

## The Rapid Transit

After seven, the personality changes,  
the night comes in, takes every third seat.  
Across from me, Barbie, in red  
white and blue, reads a Harlequin novel.

Over her head, a woman is screaming:  
"Is the train always so loud? Where  
Are the police when you need them? What  
Am I to do?" She searches among the  
Chronicles and sleepers for something  
to hold on to...

She takes my eyes  
and will not let go. I nod,  
while Barbie's eyes snap, sharp  
and open every twenty seconds.  
The woman hands me her despair  
in a plastic bag.  
I recognize it as my own.

My eyes drop and roll down the track  
with the beautiful poems from my lap.  
This is the evidence used against me  
in court. For the defense, I have children,  
someone to meet me at seven-thirty.  
What am I to do?

At 19th Street, she takes her diet soda  
and leaves. I expect relief,  
but my right hip has turned to stone  
and her tense jaw is carved there.  
I can cover it up.  
I can still make love, only slower.

The business suits pick up their neckties,  
the Chronicles fold into themselves,  
the words moving into place  
for tomorrow's edition.