

THE NEW KID

by Sara Saybo

If you were lost when you arrived here,
like I was,
then you may already know this well-worn path through town
with more brick walls than you ever thought possible
for a town this size.
For all we know, we knocked on a lot of the same
closed doors
and wandered the same hidden maze
of rail car lines embedded in the streets of
Browne's and West Central
only to find them end abruptly
beneath a newer slab of asphalt,
a bit of character long since buried
with no explanation or commemorative plaque.
Maybe the folks who live here
are the kind of people who
are still getting around to it,
like we arrived too early to the party--
so early, that our hosts are annoyed
and put out by our wanting too much
too soon.
And so, perhaps you learned to wait,
like I did,
along its sparse trails
and across its steel-girded bridges
for the small town it no longer is, really,
to grow into its big city pants.

It helps if you arrived here near death.
It helps if you landed here in a wanton heap,
having survived something awful from someplace else.
All the waiting and the solitary walking
can give you the time you need
to grow into something else,
something better than you used to be--
something...closer.
You can spend all your time waiting
for something to catch.
You can spend all your time wearing out
your worn welcome.
You can spend all your time running
your exhaustion through
the paths of Riverfront Park,
stopping every time to stare at its raging waters,
pressing your wrecked body into its guard rails,
letting the cold of its steel girders sink into your warm body
the way you want to let your warm body sink to the cold bottom of all that rage.
You can spend all your time waiting
to be anything other
than the new kid in town.