

finger and made it look like a thumb, only larger. He just walked over and made a crack about how the foreman could see him flipping him off better, then he passed out in front of me.

WORKING CLASS

Complaining to the subscriber service for the second time this week about my newspaper being thrown into the front yard sprinklers, I feel a power over someone's job that I don't like. Right after graduating from college the only job I could find was working as a janitor. The owner of a beauty salon that I cleaned used to hide pennies around the place and if I didn't find them all he would complain to my boss that I wasn't cleaning the place good enough. I've never forgotten that and I've tried to for years.

MY BITCH

German shepherd Nikki laps water out of my toilet, munches the marrow out of cow bones while lying in the dirt, licks her private parts clean in public places with a flourish, will kill instantly any rodent she can catch by snapping its neck, then leaving it, uneaten, on my back doorstep, and is more loyal and trusting of me than almost any human I've known who only eat off of plates, would be very uncomfortable about being naked in public, take showers at regular intervals, and attend church every Sunday.

— Gary Goude

Riverside CA

THE GRID

A friend of mine who owns three gas stations grunts his own tanker to the Buffalo terminal three maybe four times a week where he's ID'd at a checkpoint, then tails a cop chaperone to the end of the pipe where they all nurse at the same nipple — Chevron, Shell, Atlanta, Exxon — & there can't be gaps

when the stuff flows, so you'll see a sponge, say a blue sponge the size of a basketball, which means that now the flow is Citgo's, say, & maybe a dozen trucks will fill, & then a red ball

pops to the plug, & now it's Standard Oil's,
& my friend fills up in his turn, & is billed,

as the ancient forest pours through,
all that toucan sunlight & lily photosynthesis, roses
& pterodactyls that got me from here to you,
& vice-versa. At the crux of the grid,
someone somewhere drops these colored sponges
to claim whose power & dough is gisming forth

at any one moment. Basketballs parcel out
the lucre for what it's worth, stock broker by broker
all the parrot year, year after year while we all
drive our asses off to find the last shade somewhere.
Pop, it's pink. Pop, it's yellow, & what follows
is the color of a dead chameleon
against our particulate sky. Sort of an orange-citron.

BISON

I remember, on the shore of Lake Ronkonkoma
when I was a boy, with both hands
wedging sand aside, & for once reaching
solid bottom, & seeing, &
feeling with my fingers before the sand washed back,

a hoof-print I tried often again,
but couldn't rediscover what I'd seen,
that shape treble the width of a deer's foot
or the mark of Wenzel's curled-horn ram
in the soft earth of its fold, &

solstice came on, but I sensed, already, the essence
of what I've learned: that where I lived
the eastern bison, larger than the plains animal &
"very dark, many of the old bulls being coal black,
with grizzly white hairs around the nose and eyes,"

had once herded. In Pennsylvania Buffalo Hunt,
H. W. Shoemaker says that by 1790
the countless numbers of this species
that had migrated easterly from the Great Lakes
across New York to the valleys of Maryland and Virginia

had been decimated to "300-400 animals which sought
refuge in the wilds of the Seven Mountains."

These were slaughtered during the winter
of 1799-1800 as they wallowed helplessly in deep snow.
Two years later, a lone bull was shot,

the last seen in Pennsylvania. Records exist
of a few surviving longer: one killed