

of potatoes. I had been taking a shower when the doorbell rang and so I accepted them with one hand:

Of course, I said.

What are your plans for New Year's? he asked.

I don't have any, I said, None at all.

If you want, you can celebrate with us.

I thanked him.

And feel free to bring someone...

No, I said, I'll be alone.

I apologized for my appearance and invited him to my dinner which was already on the table: peanut butter toast and lukewarm coffee.

(4)

From the very beginning I found my job to be — Isn't it the way with most jobs? — a job.

In the morning I taught the beginners to distinguish *a* from *the*. In the afternoon my intermediate class reviewed the difference between *a* and *the*. Evening classes with the adult students were devoted to discussion of more advanced themes: for example, *another* versus *the other*.

(5)

When I had remembered to take the phone I told Aunt Helen: Hey, I gotta go, I'll call you later. No, no, everything's fine... I'll call you later. Merry Christmas!

And after hanging it up I went back to my lukewarm coffee and our unfinished discussion of American slavery.

(6)

Time passed. Like an Indian Summer. Like peanut butter in winter. At work, the semester ended just as my English was beginning to improve. Snow began to fall around mid-October and just kept falling. My kitchen sink continued to leak. My supply of toilet paper ran out. And despite *all this*, the German dictionary remained on the shelf, thick but hardly touched, next to the three solar calculators the size of credit cards.

And the weeks passed. And the snow fell. And in time it became a wonder that I had ever used articles at all.