

we were just dolls

by Jerry Ratch

I had a dream where everybody was dressed in paper. By the end of the day there was a long line of people waiting for new clothing, since what we had on was torn to shreds during the day. Our uniforms hanging from our bodies. We all looked unwrapped. Paper smocks, paper dresses, paper hats.

I had walked by something that snagged my dress, and it had literally been torn off me. I had to swathe it back around my body and hold a corner of it tucked under my arm while we went on through the rest of the day, pouring coffee, waiting tables.

And after a day like this one, to walk out along the sidewalks smoking a cigarette was the smallest, and yet greatest pleasure. After the wind had swept through all day long, bringing rain, the sky breaking in the West at last. Late evening, one bright star coming through the turmoil of clouds, grey and blue. With the late rain on the steps, near the streetlight, I envisioned you, quite young still, surveying great beauty.

