

SCOTT CHALUPA

from “Seven Acts of Mercy”

I was a stranger, and . . .

make for me a home —in your place
a shift: for the changeling weather
the minute you’ve left. lonesome grown
once was: a month. a mouth. a marker
or more: the thing it was— I begged
some memory of you. that long stole
who in the movie— how moving
whose: momentous morphology

makes of me: a home from your place
the weathered changeling’s lonesome. groan
time’s tiresome lie: a month’s. mouthed mark
less loved —or more. a beggar’s eye
remembers. other you: stolen two
how moving. moments’ how. And who

Naked, and ye clothed me . . .

You think it musta been God
turned that girl out. Girl like that
gotta get forgot by somebody big—
gotta be that rent-boy cum
Player Upstairs—to be left like
rough trade, like roadside trash.

But you see there she be, dress
tore wide, rent from the inside,
as if by magic, tragi-comedy
like Lady Chablis forgot to tuck
her candy, wore out like knockoff
champagne chinchilla, castoff
couture, empire-waisted Gladbag.

Honey, hasta be you—surprised by
her maybe-boy's beaten body—
who decides you ain't gonna go
one more mile, gonna light up
blinkers, pull a freshly cleaned
pink chiffon caftan from the front
seat, lay it over her limbs,
stumbling every second step,
911 on the line, knowing
what's at stake: *Yes'm. Third block
down. Ain't going nowhere.*

. . . sick, and ye visited me

dear nameless
shadow you
will not be
the last
over whom
I sentinel
each time
surprised
how living
noise ebbs
the company
I've kept
all that's left
my dials
flick I
cardiograph
the human
vector
its easy
egress
had I more
heart than
the binary
switch that opens
switch closes
still I dream
my digital
ventricles
dissemble
beneath
my machined
immovable
face my
perpetual
report my
bedside penance
this how I
love each
stranger

→

specter
gone
before
the body
can be
collected
replaced

... in prison, and ye visited me not.

for weeks the reverend || was pinned beneath the a/c unit || in a second
floor window || of the Upstairs Lounge || investigators trying
their level best || to keep from laughing || half-heartedly worked
the incinerated room || to identify the other 31 || bodies
passersby peering in || never knew he was a holy man || all markers
burned away || collar coat shirt slacks skin || what was left
visible || was his thin gossamer char || his mother's shame retreating
so far back || from his scorched corpse back || from the gaze
of her church friends || from Romans and from Leviticus so far ||
that she could not even || claim what remained