

## EMBRACES

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*Charles Casey Martin*

\* I understand loneliness  
Better now

Since I saw the nightshift  
Replace the dayshift

At the Procter & Gamble plant.  
It happened that seasonless time of year

When winter hadn't yet begun  
But was due to:

The parkinglot filled with women,  
The arms of sweaters the day was too warm for

Knotted 'round their waists  
Or necks—

The lastingest embraces some will ever find.

\* But I'm no expert on love either.  
Unless you count the summer I spent  
Customizing side-panels on vans in Phoenix.  
Canyons, sunsets, rodeo scenes  
And my specialty:

Fluorescent lacquer Pacific nightsurf.  
Checkmark gulls in Daytona-blue skies.  
Air-brushed moons, and under them us—  
The tiny stick-figure torsos of lovers.  
Flashpaint embraces guaranteed not to fade.

\* And though plenty's been said already  
Of old people's hands  
—How thin the skin like Biblepaper

How blue the veins like map rivers—  
Still I can't forget his workshirt  
The plain denim sleeve

Crossing my grandmother's flowery dressback  
(And her arm, sleeveless, across his broader back,  
X-ed by red suspenders).

Theirs taught me all I know  
Or want to  
Of being walked away from.

