa, its prim skirt or black bears. Its pink chintz, its velvet waterwheels. So look back and look down and then look back in tears.