

COSMOS

Amidst the twisted shoes and
boxed goods,
a balding doll waves a defiant hello
or goodbye
in a store called Cosmos.

These are all great things,
says the Greek owner,
motioning to the mostly empty shelves,
the dun and dusty inventory.

The very city is for sale.
Like most of North Dakota,
the farms at least.
My daughter wants to go to New York,
he says.
He is the owner.
Of the store and the city.
He pours me an Ouzo.
His wife delivers a fragrant plate
of spiced lamb,
positions it just so
on the floral plastic tablecloth.

I bought this city for her,
he says.
Look at the grapevines I started for her.
They dryly creep up the white asbestos siding
in the blinding midday truth and heat.
I cannot for the life of me see fruit.

I was a champion once,
he says.
His wife produces the proof:
a hairy-chested man
in black and white
hurling a discus toward the heavens.
Another Ouzo
and even less reporter's remove.

But we will be happy there,
he says.
We will be happy
where our daughter is happy.

We will sell our American dream
and we will be happy.