

Bus Boy

by George Bilgere

O teenage bus boy of the summer dusk!
Lugging your gray tub of swill,
bathed in slop and ooze and bits of spaghetti
in the alley behind the Applebee's—
hate me if you will,

as I pass by in my tennis shorts and Obama t-shirt
with a vibrant, dark-haired woman,
on my way to watch game three
of the NBA finals at our local microbrewery.

Hate me, but you cannot know
that I once labored as you do now, at a Big Boy
in Riverside, California, elbow deep
in the very same lumpish goop and ooze.

Like you, I was of the slime of alleys,
of the same immemorial cigarette butts
and rotting cottage cheese.
And like you,

I dreamed of a certain waitress,
and of driving a fork into the forehead
of the night manager,
and of spitting in the soup
of plump, complacent, well-dressed diners
who snapped their fingers at me.

But most of all I dreamed of being clean,
and cool, and never, ever again
slogging through the world's filth and stink,

which is something I have achieved,
as must be perfectly obvious to you.