

The Fourth District
John C. Mannone

I smell you
hiding in the garbage pile
between the rotten eggs
and the spoiled chicken.

You cannot escape.
Come. Let's get it over with,
I am hungry.

Ah! I see movement. Over there,
where the plastic bags sag a little
and the maggots squirm.

I hear you
slither on your belly,
your hands and feet writhing
between the putrid cabbage
and tomatoes.

There you go! Run. Run.
Let the adrenalin flow.
It will spice you up.
Don't look now. But

I got you between my teeth.
Umm! I'll masticate you.
It's okay to scream. I love it
when your guts pop in my mouth.

But now, I must defecate some
of you and the rest, I'll spit out.

We'll do this again tomorrow.
And the day after that.
Over and over again. I cannot
control my appetite. I am hungry
forever, as you once were.

Please allow me to introduce myself.
I'm not your average three-headed
junkyard dog. I am Cerberus.