

13-P-52

SEEMS THE WHOLE WORLD'S STARING IN: A TRYPICH

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One: All-You-Can-Eat Fish Fry

By the time you set your feet
Behind the barstool rung,
Bill's already drawing the Bud,
Your glass delivered on a napkin
Covered with color cartoons.
On the jukebox someone's quartered
Dolly Parton, big again now,
Her TV show and loss of weight's
Got everyone talking, and by the end
Of the night, "Happy Birthday"
Will hold everyone in a sing-along.
No crowd now, but wait till stores
Get out, people coming for
The All-You-Can-Eat Fish Fry,
Your choice of whitefish or carp,
Every Wednesday. Down along the bar
Sit feed and tractor hats, but you like it
By the window, listening to phone calls
Out, and after dinner Rosie the bag lady

Comes by and sits herself down
On the window ledge beside you.
And there's no better seat if there's a fire
Or accident in town or out on Highway 34
For watching trucks whine out the station
Kitty-corner, not to mention from here
Even the kitchen's within sight, beyond
The bar where the college kid in CARPFEST
t-shirt dangles his cigarette over the bin
Of french fries and onion rings.

Two: The Friendly Harvest

They moved the Friendly Tap
Around the corner to Center Street,
So I walked on over and noticed
Without going in it wasn't the same.

For one thing, you could stare inside now,
Ogle patrons who would just as well
Like drinking in private without what had
To seem the whole world staring in.

There was Doris, Sam, Connie, Archie,
Joe, Ellen, Bill, and people I never seen before.

And I seen immediately it didn't have
The atmosphere the old place had,

The wall that used to separate
Eaters from drinkers gone, making them all
One big, unhappy family, making me wonder
If the guy who fell face first into mashed potatoes,

Gravy, peas, and meatloaf could still eat
Without worrying about an audience.
But most of all, was someone put up
A couple of 3-foot handrails

Either side of five stone steps making it look
Like Gramma Moses frequented the premises,
Not me. I turned around and headed home,
Climbed the 31 stairs, popped open

A MGD and meatloaf Swanson dinner
Before going back for a second look, thinking
Maybe I judged it wrong, and thinking

A first impression might not be what it used to be.

Three: Trailer Park

The coffee sits cold in mismatched cups

Stolen from a flea market in Green Bay.

“Come around here,” Phyllis says to Mark.

The trailer humps the earth, gasps for air.

“She’s brought another one back,” Jake says,

Who last year added a cement patio,

And this year a plastic awning over his door.

“You should never,” Sarah replies,

“have removed our wheels without asking me first.”

“I thought it was settled we were settled.”

Sitting in lawn chairs under the new green roof,

They consider things

while a holstered boy

behind washable rose bouquet kitchen drapes

pretends the couple next trailer over aliens

On a mission from Mars. Sitting

On the sink's edge, he fires at them
While waiting for the tramp of cowboy boots
And wondering why his mother comes home
At different times, wondering why she can't
Make up her mind while

Meanwhile she thumbs

In blue jeans and t-shirt at Interstate exit
Where the potholes slow traffic, expecting a ride
Sometime will bring her home or elsewhere.

To the Holtzes, Tom and Marie, she looks
Ethereal as they gaze through the smoky windshield
Of their Le Sabre they plan to trade in
When they find a trailer park they can live with.
It shouldn't be hard around here, given

The nice man at the Mobil service station
Who takes the half-filled coffee pot from under
The Bunn-O-Matic, pours the last of the coffee
Into a mug he cups with oily fingers,
And smiles as he hands out directions
As if he is their one salvation.