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## The Garbage Wars

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Donald Finkel

## The Garbage Wars

*And he dwelleth in desolate cities, and in houses  
which no man inhabiteth, which are ready to be-  
come heaps.*

The  
prison is  
the world  
of sight,  
the light  
of the fire  
is the  
sun.

The city wears about her neck a  
garland of dead rats like an  
albatross where can we stow it?  
foul conglomerate the poor, whom  
charity corrupts brain-damaged  
infants marked for the heap by  
starvation the jails filled  
to overflowing with the young, the  
drunken and the meek for walking  
on the grass for smoking it  
for stealing cars for lying  
in front of them snipers and  
pacifists

*headless dolls, bicycles without wheels, torn  
cushions vomiting kapok, non-returnable bottles*

(from the alleys of history step  
the garbage men an army of dog-catchers  
and exterminators marching on the ghetto  
armed with headache balls and sledges)

as an example the General nails  
a nation to the stake sets it  
afame friend and foe alike  
assist via satellite they get the  
message plain as a head on a pike  
dapper little man glaring through  
gunmetal glasses into the heart of the flame  
a silk scarf blooms like a lily at his throat.

The Greeks  
set back-  
fires to  
save their  
ships.

They've thrown a wall round the ghetto  
withdrawn behind it the Governor's  
doubled the guard O happy complicity!  
on the hill the students have taken  
the library overturn ceremoniously  
files for the letters A through E  
one thousand billy-swinging fathers  
burst through the doors thunder  
of tumbling books catcalls in the ashes.

*And the fish that was in the river died; and the  
river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink  
of the water of the river; and there was blood  
throughout all the land of Egypt.*

Did Hera-  
kleitos  
teach a  
general  
conflagra-  
tion?

And the General time's ultimate  
garbage man moves in to clean up  
he rakes the streets with fire  
wipes out the snipers' nests  
(for the purpose at every corner great  
municipal incinerators and the smoke  
thereof and the ashes likewise  
consumed and the residue pressed  
into bricks with which to build  
new incinerators)

in the ghetto  
the inmates have set fire to their mattresses  
black clouds of acrimonious smoke  
appall the suburbs

the city  
thrashes in her agony the supermarket  
shrieks through her broken teeth ten thou-  
sand bedrooms lift their burning eyes to the con-  
stellations for a sign.