

“In an Urban School”

The guard picks dead leaves from plants.

The sign over the table reads:

Do not take or touch anything on this table!

In the lunchroom the cook picks up in her dishcloth
what she refers to as “a little friend,”

shakes it out,

and puts the dishcloth back on the drain.

The teacher says she needs stronger tranquilizers.

Sweat rises on the bone of her nose,

on the plates of her skull under unpressed hair.

“First graders, put your heads down. I'm taking names

so I can tell your parents

which children do not obey their teacher.”

Raheim's father was stabbed last week.

Germaine's mother, a junkie,

was found dead in an empty lot.