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Shoulders

The slope of a shoulder
says loads about a man

what he's been lugging around
and for how long

whether he's strong enough
to lift one more sack of sand

and smart enough
to leave it as it falls

when a seam splits
spilling the truth for his effort.

The boss might call him in
to have a chat

to see if what he saw
will have its way with him

if he's walking off the job
or if he's going to talk.

No matter his response
it's the shoulders give away the fact

he's had enough of this—
you can dock him if you want—

the shoulders and the back
and the hands jammed down his pockets.

Palace of Justice

Learned in the law
he labeled each event
of those days
in accordance with tradition.
The legislative will
thus informed his speech
the crunch of leather in the halls
his conscience.
Dismissing rumors of rooms
below chambers
slippery with blood
he rose from the bench
each afternoon at four
drenched in his robes
never once having looked into
the eyes
of those he condemned.
On his way out
the magnificent doors
women lined in the streets
hailed him
the last hope
for loved ones missing these months
taken in the night
and no word yet.