

CHESS MATCH IN BROOKLYN

G.H. MOSSON

Two chess champs slip past
 ducking their rent.
I check the book for what's due
 and plot my moves.
Play a grin, pass a wink,
 no mate without a check.
In the game out here, debts
 trigger new rules.

*Six flights of crash pads
with a concrete façade
where youth bed like rats
to reach king of the board
and lean-tos of bagged trash
pause on curbs by the cars.*

Slip me a hundred—wink—
 but not the back rent.
Will you miss this sass
 that stages your exit?
After intermission and barking dogs,
 curtains rising on stained furniture,
a check might stall the end game,
 but not this pawn's advances.

*Sherriff posts an eviction notice.
Checkmate, bit actors.
Landlord's books are zeroed clean.
A fork lingers in the kitchen
near a chessboard without pieces,
a vodka of the heart.*