Here you go boys
he said as he handed
us each a cellophane
covered basket with
little individually
wrapped pieces of
artificial cheese
and some hard fruit.

At quitting time
everybody on the crew
carted their holiday
booty with them to
the freight elevator
and out onto the
street.

An old wino I
recognized came
up to hit us
for some spare
change. "Here man,
merry christmas,"
the first guy said,
while handing him
his basket.

Saturday morning
I heard commotion
outside my window.

He had packed up
all his stuff and
she stood behind
an imaginary line
some 8 or 10 feet
from the pickup.

"Jimmy," she said,
"Please don't do this."
He backed the truck
into the street,
made it to the corner,
and pulled away.

She ran back to
the apartment with
her arms swinging
stiffly at her sides,
holding the cuffs
of her sweater sleeves
in her
clinched fingers.

-- Daryl Rogers

Lexington KY

THE BIG THINGS

Kit makes people nervous
when they tell her
a religious education
is good for kids,
and she asks, "Why?"
Local people are concerned
an "adult" bookstore
might open in town,
but Kit says, "So what?"
But she didn't ask why
an ex-student of mine
was beaten so badly
he was brain dead
when they found him
in an alley
the next morning.
Kit didn't ask why
the husband
of our daughter's babysitter
had a massive heart attack
when he was staking the tomatoes
in his backyard.
Kit didn't say so what
when a friend in Connecticut
told us he was operated on
for cancer of the lower jaw.
Kit never asks why
the big things happen.
She knows.

THE DISSATISFIED

My wife and I
seem to meet women
who want to leave
their husbands
everywhere we go.
Most of them
are in their late thirties
or early forties,
and you know
most of them will never go
anywhere.
The women who tell us
they're unhappy
are always strangers.
Maybe it's easy
to tell your troubles
to someone
you'll never see again.
Last week we met
two women who said,
"I'd like to go,"
and they both worked
in the mall.
One of them said something
about her four kids
and how tired she was;
she'd never imagined
her life would turn out
the way it had.
None of them
seemed to imagine
their lives would be
so drab. So sad.