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Terminal: Early Shift

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Terminal: Early Shift

The turds that floated there.
Urinals with twisted, oily pubic hairs—
Black, brown, blond, red—
And noisome yellow pools of piss
That waited for an ice-white scrub-brush.

My shift began in the cold, gritty dark
Of Rochester, New York. The lake
Used ice to cut my throat
Till the refuge of arrival in the warmth
Of my station.

I began to mop at 4 a.m.—
The back and forth like a joyless metronome—
Then walked a slow way home
Haunted by the savagery of plows.
Though sometimes, when densest flakes
Swirled down,
I was cleansed, almost.