

## Arthur Mortensen

### UFO

*To the memory of Ray Bradbury*

The barn occluding Mabel Johnson's yard  
Appeared one morning, unannounced, and perfect:  
Red walls; tin roof; white-painted window frames;  
Two well-hayed stalls equipped with nervous horses  
Face deep in bags of oats, their big eyes tracking  
Old Mabel's neighbor kids, whose parents swore  
Their perfect children never saw a thing.  
That mystery, though, was not their real complaint.  
The truth, they said, she'd let things go to pot:  
Herself, lawn, yard: the City Manager  
Proposed a fix: 'We'll hire her to work  
To beautify surrounding plots.' We voted.  
Jack's brief proposal passed without a hitch,  
With me dispatched to Mabel Johnson's house.  
'How interesting,' she said, and closed the door,  
Extinguishing the porchlight, leaving me  
To stumble down the darkened, wooden steps.  
Come morning, though, and out she came with clippers.  
She wore a brilliant floral print so new  
The tags fluttered like flags as she passed by  
To cross a lawn to where a single rose  
Stood out against a thorny, untrimmed bush.  
'We had a miracle in my front yard,'  
She said, 'and all you think about is how  
To occupy my time?' She burst out laughing,  
Snipped off the rose, put it behind her ear,  
Then marched past startled neighbors to the barn.  
At once the structure bloomed bright white and vanished,  
Leaving behind an unkempt, dying lawn,  
And a small white house with every window open.