

THE PROSE POEM: AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

Volume 7 | 1998

Fine Dining Liz Rosenberg

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Liz Rosenberg

FINE DINING

The retarded people at the next table have no small talk. It takes all their concentration to answer the many quizzes the waitress puts to them, and when they laugh, rarely, it's in a group guffaw, and then an affable silence reigns. Still, they look apologetic simply to be here, to order with many mistakes and to need everything explained. "Duck," is that like turkey? "Mozzarella," is that a kind of sauce?

They glance at the other diners shyly, coyly, their slow gazes like lighthouse beams moving from face to face.

When one woman stirs her non-alcoholic daiquiri with a spoon, the others stir theirs, together, with a gentle clinking sound, like the percussive section of a school band. It takes a long time to eat each course and sometimes they yawn and get tired or silly, half falling asleep over their spoons. Very nicely dressed in this expensive restaurant and many fine choices, but they're told they can't have lobster. This is charity.

One man begins talking in unintelligible hoarse blurts, and when he gets raucous all the others laugh—frightened—and say, shh! They know their job is to eat so no one will look up, no one will even notice they are here.