1985

Embraces

Charles Casey Martin

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Recommended Citation


Available at: https://doi.org/10.17077/0743-2747.1159

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* 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).

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