

The Umbrella People

by Michael Alan Brich

I'm at a train station.

I've never rode on a train

so

I'm either picking someone up

or

dropping someone off.

Vending machines huddled against the walls.

It's raining.

The people on the platform have black umbrellas

over their heads.

Brown suitcases at their knees.

An attendant sits behind cross-hatched wire.

Signs above and below him.

Signs about cost and refund policies.

I have a question for him.

Probably

something about time.

I ask him my question.

His face is yellow from years of train station sitting.

His words drift through the wire mesh.

He tells me to be solid.

This doesn't answer my question.

I accept his response anyway.

I walk out to the platform.

I don't have an umbrella or a suitcase.

I don't belong with this platform community.

I know it and so do they.

I back myself under the eaves.

and become a small part of a large shadow.

I light a cigarette.

The platform rattles with the oncoming train.

The umbrella people are eager.

They shift their weight.

They seem solid enough.

Smoke from my cigarette

lifts up

through the rain like a ghost.

It is the exact opposite of an umbrella.

It meanders and trails into the gray sky

as the platform shakes

through my body

and the wind blows rain

through my eyes

and through my skin.