

Lunch in Tensed

by Callie Palmer

One waitress on duty amid Sunday's rush
 roast turkey and cocktails
 old timer pays counting pennies
side of toast and coffee, one eighty-nine.
 waitress looks at us with fish eye
 we're friends by the end of the meal
 wrapping cold fries in a napkin.
 I have an urge to bus the tables
 but read the paper instead
Aries: five stars, don't blow your money
 love is just around the corner, again
 but I keep turning the wrong corner
 just as well, lunch in Tensed is nice
 long conversations about dirt
 nuances of rain.
 my fish-eyed waitress winces
 her feet tender from delivery
 listens to the oldtimer
"They're hauling the old Rambler away,
it's been there since the accident in '92"
 Hornet nests and spiders' graveyard
upholstery still smelled of blood and urine;
 teenage lovers drunk on fortified wine
 the kind that never saw a grape
 speeding toward their destiny
 when a telephone pole intervened.
 sent them around the corner
 where true love was waiting
 dressed in funeral clothes
 and smelling of gardenia.
 families cried and shuffled
 through rainy day services
 their shoes filling up with water
 rain mixing with tears.
fortified wine makes dreams come true
 at least till the shakes set in
or scenery flies through the windshield
 bringing all visions home.
 The cold fries are for my dog
while I dream whole stories of Tensed
 he waits for me in the car.