

Three Poems and Artwork
by Gene McCormick

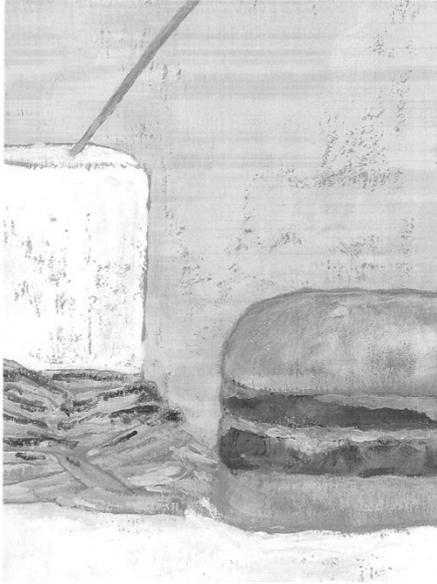


**Scooter's Pizzeria & Café,
Saugatuck, Michigan**

Blue jean Bermuda's, tank top, sandals,
sun-bleached hair and a handful of car keys,
the tanned girl stands at the pick-up counter
for her take-out pizza order,
right foot resting on top of the left,
bobbing up and down to a
vintage Aerosmith CD that charted
before she was born.

On summer break from Michigan State,
she smiles to herself, to the music, at
anyone noticing her and in anticipation
of sharing the pizza and beer with friends
back at the house.

–She knows her credit card will be declined:
the pizza will be a gift from an older man...



Slow Wait For Fast-Food

Speaking with his mouth too close to the microphone, Santos' speech comes out muffled, hard to understand even to customers milling about the counter at the fast-food diner waiting for their numbers to be called.
Number 26, your order is ready...
Number 33, pick up your order...
Number 36, ummphh, ummphh, umph.

The over-sized male customers stand near the pick-up area, arms crossed across their chest or supportive belly, looking straight ahead; not at each other. The women wait at nearby plastic tables,

sitting, talking, nesting, shushing kids,
half-listening for their number
which has to be called repeatedly
before the variant burgers, fries, Cokes,
coffees and shakes are claimed.

Five minutes, usually less,
waiting for the food,
another ten to fifteen minutes to eat while
staring out the window at the parking lot,
and then be out the door, going somewhere.
Fast food, fast life.



New Skyscraper In Town

Figuring a girl as attractive as her didn't come all the way from Taiwan to work behind the counter of a donut shop for minimum wage, he pays for his coffee and donut with a fifty, tells her to keep the

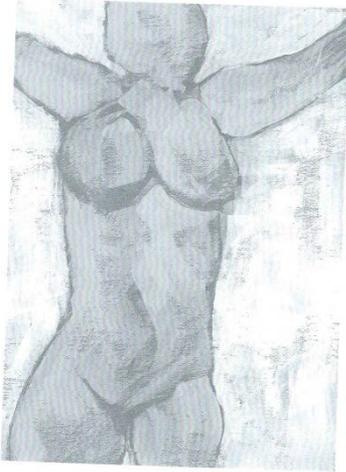
change, and pulls out a hundred dollar bill. Tearing off a corner of the bill he asks Room 812, Ritz-Carlton, nine pm? And she smiles Yes, okay. He drops the fragment of the bill into the fishbowl tip jar. *You'll get the rest, and more, tonight*, and she smiles again.

Watching and hearing through an eighth floor window of the downtown hotel, Ed absently observes a tall building—tall enough to scrape the sky when completed—going up directly across the street, a development unnoticed when checking in. Bobcats and other wheeled and tracked diggers and scrapers back up and maneuver the base of the site sending up a near-constant beep, beep, beep. Pylon drivers thump. Cranes loudly drop their loads before hoisting girders swinging from invisible cables floor after floor. Saws cut through cement, drowning out shouted instructions and warnings by bosses and workers.

The sidewalk, blocked on the construction side, forces pedestrians to cross by the hotel entrance far below the window. Occasionally traffic grinds to a stop to allow heavy equipment to enter or exit; and each stop is filled with impatient honking, as if that could speed up the procedure. Garbage

trucks, making special trash pickups, add to the snarl.

Turning from the window to glance at the bed, he sees she is still sleeping, eyes shut, mouth slightly open, softly snoring. A half-empty wine glass sits on the edge of the nightstand, her underwear is beside the bed and the other clothes scattered about. Christ, he says to himself, running a hand through matted hair, Christ.



Gene McCormick has had twelve books published, including five poetry collections, and his narrative work regularly appears in select literary journals, including *Mobius*, *Ibbetson Street*, *The Iconoclast*, *Tiger's Eye*, *Chaffin Journal* and *Homestead Review*. His artwork is in commercial and private collections. He lives in Wayne, Illinois.