We sat in the neon light

on a cool evening of a summer day

drinking beer and eating salad.

You told me your story

similar to those of many others:

All ~~your~~ my savings are gone,

the managers, the secretaries, the supervisors,

the police in charge of passports

all having received a handsome share.

Now ~~you~~  I have nothing left there,

~~your~~ my color TV and refrigerator were sold

to get the cash for the plane ticket.

“But I was lucky,” ~~you assured me~~.

“Many people have spent fortunes

and still cannot leave the country.”

“What are you going to do here?

Don’t think this is a place where

you can make a fortune by snapping fingers.

Starting poor, we have to labor for every dollar.

It is a place where money

can hire the devil to make bean curd

and your growth is measured by financial figures.

There is no way for us to get beyond

a social security number.”

“Anything, I would do anything,

as long as I can make a living.

At least, I am free here and don’t

hate others. Do you know what I wanted

when I was back there?

I always imagined how to get a gun

so I could shoot all the bastards.

That country is not a place to live—

I would rather die than go back.”

We stopped to watch seagulls.

An airplane was writing the word

FUN in the distant sky.

I wish I had left the same way,

but I brought with me all my belongings,

even my army mug and a bunch of old letters.