

JOHN POCH

The Missing Child

Like token feathers plucked from a broken bird,
the parents are separated from their daughter.
The dresses slight on hangars don't say a word,
and slumping like a dirty shirt, the father
wears unaware his stains. What was labor
and what was a given? Breathing was a given.
The mother dreams she is her own neighbor
who has a living daughter. The father is driven
livid by men in suits and women in jewels.
The parents, when they put on their masks and walk
away from each other as those who pace in duels,
continue with their faith turned dumbest luck
and accordions for lungs. Her birthday chair
is light and heavy, like cake flour. Or air.

John Poch is director of the writing program at Texas Tech University. His most recent book is *Two Men Fighting with a Knife* (Story Line Press 2008).