

Richard Luftig – Three Poems

Empty Pegboard

The clips stare at me whenever I look
for one of my father's old tools, arms
outstretched, bent cinches shrugging
their shoulders. The hammer with splintered
handle that should be hanging by its claw
in the upper left hand corner, the one

I'll search an hour before finding it under a box
of old snapshots of the two of us, the nicked rasp
that belongs center-right, that makes me think
of the one in his voice from smoking too many
unfiltered Camels. I'll search for that one too,
finding it in a junk drawer where I've thrown

everything else that I have discarded over the years;
flashlights without batteries, batteries that died
in 1996, pens without tops, ticket stubs
from the first major league game we ever saw.
Everything in its place and a place for everything,
he lectured, just before he left for good.

Ohio, Late October

A fragile moon along
this out-county road.
Woods dropping to a creek.
A good darkness for light

snow. Gravel drives
run transit- straight;
the only relief in
low, rolling hills.

But look close, see
the breaks in these
trees, places for
spotlight stars

to ply their trade.
And up ahead,
a weedy farm,
plank-missing barn.
And aspens full with black grackles
making their demands
while below monk sparrows
scurry about for charity.

Magic

Look up my sleeve
if you must.
Make sure
there is nothing,
hidden, no sleight
to pull me out,
or save the day.

Watch me cut
this love into strips,
then try to retract it
from my top hat whole
only to have them
flutter in the wind
then beg to try again.

Pick a card,
any old card
you please.
Don't show it
but study
intensely,
commit it

to memory. Now,
don't place it back
but hold it close
keep it near
just in case I ask
at some later date
if it ever contained a heart.

Richard Luftig is a former professor of educational psychology and special education at Miami University in Ohio now residing in Pomona, CA. He is a recipient of the Cincinnati Post-Corbett Foundation Award for Literature and a semi-finalist for the Emily Dickinson Society Award. His poems have appeared in numerous literary journals in the United States and internationally in Japan, Canada, Australia, Europe, Thailand, Hong Kong and India.