

Is It Alice, Amy or Anne?

GEORGE LONGENECKER

Huddled with four other nameless people,
who sleep on cardboard and blankets,
in the entry of a garage alcove,
just a block from Grand America Hotel,
the finest place to stay in Salt Lake City—
soft beds in a chic setting.

It's still cool at dawn
but before long pavement's too hot to touch,
all day they rest on a narrow strip of lawn,
by a parking lot shaded by lindens,
robins and sparrows nest in the trees,
search for bugs or scraps.

Behind a wall hotel guests
rest on chaise lounges
order drinks and lunch by the pool.
All day people pass by—
how sad, disgusting, lazy, addicts.
Once in a while somebody drops a few coins.

By October icy winds
will slice down city streets—
who knows how many will be left after winter,
though some will die in heat long before then,
slow euthanasia for these castoffs,
who search for scraps in trash bins.

Hotel guests come and go from restaurants,
high above, balcony lights come on.
Together they huddle for another night,
maybe dreams will bring them a little peace.