

Snow in North Jersey

August Kleinzahler

Snow is falling along the Boulevard
and its little cemeteries hugged by transmission shops
and on the stone bear in the park
and the WWI monument, making a crust
on the soldier with his chinstrap and bayonet
It's blowing in from the west
over the low hills and meadowlands
swirling past the giant cracking stills
that flare all night along the Turnpike
It is with a terrible deliberateness
that Mr Ruiz reaches into his back pocket
and counts out \$18 and change for his Lotto picks
while in the upstairs of a thousand duplexes
with the TV on, cancers tick tick tick
and the snow continues to fall and blanket
these crowded rows of frame and brick
with their heartbreaking porches and castellations
and the red '68 Impala on blocks
and Joe he's drinking again and Myra's boy Tommy
in the old days it would have been a disgrace
and Father Keenan's not been having a good winter
and it was nice enough this morning
till noon anyhow with the sun sitting up there like a crown
over a great big dome of mackerel sky
But it's coming down now, all right
falling on the Dixon-Crucible Pencil factory
and on the spur to Bayonne
along the length of the Pulaski Skyway
and on St Bridgit's and the Alibi Saloon
closed now, oh dear, I can't remember how long
and lordjesussaveus they're still making babies
and what did you expect from this life
and they're calling for snow tonight and through tomorrow
an inch an hour over 9 Ridge Road and the old courthouse
and along the sluggish, gray Passaic
as it empties itself into Newark Bay
and on Grandpa's store that sells curries now
and St Peter's almost made it to the semis this year
It's snowing on the canal and railyards, the bus barns and trucks
and on all the swells in their big houses along the river bluff
It's snowing on us all
and on a three-storey fix-up off of Van Vorst Park
a young lawyer couple from Manhattan bought
where for no special reason in back of a closet
a thick, dusty volume from the Thirties sits open
with a broken spine and smelling of mildew
to a chapter titled *Social Realism*

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