

## **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.

Charles F. Thielman / 3695 Dixielee St. / Santa Maria, CA 93455

### **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.