

## Tobi Alfier – Two Poems

### Mornings

The neighbor stepped out on the porch  
in her nightdress. Blowsy rose-hued flowers  
blow sheer between her thighs in the morning  
breeze. Pink Uggs nabbed from her daughter  
protect her feet on the cold, splintered wood.  
A nicotine patch up high on one arm,  
blackbird tattoo on the other, she heaves  
her Winston butt, smoked down to the bone,  
out in the yard, dumps her ashtray  
over the low hedge into one yard over.

She wouldn't know the word hypocrite  
if you paid her, she just always has one  
wake-up smoke in the morning, true that.  
One yard over? They don't care, could  
maybe be in jail if it's a *sober-up Saturday*—

might be in jail no matter what.  
It's a neighborhood of chained-up dogs,  
El Caminos parked on what used to be grass  
and fights as loud as a record turned up high,  
but respect between future alibis—you bet.

She don't care who sees what as she turns around,  
heads back into the house. She'll make something  
delicious for breakfast from the ruins of last night's  
take-out, anything fried will do. Like magic  
they'll all appear at the table, complexions

the gray of old snow and poor nutrition.  
They fold their hands in gratitude, wish for anyone  
to come by with logs already split,  
maybe a bottle of drink with a real label—  
they don't ask for much, and the bright day tumbles on.

## Offshore

The sea tells its story in more than myths and shipwrecks,  
it is mothers and sons, sons and lovers, lovers and husbands  
as well as all things living or dying, or dead—  
the thick kelp forest hides meteorites from heaven  
and much sea life, some we can't even describe  
because we have no words for it, all preserved  
in the salt of witness, stories passed down  
from generations, changed very little as they go.

I catch her often on beaches that thread the coast,  
always gazing seaward, lowering her head to light a smoke  
even in damp winds, her collar drawn up against the cold.  
The day is already etching away in shadows—  
she has not found what she searches for, only gulls  
crying up and down the flattened water. They carry  
no answers. I'm fearful of approaching her to ask  
what she seeks. She won't find it tonight, I'm sure.

Flying clouds muscle in on the gulls, change stars  
into scraps of constellations. The sky over the sea  
turns tungsten-gray to blue-black. Late workers on break  
congregate in the beach parking to pass a flask.  
It's time for the woman to move on to her next lookout.  
I don't know where she's going or how she'll get there.  
May her ghosts find their sea legs and bring her peace  
before the next morning breaks—my unspoken wish for her.

**Tobi Alfier** is a multiple Pushcart nominee and multiple Best of the Net nominee. *Symmetry: earth and sky* was published by Main Street Rag. Her chapbook *Grit & Grace* was published by Orchard Street Press (March, 2021). She is co-editor of San Pedro River Review ([www.bluehorsepress.com](http://www.bluehorsepress.com)).