

buying huge amounts of wrapping paper at discount houses, but it did not cheer him. Then he took to eating scraps, gnawing labels off bottles, picking up discarded transfers in the subway.

She saw him early in January, fighting the garbage man in the alley behind her apartment. He lost the fight, staunched the blood from his nose with a scrap of paper, ate the paper, looked pleadingly up at her window and, when she closed the blind, walked sadly away.

He became a teacher of composition at a suburban community college, forever unsatisfied with his students' papers, searching vainly for the one writer who would once again satisfy his appetite for fresh, keen prose.

-- Michael R. Brown

Chicago IL

IN HER SHOP HANG PICTURES OF GERONIMO AND JESUS

Eating in my truck under
the salt cedars
I am surprised to find that the Mexican woman
who sells me tamales
has also put in
green olives.
I must remember to thank her.

COPPER AND BRASS

Bald, arms thick as tree trunks
(used to keep a junkyard,
almost killed a drunk who
stumbled in to sleep), Dell,
now heavy-equip. operator at the plant,
all day loads cinders
from the mound behind the mill stacks
into two dumps I drive,
racing one to the landfill
just down the road, emptying it,
roar back just in time to
jump out and into the other
as he rocks it with the final scoop.

Then off again,
careful not to back and lift
into the wires overhead.
Twenty-five minutes

till the whistle, Dell quits,
shows me where he sorts for salvage
copper and brass from
a heap of junk wire.
I help and listen, too pooped
to talk; he tells me
how his truck ran away
once sloping into Omaha --
I watch his thick stubby hands
yanking at the reddish wire,
throwing it into one barrel,
in the other,
scraps of yellow brass.

UP IN MAINE

Saw a payroll list
for the construction co.
Almost all the names were
French:

Beaulieu
Bouchard
De Vois
Gagnon
Gendron

Is that why we're working
for this lousy outfit?
Only Frenchmen take so little?

DOUG, SITTING IN
MAMA'S TRUCKSTOP

put a ten-dollar bill
in my boot
looked at it a couple days
later--
all the ink worn off
just like a piece of paper
was I pissed! never
do that again

TOMMY

Tommy wore a scorpion
set inside clear plastic
on his belt buckle which
glowed in the dark
and cowboy boots tooled with oak leaves.
On the grounds crew,
he mowed lawns, trimmed,
examined the honeysuckle,
looked for rabbits, ate loquats