

from Flatlander's Suite

by Greg Davis

VII.

A hothouse for rumors and gossip-
that's a small town store.
Your name will grow in such a place
even before you arrive.
Under nervously flickering fluorescent lights
your name will grow
fed by the talk of Those Who Never Leave,
those who watch as you enter and
ask with squinting eyes
why you stare so long at the steak
that shines in its cellophane
like motor oil shines on water-
purple, red, and green.
"Not good enough?"

The hidden voice of slanderers
is like an empty bubble
escaping pale blue lips,
drowned by the noise of leaky freezers.
You should know that when you leave,
sweating over some failed chatter with the clerk,
your name will grow again.

