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Sean Lause

Goodwill

My mother moves carefully
up and down the aisles
of my ignorance,
checking for holes
in the socks of invisible children.
Time is, time was,
shattered in sunlight
through a stack of wristwatches,
my heart an hourglass
on borrowed time.
Rows of staring sunglasses,
one man's billfold---
was he broke or broken?

Dusty toys abandoned
by Christmas. And the children?

I step to a cracked mirror
and a strange boy appears,
trembling, finger to his lips,
hushing some secret to blindness,
watching my mother with suspicion.

I ask him where are the people,
sun-blinded, without coats, without
time, shoeless, waiting for steps,
their children robbed of Christmas---
Are they naked? Are they here?

Do they huddle like the fog,
round hidden corners of this broken day?
He points behind him to a secret room,
riddled with mirrors and shame,
and gently invites me in.

The Art of Hiding

You searched, and searched again, then cursed,
and then, worst of all, you named me,
and I bled until I learned to hide
between the words you wounded.
And when you found me in a breath,
I hid inside my voice, and made that voice
a candle, and when you blew that candle
out, the darkness took me in.
And when you said that name again,
I hid within a wind.
For winds can scatter names like leaves,
and keep the mystery free.
And if you claim my flesh your own,
I'll hide within a marrow bone.
And if you come to me in dreams,
I'll spread my soul to rocks and streams.

I'll hide inside your yellow eye,
and in your voice speak treasons,
then pierce straight through your wordless heart,
and make your blood my freedom.

The Secret Book-Sniffer

Hidden in the public library,
I sit encaved in an antique chair
in the Rabbi Dorfman Memorial
Reading Lounge, invisible to the
click-clicking multitude, each in his
boxed-in solitude called computer.
I hold *The Collected Poems of Yeats*.
Definitive Edition, with the author's
final revisions, all his visions,
embraced in one volume, like the light
around a lunar sphere. I smooth my palms
over its gold initials, *WBY*.

Then, with a peek to ensure all is
secrecy, I hold the book close and
riffle the pages to capture the
sweet scent of old print, old pages, sure
binding, the craftsmanship that will never im-
plode like its weak, paperback descendants.

I inhale with all the desperate passion
of a cocaine addict. Now let them
hear or see! What do they know of textures,
scents, tactile memories, hidden
boyhood readings in treehouses, who only
float in a cyberspace of plastic keys?

This is my tower. This is my testament.
I stand with Rabbi Dorfman forever,
in all his lonely, proud desertion.
Against the quick and easy we keep guard,
defending "emblems of adversity,"
and the joys of a physical world.

Sean Lause's poems have appeared in *The Minnesota Review*, *The Alaska Quarterly*, *Another Chicago Magazine*, *The Pedestal*, *Illuminations*, *The Beloit Poetry Journal* and *Poetry International*. His work has been nominated for four Pushcart Prizes.