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Shift Change

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Shift Change

Though weary from your factory job—
this summer's only opening was night shift—
you rise, pull your bones to the door and admit me
for our breakfast ritual. We young fools meet,
convincing each other again that we're really wise women.

The morning edition lands with a soft thud—
I secretly covet your delivery boy
each time I pluck my news from the cat's dish—
but we ignore the sound of murders,
mourners and newborns arriving at your doorstep.

I decline a cup of instant coffee, jelly donut,
and feast on your tale of factory gossip.
A cigarette would suit my dietary needs,
but you recoil at the thought.
Turned mouthy mother, you frown at my latest vice.
Conversation tightens, but we continue.

My insomnia keeps calling me here,
though I ache, bone-tired as you,
that and the quiet of my days of purchase orders,
your nights of plastic. Counting fasteners (gray #244),
you try to remember everything
you want to tell over apple juice; we both hate orange.

We sip slowly. A ray through the window signals
bedtime. I go home to pack my lunch before work.
My day begins, and I know you are resting well.

—Angel Lemke '00