

Ritual

It has to be the blue mug,
the one that fits my hand like a chalice.
The coffee runs through the brewer,
and I stir in cinnamon until the aroma
fills the room like incense.

Maxwell trots into the kitchen
to take his place by my side,
the furry acolyte who will lead
the processional into the living room
where ritual resumes
in the predawn silence.

Folding myself into
a corner of the couch
I watch the shadows
take shape over the hill.

The quilt Beth made for me
is draped over the couch
like an altar cloth I unfold
with the dexterity that comes
from mindful repetition.

The outline of cedars
across the open field emerges
through soft pink light
and the windows melt away.

Listening to the hymn of
my own rhythmic breath,
I watch the sacrament of dawn
breaking over the pines
and drink in the new day.

—Gloria Heffernan



art by Chris Hero