

now I know what the rules are, and Teresa is coming for me in the Packard. She's probably outside right now, and the car doesn't wait. Because it's May and the Packard runs on Ethyl in May. That's why I just had one dime, and now that's gone. You tricked me. I didn't need any popcorn. I had my brown paper bag, and now the bag and the popcorn and the dime are gone. Because of inflation, and prices going up."

"That's only in the fall," the assistant manager said. "We like to give our clients ample time to make arrangements for the higher price. And we don't go up very much at a time. Not like other places. The price goes up gradually, so that people, our clients, can make the adjustment. Then they can sit and not worry about money. We like everybody to be comfortable. Are you comfortable now, Joe? Would you like to lie down? We have a lounge. I don't think you've ever been to the lounge. It's a beautiful lounge, where there are many people lounging, but they won't bother you."

"Keep your hands off my knee cap. I'm poor but I'm proud. I have connections. I don't need your crummy lounge. I paid to get into the theatre. Let me in the auditorium now, and I'll pay you again, since I guess it's another day now. Is it another day? Is it after 7:30?"

"Yes, it's after 7:30, and there's nobody in the theatre, or on the screen. The janitor is cleaning the theatre, scraping."

"Teresa can put it all up again. You should hire her. She knows all the ropes, all the pictures just like she was in them personally. I'll go get her. She's probably outside right now if it's around 7:30. Wait a minute."

The assistant manager's hands were at Joe's temples, but he brushed them aside. Joe's temples felt like quicksilver when the assistant manager's hands touched them, as though they could go right through into the back of Joe's throat. Joe swallowed, wanting to feel the heavy weight of a full bottle against the back of his throat, pressing down on his gums, while his throat worked to take the liquor down hardly even swallowing.

Joe's gums tingled when nipple teased them. His nose was full, he had a cold. It was hard to suck. He cried without tears — his whole face got hot. Something put a hand on his hair. He cried harder. Steam helped. Headache. Nothing knew. He kept it. Light gave him a headache, the glass was too hot, kernels of unpopped corn stuck to the back of his throat, exactly opposite something warm and wet. No more crying, his face was not hot, no blood pumping into his head. That was in the theatre. Mirror and brown pool.

"Joe," the assistant manager reminded, "we have the authority. No use holding back. I offered to call Teresa. She won't answer, she knows the rules. She's been there. Come down off the counter."

CHARLES PLYMELL

SURREALIST

HAIKU

a landscape of barking grease
will chase me past the
carbon copy of the blue light

COASTLINE CLARITY

Poetry in my dinner plate
and poetry on the wall
I am writing poetry
for my big readings this fall.

I don't write anymore good poems
I write bad ones to get well known.

I want to be on the lips of every poetry pimp
and old weedaholic ex professors
and their students with bad breath & taste.

Yes. I want to write new poems
clean as a whistle
on a mirror full of skates
that you can hear sometimes
flying around in the coastline of cities.