

STORE 24, 11/8— There's this guy who works in store 24 who's in love with me the first time he saw me he was just bowled over he importuned me for my phone number he couldn't really talk english much in fact i could hardly understand anything he said i gave him my phone number for some reason i think i felt sorry for him and i was sure he wouldn't use it the next night my roommates told me some guy who couldn't talk english kept on calling me i went to store 24 for some late night food and said hi to femi that's his name when i got back to my room the phone was ringing i thought you were coming over to talk to me he said come and TALK to me we must talk i stayed away from store 24 for a few days but it was hard my bedroom window looks out right onto the neon shopfront i get so hungry at 3 a m it's time for another meal you know so i went back femi is from nigeria one day he tried to convince me of his eligibility as a bachelor i'm a student at u mass he kept on saying i am a student and what is wrong with that is there another man better than me tell me his name so i laugh and leave as soon as is polite when i'm with another girl he refuses to take our money on the other hand if i am with a guy he is very subdued and i am so relieved he asks me why don't you come in more often he asks me why haven't you been in for a week he asked me last night if there was any food i wanted no i said i had none and he wanted so much for me to have some but i won't i won't eat food he gives us for free because it is a soul debt i am no persephone he asked me then to go with him to the opera on saturday night i have tickets sorry i said you are so mature he said you are just the right age for me i would guess you are twenty no? women become mature at age fifteen but men later why do you always reject me it is very embarrassing he pronounced this word in the oddest way the stress on the first syllable at first it was this great story to tell people bruno said jen he wants to do it to you i know i said and then at dinner john and bruno were talking about the movie they want to make i'll be the star i said ok john said now pick your costar i don't know who i said how about the guy from store 24 bruno said we can film him doing it to you it wouldn't hurt that much john said but it's not funny it's not it stopped being a joke and i'm afraid of what will happen why did he pick me what is there about me that is any different from thousands of other harvard girls they are mostly more beautiful and better dressed and more interesting to talk to and more mature than i am i can't understand it how can this stranger be thinking about me when i just don't want to think about him at all i am supposed to be the one who falls in love with somebody way out of reach poor femi what can i do why am i so scared of store 24

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S P R I N G 1 9 8 9

WOKEN,

I am alive
inside
this burning house
this lit body
 I have left
 behind
stepping from
my skin which
pulls open
 like a new book
 or some old one
 unread
on fire
and alone through
this house thrown awake
unaware of what
to keep
what to take
I walk

the practiced walk
of parents planning escape
to the roof then and smooth air
this time forgetting
 that thing we taught
 ourselves
 called gravity

I am he who carries stars

I am light

and I leap

Kevin Young