

CLARK

CONTAINMENT

Clark sits in an office. A poster across from her depicts a straining group of whitewater rafters: the word ILLINOIS hangs in the air above them. She sips her brackish coffee and calls up the Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site to confirm their hours, which have been reduced, due to budget cuts. She notes the change and calls the next location on her list, the Fayette County Museum.

This is her new job. She's working as an Associate Editor for a company that publishes specialty magazines. The one she's working on now is a quarterly regional-interest thing, an inoffensive assemblage of coupons and event listings and generic photos of autumn woods which ends up distributed to local hotels, placed carefully in the desk drawer, next to the hotel stationery, to live in darkness, aspiring to nothing more than for some businessman to pick it up, flip through it idly, and maybe tear out a page for future reference. When she was first familiarizing herself with it, she noted with a depressed bemusement that the Chicago that appears in it is one that she does not inhabit: all high-end retail shops, Loop steakhouses, and big-name attractions like the Shedd Aquarium that she hasn't been to since junior high school. An official Chicago, a Chicago that she could not love.

She saw a different Chicago this past weekend, out at the F15 anti-war protest: thousands of people gathered on Devon Street, marching together in the freezing wind, carrying homemade signs, shouting, singing hymns, daring to feel jubilation in the face of the horror and death that may yet come.

That *is coming*, she corrects herself.

For it is coming. She cannot let herself believe that they have managed to contain it. On Sunday she got online and dug up coverage on the other demonstrations around the world: 600 cities, millions of protesters overall—when she began to see the numbers some optimistic voice inside her blurted out *maybe we are actually stopping this thing*. But to believe that overlooks the sheer momentum of the machinery already set into motion, not to mention the contempt the Bush Administration evinces towards all who would oppose it. It is not yet time to relax.

And yet. How good to see that she is not the only one. That is the knowledge that carries her through another week in this awful office. One window on her computer is open on the Poets Against the War website. Joan Retallack: Oh lucky lucky us that we know we are not alone in this. That we discover we are each other.