Poetry

Lizard at the University

John Herschel

I am a lizard at the university,
restless in my skin
like a suitcase left on the turntable
at the airport.
The liquid in my head expands,
lofting paper airplanes in the clouds;
they rise and drift and spiral serenely.
O if only I had wings,
they would be in the museum of medical anomalies.

One slithers through a place like this,
avoiding certain people
who are like brooms sweeping their own straw,
and have that curious frenzied look
of a drummer in a silent movie.
When they have tiffs the clouds collide
like a glass of milk lying on its side;
even the buildings seem like drunks
in the middle of a huge explanation.

But the obvious is not obvious here.
Those who aspire to great heights
are often driven by an urge to jump.
And even the windows weep from boredom,
as the hours circumnavigate in amber drops
like little oars dipped in marmalade.
When I look up at the sky,
it’s as if someone in a blue shirt
were playing a joke on me.

I flick my tongue
to turn the pages in a book.
The lowest grain I am, the minimum,
has run aground on a berm of gravel.
But I have packed my claws
and can barely scratch
the yellow paint from a pencil.

A red hawk spirals in the parking lot.
My elbows grind into the sand;
I scribble notes in the margin.

**Mirage**
*Ed Subitzky*

I cannot die
because I never lived.
I cannot cease to exist
because I never was.

I am a filigree,
a fantasy,
spun by an organ
looking back on itself
to understand itself,
chasing its disappearing tail
(which chases a tale)
through a whirlpool of nothingness
from which nothing can emerge;
this sorry recursive farce
has been given a name:
‘Me.’
But a name does not make it real.
I am a fraud,
a deceit,
a narrative,
a fiction.
I am the fourth law of thermodynamics
which states:
‘Fools believe in themselves.’
But even such a fool
(in its reflective pool)
is palpable
and perhaps plausible
while I
on the other hand
am emptiness
breaded into nothingness
twisted into un-ness
baked and served
to its own plot device.
Can such a thing really
be afraid to die?

I do not know myself
I will not miss myself
because myself
was never mine,
was never self.
This is the terror.
This is the comfort.
This is the truth
insisting on hearing its own words
even when spoken by a liar.