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Peter Jacob Streitz

Shakespeare in the Dark

The tweeker's
Boggy, alcoholic eyes
Bulged unblinkingly
Within inches of mine
Setting the stage
For mere players
In this mosh pit
At the intersection of ol' Frisco
And modernity
While the watery whirl
Of rush hour washed 'round
And Dino denied I've come—
To that very corner
Everyday
For the past twenty years
Awaiting my love's return

from work
But on this day
Where the subway
emerges
And the street cars clank
Like two ships
Passing in the night
I unknowingly missed her
As she unknowingly missed me
But Dino didn't miss a beat
Manically orating his resurrection
As a bookseller
And one who
Only reads the law
And fuck that storytelling
Crap
With his countenance
Increasingly inscribed
In an ominous glaze
And his lids hoisted
At half-mast
He pulled back the curtain
For the briefest moment
To inquire
Do you read?
What?
There was no answer
Other than His . . .
—Shakespeare—
Leading to
his sidewalk bibliothèque
Where ten tomes of prose
Sat dog-eared and dirty
Along with a soiled sleeping mat
And a rat
Disguised as a pet
Entrapped beneath
A milk crate.

—Much Ado About Nothing—
Was crammed into my hand
While two bucks
departed this fool
And his wad of money
Filled Dino's head
With sugar plums of theft
Or thirst for some complicity
Whose outright criminality
Got quenched with past drinks
And blackouts
At whore houses
In Alaska
And racist chases
In Texas by Rangers
Who took exception
To the pilfering
Of black velvet
Bedspreads—
when shit and damn
My cell phone vibrated
And a distraught
Wifely voice
Rung down the curtain
On two role players
In another performance
Of their life.

Peter Jacob Streitzi came from a single parent home in upstate New York. With a full basketball scholarship to college--within weeks he found it wasn't his calling. After a detour, he graduated from Boston University with the only Alternative Education diploma ever given. Now a retired executive from the computer industry, he spends his time writing poetry and novels in San Francisco, CA.