



61 lines

DECEMBER 6TH IN THAT ONE HOUSE ON MAPLE

“Tonight,” he says,
“I don’t have a girlfriend.”
He doesn’t say it to me, just in
passing.

I place my hands
on his blue yellow and white knit shoulders
eyes narrowed
saying,
Be a good human.
My voice drops an octave
like pianos
hitting concrete,
no hesitation in the crash.

He tilts his head
raises one nearly invisible eyebrow
claims
he doesn’t know how
and he’s lucky
I’m waist-deep in vodka and coke
trying hard to keep my head above
the shoreline
that the most I can do
is take a swing at him as I pass
Sneer, Yes. You do.

He leaves the limes he’s slicing
to dive into the bright yellow bathroom
and I
move another bead
on an abacus.

Out front, boys
with bald heads or greasy hair full of hand holds
and girls
wrapped in reindeer sweaters
shiver through their buzz
take drags from their Marlboros
and eat chips

I smoke and stand still,
cough from December icicles in my lungs.
I don't feel the cold
and keep saying so, asking if I
should be worried
but I'm talking too quietly again.
I watch the cherry in my cig burn
and accidentally flick it out
of the paper
onto the sidewalk.

The girl in front of me gets kissed
on the mouth
by the boy I liked earlier this year
and I swear, I'm not roaring in my chest

I heard him talking
about a girl like music notes
with hair that must be
redder than mine,
deep enough to catch the sound of laughter.

I wonder what she would think
about his lips skipping across
boundary lines,
what she'd think of him asking
permission first
and not quite getting it.