

The No-Net World

--Larissa Shmailo

Deep in your heart, you always believed
There was a barrier, a secret shield
Keeping you safe from the street
Secretly, you knew
Your good shoes and your warm lined gloves
Kept you apart, and safe
From the man with the cup in his hand
And the boy with the cardboard sign
And the woman with the bloated legs
And the girls with the begging eyes
From the weathered madwomen railing at God
And the shadows at the ashcan fires
From the need to ask, no choices left:
Mister, can you please ...?

What did you, from the cushioned world
Of buffers, alternatives, other ways to turn
Of loans from family friends
Of credit cards and healthy children
Of grocers who smiled because they knew how well you ate:
What did you have in common with the concrete world of need?
Secretly, you knew, so surely you believed
You could never fall so low

Welcome to the no-net world.

Then I got fired one day
I got fired one day
Lost my job and then my house
I got fired one day.

Now your debts mount up like garbage and a layoff's coming soon
And you have to see a doctor and insurance just pays half
And your folks who lent you money just can't help you anymore
And the loans are coming due; still, the force field is there,
In the lining of the gloves, in the good if now used shoes