

ENERGY

At the cafe, the line inched along slowly this morning until Terri, almost now surprised, found herself at the head of it; then she ordered her coffee Americano as usual and waited as every other morning while it was poured. At this time of day the cafe was usually busy with a smell of toasting atop the heavy ever-present aroma of the coffee-grinding, an haphazard but consistently flowing crowd, the hum of banter; and so it was this morning. The roil and hiss of coppery machinery underscored the commerce. Terri barely paid heed. Her mind was adrift. The intent young counterman/barista, possibly of Italian descent, with olive-coloured sleepy eyes and black hair perfectly tousled, came forward from among the tangle of machines and handed her the steaming cup. Terri felt it. Regarding his outstretched hand...Umm, Hot, she thought. She let the paper cup sit on the counter

while she fumbled for her payment. The young man smiled at her. He was nice.

“Mam, your change...” he said.

She dispensed a quick smile, too. “Yes. Thank you.”

While standing outside the doorway Terri sat the cup on the sidewalk table, and decided impulsively to take a seat there for a moment despite the chill, looking curiously at this gray city washed by a pale morning sunlight, the clumps of hardened snow scattered about. How long had it been? As while she surveyed, the city devoured its' opponents, the mass who trudged along its' regular and worn paths, and disappeared into the maws of its' various buildings. The very air smelled of closeness, and toil, and damp, occasionally a whiff of the distant chestnut vendors, and a thin billow of steam rose from the manhole cover in the street. Terri stared at the corner where the streets intersected, south and west, where people in their coats and hats and mufflers, not smiling, passed by on their ways. They, solemn,

heads bent, rounded the corners, leaving no hint of their trail. She tried to find the sky, but there was only a sliver. Fingering the paper bill and her few coins, and sipping the cooling coffee, impatiently, she stared ahead. She rose, faced the intersection speckled with lights. Yes...resolution, she thought. She secreted the change in her pocket. A new day had begun...

--J. F. Lowe