

Sisyphus

Shawn P. Bailey

The escalator broken again
We climb the adjacent stairs
In wingtips and houndstooth slacks.
I peer into the guts of the silent machine.
It is always the same guy,
Crouched over, sweat on his face,
Wielding a flashlight and cursing,
Pushing the same stubborn rock
Up the same hill. Maybe
It wouldn't be that bad;
With any luck, your hill has some trees,
A view of a lake. A breeze
kicks up and you suck your lungs
full of mountain air. Your arms
have grown strong and the rock
in your hands feels heavy,
satisfying. It is permanent.
Its weight reminds you of its path
Down the face of the ridge,
Rolling all the way to your feet.
It could be a sculpture.
There is already one in there, probably,
Waiting for the right set of hands.
Over lunch you wonder why
The stone needs pushing anyway
And you notice it is almost one o'clock
And you need to get pushing again
If you're going to beat the traffic tonight
And you feel your hands reaching for the flashlight,
Sweat on your face—cursing the escalator.