

Mail in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (the east side)

Living with three other adults
means that
all the mail protruding from the mail box
that you see while walking down the street is not necessarily yours.

Living on the fashionable East side
in a house that has been rented for many years
by a fairly transient population
means that
all the mail protruding from the mail box
that you see walking down the street
is not necessarily yours.

I kept both of these facts
(along with the general rule no mail is better than bills)
uppermost

in my mind as I walked toward the house.
I took the mail from the box,
refusing to look until I got in the kitchen
and poured myself a Cherry Koolaid.

Then I sorted.

Pati Allen. Gimbels.

Howard Kaufman. National Federation of the Blind. (All of his envelopes are thick.)

Pati. Insurance.

A thick envelope for Robert Anders. Personal mail from Mom in Philadelphia.

Gerald Balzentis. He doesn't live here. Actually, I understand he never lived here.

Jef Schulz. I took his place.

Me. A bank by mail envelope.

Pati. Speech and Language Association.

Howard. From the Indian Health Service. He's Jewish.

Howard. Something about ham radios.

Ellen Warrends. She defected to Barbados and left no forwarding address.

Robert. Howard. Pati.

Nancy Smits. She lives next door.

Rosalie Samalia. A Midwest Women's Music Catalogue.

And another one for Anna somebody.

By the mail code and the chart inside I

found they both got their names on the mailing list by
attending a women's event.

I read the catalogue in my room

with Baxter on my lap

(every good lesbian has a cat, Darla once told me)

and my feet on the sill

and I thought

feminists

maybe lesbians even

had lived here.

In my room? Were they lovers?

Did Rosalie and Anna live here at the same time?

The separatist in me said

maybe there were no men in the household at all for awhile.

(I briefly contemplated not living with Howard or Robert. Or anyone.)

Sitting there in the sun

with my cat on my lap

and Carole King on the tape recorder

and the sun in the window

I felt strong.

Sharon Matuszeski

WINTER SOLACE

Absence makes the heart grow fonder, but we're already in love

I am at the stage
where

I see you in parking lots of 24 hour diners and libraries
on old orange busses, in silver Datsuns
(and since I'm not always too clear on what a Datsun looks like)

in foreign cars in general
down the aisle by the granola
and around the corner —

just around the corner.

I take a step closer
your names resting on the edge of my lip
ready . . .

it is not you.

This or that stranger will not greet me

"Hi, Love," like you do, will not take me home, make me herbal tea,
will not hold me.

You said on the phone,
waves of long distance crashing

between your words
"I'm not saying forever —
well, maybe I am."

I have thought it for awhile myself,
waiting.

It is good you want it now too,
because

I am tired of this half continent between us.

Me having to

describe the cat in my lap
tell of the Christmas light on (still up a month and a half later)
and the grape purple robe (I mean purple! it looks like it should be
poured out of a bottle labeled T.J. Swan)

my mother bought me (My mother never buys me clothes but she thought maybe she
could pull it off because it was just a robe and not something
I would wear in public, so I told her everything, explicitly,
but that I hated deep purple and especially in the morning)

the purple robe falling open
the baby-oiled curves —

I am tired of whispering of things
from my heart into the phone in my hand
which is somehow connected to
your hand, your ear, your heart.

I am glad this will be over soon,
and we will get on to the living of our togetherlives.

I cannot wait but

I will wait
but
I cannot wait.

Sharon Matuszeski

