

Survivors

The early December sky
is cupped like an angry hand
over our bleak suburb —
where I walk a wet road
dividing city from township.
To my left, a drainage ditch
whose banks are a tangle of
lifeless sumach. Swollen, frothy
brown, it carries on its way
a flotilla of beer cans, candy
wrappers, chunks of plastic waste.
Here, suddenly, a pair of muskrats
bob up to the surface —
rough customers, survivors
of this element.
They cut upstream against
the small indignity of trash,
then disappear. But not before
I've caught the song
of water in their throat,
the muddy laughter of their mouth . . .
City, beware.
There still are scrappers
holding to your edges.
They've learned to tough it out.
They're not yet done with you.

DON POLSON