

How are you tonight, 7-Eleven? with your smell
of departure and annoyance, your white bread, your drain cleaners,
your puddings, your cockroaches fanning out over the parking lot
like glossy marzipan soldiers lugging fearsome shadows.
It must be lovely to watch for dawn
coming over the EverTrust Bank and the Chevron station,
it must be trying
for the lively man with the turban (sales associate #33323)
to hang out with the seven moving objects of the sky,
the eleven ounces of the heart
and the sturdy sixteen-year-olds
picking their noses by the soda fountain.
7-Eleven—benign, broad-minded firebrand of night—
the great inward journey begins with *you*,
inexhaustible Christmas of green red orange HELP
WANTED Do we think we understand you, 7-Eleven? How sweet
the industrious freezer, the implacable milk,
the pounds of glaze, fritters, muffins,
“freedom of choice,” Hispanic, Hmong, Chinese,
the painful joy of brainfreeze™,
10,000 pots of coffee for Tarzana
apotheosis of the hot-dog-loving state
that stares at *Popular Mechanics* and *Soap Opera Weekly*
when all at once a man looks up, catches
his own image timid in the window
and a girl examining her nails in an idling van. . . HELP
and beyond that a string of bungalows and porches
and flagrant Union 76 balls WANTED
from here all the way to Downey, Bell Gardens, City of Industry,
past where the freight trains jangle and yelp
though perhaps no one can say for sure where they’re headed
or what they’re freighted with.

Ode to 7-Eleven



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Alex M. Frankel was born in San Francisco. He studied poetry at Columbia with Kenneth Koch in the early 80's before moving to Spain, where he stayed until 1995. He now lives in Alhambra. His poems and short fiction have appeared in such publications as *The Comstock Review*, *WordRiver*, *The North Dakota Review*, *the Cider Press Review*, *the Temple and Beyond* and *the Valley of the Contemporary Poets*. He has an MFA in Poetry which he received from New England College in 2006.