The Alligators

Michael Van Walleghen

Follow this and additional works at: https://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview
Part of the Creative Writing Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.1050
Feigning sleep,
to the casual eye
more dead than alive,
they wait. On them,
like a dinner plate
forever dropping,
all things depend.
One sees it clearly
in the eyes
of certain women.
After a time
not even their children
can pull them away.
I have seen them
standing tensely there
as at a window:
my mother
my grandmother looking out
one hand floating absent
among the dishes,
and the sink, the sink
soft-sucking things
it can’t quite swallow.
I have seen them standing there
as rigidly as birds
who feel too late
the almost imperceptible
undulation of stagnant water.
When at last
they lift their heads
I’ve felt the whole zoo listen:
a neighborhood at dark
listening to streetcars
the far factories whistling
children, a lifetime
the perfectly indifferent
closing in.