

Coffee

— Linda Flowers



T O G O

A cold and rainy New Year's day, weather like a washcloth on my face as I stop at Hardee's for coffee to go. Not many cars out but still the line is slow; no horns, though. A new girl's at the drive-through, and another I've not seen before's showing her how to run the register. Usually this is the fastest window in town, in the morning at least, before eight o'clock, when Kim's there and knows how most of us take everything; then the cars hardly seem to have to stop at all. Not like today.

I don't care. I'm on my way to school to do a little of this, a little of that; to get out of the house, mainly. Days this grey remind me of November or of what I remember the fall of the year as being like after the cold set in. The last of the corn would have been picked by then, the ground frozen and stalks mangled where the harvester had been. Once I had been kept home from school and Mama and I had walked down each row picking up the ears dropped or forgotten by the machine. Shucks could look real with corn, and you had to step on them sometimes to see if they were, or not. My father would then come along with the tractor and take the corn we had gathered to the mill. A good load was worth \$20 or \$30. Not to be wasted on coffee that you could have made yourself . . . if you could have found a place to buy a cup without getting out of your car.

NUMBER 5 1996