

Best's Barbeque

Bill Bremer

Best's door whips open when I crack it,
Expressway across the street drowns
The wind's ruckus.

At the counter I catch the clerk's eyes,
Yellowed from years of whiskey
Or the bulletproof glass.

"Tips and hot links combo,"

My voice streams through six
Hand-drilled holes a foot above
The cash slit.

Between two potted palms,
A bench is missing half its seat
Lengthwise. On the right vibrant
Green plastic sways peacefully;
Thin, crisp leaves bounce
Each time the door swings wide.
To the left is a yellow, withered thing.
Twenty years of grease coats
The thick fronds, blocking
All but the most determined rays
From the red sunset.

Its soil is Sahara dry,
I take a sip from my bottle.

Fifteen minutes of people watching,
Stories swapped between swallows
Of rib tips and sausage links.

A big guy near the back laughs
So hard he chokes,
Takes the last gulp
Of his friend's Coke.

P.A. squawks my number
I grab the steaming paper bag
Out of the revolving window.
Out the door, in the car,
Back up 13th to Abe's,
Where barbeque sauce is
All that matters.