

Old Dreams

I drank a beer in the park today
 twenty feet from a guy
 sleeping in a blanket
 of newspaper
 and his own vomit
 Haven't been homeless
 since I was sixteen
 but ever since I have lived
 only one paycheck away
 from the gutter
 and
 my room at twenty-two-twelve
 first avenue
 has a good view of it
 from the second floor
 I lost my job today
 and I have enough
 for beer and food for the month
 but when the first comes
 I'll have to dodge the old man
 until I can come up with rent
 the American dream
 seems so far away
 from my corner of the world

— OPUS23

Jesus Is Stripped Of His Garments (Good Friday on the streets)

To Be Stripped Naked

Standing there
 numb and drained
 abandoned and persecuted.

So it is here
 in the weeds of this vacant lot
 under this sidewalk
 people have slept
 on. Display and defenseless
 abandoned and drained ...

To Be Stripped Naked

One day you are having supper with your
 family and before
 you know it, you can't even prove who you are.
 You are alone.

"You were laid off and your wallet stolen, you
 say??"

WELL, then we need you to complete this
 form in triplicate
 and then the questions.

Personal questions.

Over and over

"What is your problem?" "Did your
 parents beat you?"

Where are your children?

How did you get that bruise? Are you
 HIV positive?

You say you're Jesus? You must be crazy.
 Lock this one up.

To Be Stripped Naked

Caught in a surrounding series of events and
 before you know it

You are left standing there beaten down and
 naked

Alone

Exposed for all to judge, label, blame, and
 Hate.

People go by and stare

(or avoid the look of suffering)

And say

"The Homeless are lazy."

"They are weak alcoholics and addicts."

"They live on my tax dollars."

"They like living this way."

"Why don't we put them out of their
 misery."

To Be Stripped Naked

False pretenses don't last on the streets
 No Armani suits for crooks to hide behind
 No six-month dental cleanings or tanning
 booths