Cultural Daily

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Mel Green: "Cut"

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Mel Green is a writer/performer who splits his time between Los Angeles and the Big Bend region on the Tex/Mex border. A Saturday Night Live alum, he mixes humor and pathos in his latest book *MARKER: A True Story with an Appendix of Lies*.
We are proud to premiere this poem in Cultural Weekly.
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Cut

We met at a Halloween party. She came dressed as a man
and I was looking for a father figure.
Costumed in a monk's habit borrowed to cloak my hippie
stench and lend a purpose to my ragged beard.
Her blue eyes were mostly unconvinced and old beyond her years.
The accent spoke a history: Texas shrimp boat trash, a
junior high drop out with a hitch in her grammar.
I done gone to Beauty College where she learned to cut
hair at fifteen and married already to a big soft daddy man
come home every night hold her in his lap and she would
cry cry cry without even knowing why.
It was all wrong that trailer park—the country music, the
missing spark. Moved to Houston with the boom money
gushing and all them heads and her like a machine—hour
after hour—like an International Harvester she would cut
that hair.
The people they talked how every cut framed perfectly the
particulars of that face—no matter the shape or what
unnamed hell played behind the eyes—the after was better
than the before.
To Galveston she drove us on that first night
Flashed her scissors in the wet moon light.
She breathed in my ear, *I want to cut you.*
There in the dark, sitting on the beach,
she cut by feel, her fingers reached
and dug like vermin into my scalp
while the waves beat blue spume,

And hair severed fell across my back.
A wedge-cut it was called: a short style popular among women at the time. With a touch of eye-liner, I too looked much better after than I had before.
Good enough to step into her house without doors.
No bedroom door.
No bathroom door.
No place to hide.
Mornings I made her Luzianne coffee dripped in a blue enamel pot, sweetened with Eagle Brand condensed milk spooned from the can.
“Make it sweeter,” was her command.
Then off to the salon, hair still wet, skin reeking of rose oil and ambition—she’d cut fourteen heads and buy me a new dress. Back home I’d fix some dinner, massage her neck. She’d fuck me from behind and leave me to the mess. Arrange herself cross-legged on the floor, kimono draping her breasts, she’d throw the I Ching and read, full- throated like hungry bird from the Book of Changes.

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