

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.

