

Poems by Charles Passy

Daylight Savings

You misstate the difference. In the same way you discount
the possibility of miracles. If it matters, the evening will make
note of the memory. Of a place that was warmer. Of a time
when the sky shrugged. There's a redness to the apple, yes?

But there's also a flatness to one too many landlocked cities.
Elmira, the city of long vowels. Binghamton, the city of Mondays.
Plattsburgh, the city that never mattered. Until such time it did.
I will visit them all, eventually. When the sun forgets to remember.

We begin with the basics: brown bread, a cup of oolong tea.
We return with the essentials: worn chessboards, untied shoelaces.
Connect the dots and you know everything to know about what's
stored in the root cellar. And about the onset of darkness, too.

The Almost Winter

We came to the reckoning at half past eleven.
As if all truth is divvied into the stuff we collect
in the back of our bedroom closets.
The morning is whole, warm and wise,
which means it's best served in a souvenir mug.
To deny this daily bread is to ask for forgiveness.

We stumbled upon Jesus in the beginning of spring.
Not the real Jesus, of course, but the stuffed version sold
in the dollar stores that blind men frequent.
The alleyways are known for their perpetual kindness,
so it's best to visit them at first light.
You will understand this, eventually and then forever.

We returned to zero long before it became the fashion.
Like the stuff of tabloid fodder, or, better yet, like dogs
on a salt-licked beach, there to devour the sun.
The rockets have all the red glare they could muster;
it's quite possible their best years are behind them.
This is not a fact so much as a point of departure.

Dreaming of *Lechón*

Mi abuela, mi corazón, a million miles of sand, and yet this?
To have made one's way back to *la isla bonita* is to have missed
The point. It is not about the contour of the sun-washed shell
Or the rhythm of the rum. It is about how you live your life away
From this troubled shore. To pretend the day is done when
It is not even *medianoche*? This is the American lie, the conceit
That time counts (and can be counted). It is why the hairdresser
Always matters, teasing black strands into black magic,
Asking if there is a better way to craft a country. The answer,
Inevitably, is *tal vez*. Because this nation is the maybe nation.

So let us sound the bell, scrape the *güiro*, dance a thousand
Pagan dances. Let us eat the overripe papaya – so much fruit,
So few regrets. The point, *mis chicas*, is that our moment
Has passed – or it's still to come. This measuring of meaning
In each shake or sway of the hips is like the laugh of so many
Flowers of mahogany. You should know better. You *did*
Know better. But you chose the obvious return, a ride taken
On a different driftwood raft. Oh, *la playa, la playa*, so cruel
And still so oddly perfect. What did *el hombre* say? You can't
Go home again. The truth is like that, full of sand and tears.