Cultural Daily

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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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