

Raymond Carver

NyQuil

Call it iron discipline. But for months
I never took my first drink
before eleven P.M. Not so bad,
considering. This was in the beginning
phase of things. I knew a man
whose drink of choice was Listerine.
He was coming down off Scotch.
He bought Listerine by the case,
and drank it by the case. The back seat
of his car was piled high with dead soldiers.
Those empty bottles of Listerine
gleaming in his scalding back seat!
The sight of it sent me home soul-searching.
I did that once or twice. Everybody does.
Go way down inside and look around.
I spent hours there, but
didn't meet anyone, or see anything
of interest. I came back to the here and now,
and put on my slippers. Fixed
myself a nice glass of NyQuil.
Dragged a chair over to the window.
Where I watched a pale moon struggle to rise
over Cupertino, California.
I waited through hours of darkness with NyQuil.
And then, sweet Jesus! the first sliver
of light.