

Peculiar Properties

By Juan Delgado

On my cutting board, I discovered them,
the tiniest of ants, roaming dots of lead.
At first, they were too few to classify, hiding
under crumbs, these scavengers of leftovers.
Admiring their labor, I immediately granted them
citizenship, these tailgaters of a kitchen's routines.

In Miami, I had no stove, working far from my home.
My wife was a midnight call to San Bernardino.
While searching for crumbs, especially for
the taste of apricot jelly, they fell into a line
across my cutting board; I saw it again,
saw the line my sixth-grade teacher drew
on the board, pointing to each end.

While he planted himself on his desk, he leaned
his face toward us, telling us in a low voice:

"You don't see it yet, you're too young
still, but that line in front of you continues
infinitely on either side. And if there is
the slightest slope in that line, either way,
it will slowly begin to sag, then curve and veer
and eventually one end will find the other.

And lines, lines are never perfect, they are
like us, never completely straight. So just
imagine the searching that goes on all
around us, every day. And to happen on
that union is really to witness the most earthly
of forms you'll ever get to know. If you're lucky,
you'll see that, even luckier if you're part
of that union."

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