

## Occupational Hazards

Working graveyard shift at a 7-11  
in Seattle, making minimum  
everything, when I got robbed

by a guy with a pistol. Now  
I was thinking as it happened  
thinking the gun ain't loaded

everything is under control  
this guy don't want to hurt me  
he understands I ain't got much

more than he does. I got  
an old car, high rent, even  
the same dark skin as his

and my best shirt is the one  
I have to wear to work  
with 7-11 stitched on my chest.

But the robber takes me back  
into the cooler, makes me  
kneel on the cold floor

with my hands on my head/ my back turned to him/ and I wet  
my pants when he puts the pistol/ up against my skull/ I keep  
thinking/ I'm going to die/ between the broken eggs/ and the  
expired milk/ and I keep thinking/ I'll make a move/ on the  
robber/ and tear the gun from him/ and I keep thinking/ I'd  
rather die fighting/ and/ I'd rather die brave and crazy/

but the robber laughs, runs  
out of the store, out  
of the rest of my life

and leaves me to the police  
and their sketch artist.  
It takes hours to describe

the robber, detail by detail  
the color of his hair, eyes, skin  
his height, weight, age

all approximated, estimated.  
After all that work  
the sketch artist asks

if I've remembered everything  
perfectly, if I'm sure  
I've described the robber

exactly as he looked, exactly  
as he lived and breathed  
and I tell the sketch artist

"Yes, I could never forget"  
and then he shows me his sketch  
shows me my memory, my vision

and the face on the page  
is the same face I always see  
when I look in my mirror

in those last seconds  
before I walk out the door  
and leave home for work.