

## Lift

On his knees in the walk-in fridge breathing  
pink detergent, he scrubs under shelves of food  
with numb hands. The relief of cleaning the deep fryer,  
feeling still warm fat sludge through his fingers,  
digging out brown wrinkles of potato and batter.

He watches the clock above the bins  
he empties after every shift, when the pans  
have been scraped clean, the floors swept and mopped.  
On the bus home, his head tilts against the cold window –  
night falls – his reflection ripples.

Walking from the stop, looking at the ground,  
something crackles from the hedgerow. Through dark  
he sees a thrush trapped, panicked in leafless mesh.  
He pushes his hands in, and pulls lightly at the web  
of prickled branches.

The bird fights free, lifting  
above the rooftops and telephone wires, vanishing.