

On Work

by David Ackley

Cook, cater, cut, no matter how you slice it, bone in or boner out, or what you call this, *voluntary servitude*, say, it's all fucking *employment*. After a while, getting a job drops to second place behind the juice of quitting. This is not fiction. I once was hired as a so-called job counselor for the Unemployment Office. I figured my own job would be secured by the number of people I turned down for benefits. Besides, it was fun in a way, inventing reasons. On the other hand, sometimes the problem was self-evident: The guy with the tube in his gullet from smoking, for example, who had a voice like Jacob Marley's chains, not ideal for phone sales. And Nutri-system was clearly not clamoring for the woman at my desk who told me she'd lost forty pounds since she still weighed in at a little over four fifty. Another I told: You're overqualified with your associates degree: this job calls for a high-school dropout with low self esteem. And the one after: Your mother's too old, you might have to quit to take care of her.

How did you leave your last job? In Good Standing? If they liked you so much, why'd you leave? Don't you know how hard it is to find work?

Denied. Denied. Denied. My wife tried to wake me from this dream, but I wouldn't come out of it: Denied, I told her. I knew what she was up to, trying to get on my good side so I'd reinstate her benefits.

