

Garbage

By Chris Minton

It was after midnight when
I let myself into the garage.
My shame flooded the space.
I slunk around the family sedan
and over to the garbage cans.

Half full of cargo, the green things
waited expectantly for Monday night,
when they would make their weekly
expedition to the curb,
where they would sit,
giddy with the promise of
Tuesday's emptiness.

But it was not Monday and
they seemed to know this.
They stared accusingly at me,
but I was determined,
even though it made me sick.

I opened the lid to one of the cans.
I opened the white plastic bag that
I had deposited the previous day.
I closed my mind to thought
as I rooted through its contents.

After sorting through broken egg shells
and banana peels, empty meat containers
whose bloody remnants
had seeped throughout the bag,
I found what I had come for
and held it up for inspection.

I did wonder, as I had on previous occasions,
why I had not simply gone down the street
to the convenience store.

But that defeat would have been
larger than this one.

Right?

I jammed the twisted,
dirty cigarette butt into my mouth.
From my pocket I pulled a lighter and stroked it.
The heat seared my eyes and my lips
as I lit the crippled thing.

I stole the few remaining drags
the butt offered and put it out.
I eyed the open bag, my need
not only still present but exacerbated.
The smoke dissipated around me.
My shame did not.