

The Poetry Section

by Mark Waldrop

In the poetry section, no one talks except to say, "excuse me,"
or, "wow," or, "amazing," with the second 'a' stretched out like
a blacktop highway. But mostly they say, "excuse me."
and that's only because someone dressed in a corduroy
jacket is blocking the path to the reference section.

"Excuse me." Her hand on his back, pink painted nails because
he's deaf,
not really deaf but lost in shelves of symbolism and
he never looks up, just turns the page, steps once to let her by.
He crowds Charles Simic, who doesn't seem to mind, with his
shoes. He
smiles and offers the corduroy man a walk around the country
fair.

The roof is leaking, crying a tap, tap, tap into the empty garbage
can,
a hydro-metronome that makes syllables jerk and twitch
a shivering foot face right through him.

He's locked in, I can tell, the way I get sometimes too when I read
Neruda in Spanish just for the sounds of the words in my head;
so I can imagine girls with pink nails speaking them out loud.
Short little bursts of leftover rain through a sagging
ceiling tile.

His jacket makes the sound of a tiny ocean wave breaking
under God's magnifying glass when he reaches, trading Billy
Collins

for Buddy Wakefield, and when I leave I'll walk back
through nonfiction, so Charles Simic can breathe easy and the

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corduroy man won't think to notice the taps have turned to splashes.

