Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Brian Rihlmann: Three Poems

Brian Rihlmann · Wednesday, October 21st, 2020

STAND

Tonight, Friday night, I stand mid-street,
an hour after sunset, looking west
at a sliver of moon just above the horizon,
like a clipped toenail, chasing the sun.

I stand where cars filled with the
restless young ought to be thumping by
on their way to Dionysian excess,
to grind hips at dance clubs,
to tequila body shots leading to
tongue kisses, cars, bathroom stalls.

I stand here for several minutes
until I see headlights, and step aside.
The car pulls into a driveway down the block.
Neighbors, now home for the evening.
A breeze blows. A leaf skitters, lands at my feet.
A tiny corpse, curled like a fetus.

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JACOB AND THE ANGEL

Dad and I used to have “sock wars”—
we’d take them off our feet
roll them up into tight little balls
and hurl them at each other
laughing the whole time

or sometimes we’d wrestle
that was fun, too

of course he'd always win—
when I was little

but as I became a teenager
there was less laughter
more grunting, gritted teeth
and protruding forehead veins
and the words—
"All right! That's enough!"
came more quickly
than they used to
and he'd quit, then
but I never have

*

BLACK AND WHITE

you press me for an answer
and when I give it
you hiss—
"liberal" or "socialist"
the parroted epithets, empty
but this solves it, solves me—
I am caricature and scapegoat
I understand…
you want the black and white world
not this grey soup, this fog
they say babies prefer mobiles
in black and white, too
the contrast holds their attention
their little eyes rapt at the patterns
and who doesn't love westerns, cop shows?
black hats, white hats
I love to watch Sipowicz
beat a confession out of some scumbag
he knows is guilty
but the world ain't a cop show, pal…
and guilt is a hypothesis

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