
Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Luke J. Johnson: Two Poems

Luke J. Johnson · Wednesday, June 20th, 2018

Beetroot

Here is where an umbilical
budded like a beetroot,
where my drunk daddy
cut the cord crooked, left
a piece like frayed shoestring.
If you put an ear to it, you
can hear tentacles slip
between ribs, consume me.
Now squint, as if looking
through a peephole. Notice a
moon-shaped mark marred
from a smoke-butt. I found
pleasure there. I let the cat
lick it clean.

*

Hum

An El Camino
bumps Beastie Boys
in a parking garage,
when two broad
shouldered dudes
emerge from dumpster fire,
and lumber
like vagrant shadows.
They take turns
jabbing each other's ribs,
talking shit,
boasting 'bout pussy
they'll crush later at the L.
The man in the car,
is my dad's

friend Fred,
nodding his head
to the beat. He's
high on oxy, and
still learning to cope
with flashbacks.
He's just come
from his ex-lover's home,
where she told him
his dreams after sex were
disturbing her. How she'd wake
in the witching hour,
with his hands
at her throat,
begging he'd please
let her go. He told her
he's sorry,
he has no reason
to harm her,
contusions greened up
and down her legs.
She handed him clothes,
a letter,
asked that he burn
the marriage license,
that he seeks help, rehab,
settles somewhere
safe, somewhere quiet,
never call,
never go near her again.
Fred doesn't know
now is the moment
he'll die,
the moment a gun
he's shined
from boyhood,
will erase him
like sleeve a chalk-stain.
He pulls the pistol
from the front dash,
spins its chamber,
glides blurred vision
down the gun's
oil slicked exterior,
and snaps it shut.
Scans the boys.
Frames their faces
as they approach

the car quietly.
One taps the window,
while the other
draws a light.
How much you
need motherfucker?
All you got, he says,
flashing back,
to the first buck
he narrowed through a scope
as a boy. How the crowned beast
wobbled jacklit jacaranda
like a lopped ballerina,
how he held it under
'til the kicking stopped.

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