

Charles Simic

In the Junk Store

A small, straw basket
Full of medals
From good old wars
No one recalls.

I flipped one over
To feel the pin
That once pierced
The hero's swelling chest.

Crickets

Blessed are those for whom
Time doesn't run
Into dark of night,
But drags its feet,

A moment's captive,
Like a lone sail
At sunset
Suspended on the river,

Some birds out there
Keeping it company,
And closer to home,
Crickets, crickets, crickets.

Those Who Clean After

Evil things are being done in our name.
Someone scrubs the blood,
As we look away,
Getting the cell ready for another day.

I can't make out the faces,
Only buckets and mops
Being carried down stone steps
Into the dark basement.

How quietly they hose the floor,
Unfurl the musty old rags
To wipe the hooks on the wall.
I hear only the sounds of summer night,

The leaves worried as always
By that nameless something
That may be lurking out there
Beyond the barn and the chicken coop.