

At The Entrance To *Gan Eden*—The Doorman's Tale

for Peter

There is no sneaking by, no bribe he will accept.
His word is law, denial final. He has given
many years of loyal service. All rest easy
in the structure's upper reaches. Knowing
everyone by name, the doorman shares
a joke or anecdote while weighing judgment
like a flaming sword. He learns the secrets
that are passed in the stairs and elevators.
Hidden cameras are his eyes. He can tell you
what is going on in front of any door.
He makes a list for everything and everyone,
quizzes delivery boys in their native tongue.
What apartment do you want? What's the name?
There's a party on the highest floor tonight.
Outside the light is fading as his shift is winding down.
He is tired from the banter and his uniform sags
like aging skin under the warm lobby lights.
He is certain only the deserving have gotten by,
only the worthy were given the access they desired.
As he goes off shift, he ticks off tasks and calls
upstairs. The host is not yet dining with his guests.

Steven Sher's most recent book is *Grazing On Stars: Selected Poems* (Presa Press, 2012) with another poetry book forthcoming: *The House Of Washing Hands* (Pecan Grove Press). Steven recently moved to Jerusalem, Israel.