

SAM CHA

For Light, For Fire

But all I've got's this car-exhaust-blue
whiff of naphtha, click whirr scrape of flint
and knurled steel, tongue flick of orange and soot
in an oblong of dull metal, corners rounded
and nicked. Hard as brass, bold as brass –

But wounded, still. Feel it.
The snaking abrasions, hair-trap tangle
of them, slick under fingers like warm wax.
Don't the impressions melt? See how leisurely
the light falls, how it drips off your skin

to mist the worn chrome, how slowly it evaporates,
condenses into sight. All our reflections
are warped and already past. Our mouths smear
like fingerprints. The volatile hydrocarbons
of the eye sublime and deposit. This is how

we perceive. We are remembering.
Take that jaundice yellow patch, there.
That's two weeks of rain, a rusty
chain, one too many pills. He floated
over the handlebars into the sweet syrup

of the air, felt the brake handle bloom
in his thigh like an orgasm, heard his Zippo
clattering on the pavement. It's been so long
since I was him. The scar on my leg
is fading, and I don't remember much else

about him. I think he lay in the street
flat on his back. I think there was more rain.
A flicker of lightning. There was dark
and there was streetlamp. Shadow spreading
vulture wings. The turnpike moaned.

He couldn't see it. There were drugs, rain-
drops, trees, houses, streets, other lives
between them. At that distance it might
have sounded like the sea. It must have
sounded like tide. It must have sounded
like all of us, chained to time.