

# *Bingo*

SETH BENTON

Mosquitoes spatter the wall  
beside us as the sweet rot  
smell of marsh at low tide  
drifts in the open windows, floating  
the friday night bingo voices  
upward toward the cigarette  
smoke curling blue  
around the ceiling lights.

Hunched over the long  
rows of tables the players  
hush when the caller's voice begins  
a new game, but our candy and soda  
gone we have grown tired  
past enjoying the night,  
our faith in those magic  
numbers disappearing as the prize table  
dwindles, yet we play on, determined  
to survive until the final  
number is called.

Grandma will not leave  
before then anyway.  
“Shake em up,”  
she yells, surprising us back to the game,  
then reaches down with her crooked  
finger and taps her long  
yellow nail at a number on my card.  
So alive in here

like the time she plunged  
her hand into my pail,  
pulled out a large eel all slime  
and wriggle, whacked  
away its life against the step,  
nailed it limp to the back porch,  
expertly stripped off  
the skin, gutted and cleaned it,  
then fried the fish in grease  
and together we ate  
the sweet, dark flesh in silence.