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