

White Egret

by Chris Abani

The whole earth is filled with the love of God. —Kwame Dawes

A stream in a forest and a boy fishing,
heart aflame, head hush, tasting the world—
lick and pant. The Holy Scripture
is animal not book.

I should know, I have smoked
the soul of God, psalm burning
between fingers on an African afternoon.

And how is it that death can open up
an alleluia from the core of a man?

How easily the profound fritters away in words.

And the simple wisdom of my brother:

What you taste with abandon
even God cannot take from you.

All my life, men with blackened insides
have fought to keep
the flutter of a white egret in my chest
from bursting into flight, into glory.