



## Michael Hettich

### **The Furniture** by Michael Hettich

It's funny what can happen: A chair learns to walk by itself and teaches all the other chairs to walk too, by example, and suddenly the streets of the city are full of all kinds of furniture going everywhere—you name it—still blind but moving with ever greater confidence, for the sheer joy of moving, at first, and then with an increasing sense of coordination and direction. And soon they've taught themselves to see dimly and to hear the hum of silence around them, broken only by their own awkward bodies moving where once was landscape and trees, houses full of people, cars moving up and down the streets. And then they've learned to breathe, to sing—it seems a miracle—these chairs and splintered tables crowding all the streets in rain and sunshine, singing as though they were mammals, or birds that haven't learned to fly, though soon they'll be soaring, I'm certain, as soon they'll be swimming, learning to breathe underwater, to hold their breath and dive all the way to the bottom where they'll shiver and gleam in the dark.

# Something ELSE

by Michael Hettich

Suppose, one spring, the birds decided  
not to fly north, and the animals  
sleeping in the woods decided this year  
they'd rather not wake, and turned over instead  
for another dream.

Imagine one summer the butterflies decided  
to stay in their cocoons, or the caterpillars forgot  
to wrap themselves up inside themselves  
and simply gorged themselves instead  
until their season passed. One day the tide forgot to rise.  
This is only one way of speaking for the world.

Suppose the spiders stopped weaving, mosquitoes  
forgot how to suck our blood, bees  
decided not to pollinate flowers.  
Suppose the sea turtles never returned  
to the beaches that bore them, to lay their moon-drawn eggs.  
Or suppose for a moment the rivers held still  
and the leaping salmon held still in mid-air.

Imagine fire stopped burning things to ash  
although it still burned. It was no longer hot.  
Of course that couldn't happen. So think of something else.  
where they'll shiver and gleam in the dark.

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## The Affair

by Michael Hettich

This man imagined that if he lay silent  
and thought about nothing, he might become a bed  
his wife and children could sleep in, dreaming  
happily, safe from the hurt and hurting

so he pretended he was going on a man-to-man vacation  
with his best friend from college, and he lay still as a bed  
while his wife lay on top of him dreaming, and thinking  
the break would do him a world of good.

She hardly noticed how comfortable the bed felt,

how well she slept. She was proud to have let him  
go off without even a frown of complaint.  
His children missed him the way children do,

which is not much, as long as their lives are content  
which theirs were. By now he was hardly breathing,  
as though he were really her bed, dreaming  
he was off on vacation with his old friend, in the mountains

they'd hiked as students, remembering the high times  
and the sweet girls they'd loved, the wild parties. They camped  
in the snow above timber line, but they could hardly sleep,  
the stars were so sharp and bright and cold,

so they lay on their backs on a boulder  
and stared into the sky, and tried not to be frightened  
at the billions of tiny lights, each one larger  
than our sun. That was the first night

his wife suspected he was having an affair,  
not camping at all, holed up somewhere  
in some hussy's apartment, and she cried herself to sleep  
while he stretched out below her, aching to hug

and kiss her, and tell her how much he loved her,  
desperately trying to remember how  
he'd turned himself into this furniture, to figure out  
how to transform himself back into a man

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