

LAWRENCE JAY DESSNER

Working Late

He stepped through shuddering doors
Onto the empty platform,
Turned smartly and strode through
A gauntlet of tiled columns
From which mirrored gum machines
Flashed bits of his image to each other.

A row of red-lacquered chairs
Burned before him
In the merciless fluorescence
which leached the day's stale sweetness
Into the echoing air.

On one, a dollop of tweed
Grew into an old coat and a stubbled face;
An arm beckoned —
No! — raised a paper bag
(Its mouth worked into a fringed O)
Toward puckering lips.

He *knew* what was in it
But slowed to hear behind him
A great breath drawn and released,
The bag filling, creases giving up their set.
He waited for the palm's swing,
The bursting, startling, deafening, POP,
That did not come.