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**Marquee**

**Josh Kaminski**

The marquee at 26<sup>th</sup> and Pierce was where Rob  
and I went on Saturday nights, not to  
see the shows, but to see  
how they were misspelled.

We wondered if there weren't enough  
letters, or if the letter-hanger was  
the theater manager's dumb uncle,  
or if the letter hanger was secretly brilliant,  
and desired to keep other smart people  
away from this, the den  
of flickering lights over dull gazes  
and slightly-ajar-mouths.

We would move fast past the lights and into  
the alley, where we smoked sweet tobacco  
that tasted like Irish coffee, burning  
our fingers on our pipes' thin bowl-ends.

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He spoke as he smoked, his tone bellicose,  
his drawl East Coast, and he always held my ears  
close, until they prickled and broke like icicles  
after a run-through by a fine wooden comb.

I couldn't tell you now what he said, only  
how he said it: like the world was ending,  
and only our smoke and our laughter  
could save it.