

By St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church

March, my lord, was stillborn. April waits in mud.
How long will I stay beside the street
in this thin house and hear bottles breaking by night?
All day the trucks pass by, so close,
just across the narrow, cracking sidewalk,
and I turn up rubber and glass
in the mud by the door where I plant tomatoes.

When I first came here, it was good from the alley to see
so many small houses leaning together, and the row of garages.
Each flat roof sloped back at a different lazy pitch.
Each wall had a different dress: peeling rolls of red asphalt brick,
peeling white asphalt stone, wood paneling, battered aluminum,
doors painted red and orange, windows trimmed grass-yellow and
aquamarine,
no angle right, no two lines parallel,
the drooping wires from listing poles, a car without wheels, a
twisted bicycle.

Then from the patchwork a man stepped out,
unshaven, grey-stubbed, nearly old,
into the thick malt odor from the brewery.
As if dazed by the low blue sky and rush of clouds
pouring down from the north, he stops outside the door.
His thick body sways on stiff legs. The khaki work pants
flap, and a young dog twirls around his legs in the wind.
Then it runs far off, but always looks back until, slowly, the man comes.

That was another muddy April, lord,
with glass and paper in the alley puddles, though not as much as
today.

Not a bud showed yet on the trees along the streets
endlessly straight. To north and south you could see,
so far away that few who went there ever returned,
the roofs and steeples of other worlds.

A.F. Moritz