

The Meat Grinder on Riopelle Street

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Tina knows how to spray down the meat grinder. Tina, brassy blonde hair, rail thin arms, worn face, half a cigarette hanging out of her mouth knows at what angle to hold her arms, how to adjust her body weight, and at which angles to shoot the nozzle. She knows which way will send bits of chicken spewing out into the street. The bits make their way across Riopelle Street in the Eastern Market neighborhood of Detroit, they land at the edge of my canvas sneakers. I smoke organic American Spirits as Bull wanders over from the meat locker next door with a blue pacifier around his neck. He tells me how his brand new grandson, Jaelyn, is in the hospital. There's something wrong with his blood sugar and he must stay there longer, days they hope, not weeks. Jaelyn dropped the first pacifier they gave him, and when it hit the floor the nurses went to discard it but Bull intervened. "I'll take that," he said. Now he wears it around his neck every day until Jaelyn comes home. The humidity has been stifling this summer, oppressive. Would I like to come over to the pool sometime? (There aren't any public pools within the Detroit city limits, one must have a car to drive to the suburbs.) Bull wipes the sweat from his forehead as he says, "He's a beautiful baby boy. Beautiful. I'm going to skim the bugs off the top of the pool tomorrow." Comerica Park turns the sky purple with light pollution while chicken juice spills out of the trash bag Tina drags to the dumpster in the alley.