Still Lives in Detroit, #5

Jim Daniels

Fall 1984
Still Lives in Detroit, #5

In the alley behind Simpson's Market
two boys and an older man stand stained
in aprons, lean against the dumpster's smell.

In the field between Simpson's and Delta Drugs
broken glass, candy wrappers, footprints
lie frozen in earth.

Three cigarettes smoke the air.
Across the street, the high school
spills toward them.

The boys pose in faded letter jackets
playing hooky briefly again, stamp
guns on their belts.

The man is smiling as one boy speaks.
He is watching the back door, measuring distances.
No clues to what has put him here.

If I could, I would watch until the mud
took in new shapes, shifted with possibility.
What could be a rat moves through the picture.