

Her Heavy Chair

The sky releases a cascade
of long, black hair as the first wren
faces east, song rising into the mesh of sky.
Night rivulets down, gray wing on the horizon
 like an old swan's on black ice,
 shadows ready to edge out of wood and steel.

She resumes her morning kabuki, painting
a mask while repeating an affirmation,
cosmetics being a job requirement,
 mirror ringed with photos
 of nieces, nephews,
 a family group photo,
 veins overlapping
in the brine of shared needs,
jobs continuing to disappear
 as wars fester.

Christmas approaches club-footed,
 stripped of mistletoe,
 the scarred empty chair carried
in her eyes always set within reach,
the props of faith sure to wash away
 during the dry cold blues of January.

She finds comfort in being anchored
to a cubicle, the eyes of her youngest here
absorbing the spread and arch of heron wings, the oldest
texting a friend ten feet away. Buying gifts should be easy.

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Solitaire at Dawn

The children of four days of rain,
having left the arms of spruce,
pool above roots and listen

as the black-haired goats
of evening slip inside loam.

The first crow call a beacon
void of promise for those
who play solitaire well.

The queen of hearts, heavy
with an imprint left by a mask,
waits to see which cards are dealt.

Then, we find a home
for the one-eyed jack of diamonds

as fog trails mist onto sliding glass doors.
Gray brush over the mural of one life.

Night Sky, Stream Bed

His right foot tremors a pedal,
soul edge placed on stone wheel,
umbrellas of sparks cast over kindling

hand-swept from the median
between twilight and dream.

Ancient songs born of rituals
tunnel near dreaming owls
as he grinds starlight

out of shadow
waking the eyes
waiting on branches.

His blue shirt unbuttoned,
coaxed off his shoulders.

Her scent lakes
over his tongue

and floods his chest.

Spun through Rain

Waking thoughts tattooed on the wing
of a dream let to fly, his solo print left
cooling on blue sheets, he drinks in dawn
with a java back, sky the color of gravel.

Rain washing night's veneers off Portland,
he waits, blowing smoke at bridge legs.
His walk, so far, punctuated by squalls
and a barista's caffeinated chirps.

The neon eyes of city night closing,
traffic returns to its toxic usual, exhaust
black on yellow brake squeal turns, radio
tunes, angry horns, shouts, all spun through rain.

Preparing a speech for delivery to a mirror,
his trust calibrated in layers of spine, he lip-syncs
intentions and promises to his soul. The hut halo
of his umbrella pumped up inside downpour,

He stands beside the bench cross-hatched
with initials added together. Living the beauty
that flies into ash after embers subside,
he thinks of her on a beachside jaunt.

He sees her walking between trees
that hold the shapes of wind,
a cloud-break dancing sun slants
over warm sands as she removes her shoes.

On The Bridge Between

This lightning-struck
tree's sole branch
is a jazz sax
stemmed into squall gusts.

Sky tuned to blow
rip-tides out of exile,
twilight out of your veins

while a river-bed plants agates
in the belly of a strong current.

One buoy marks
your passage out of confusion,
spun by wind, anchored to bridge leg,

it clangs a route
through downpour
as you grip the railing

and gut-sing opals inside storm-clouds.