

Lesson Plan

by Gary Hardaway

The twitching finally stopped.
It took a long time for Tom to die.
Long enough for the whiskey laughs
to die down to murmurs and half-assed chuckles.
Daddy shouted, "Well, now, this is one good nigger
'cause this is one dead nigger!"
The whiskey-stinking crowd
cackled at the old joke, told again.

Daddy is a dried out dog turd that sprouted legs.
I want to see him twitching at the end of a rope.
But I'm just dogshit's daughter,
a bigger coward than the father.

At least daddy has some talents. He can drink
and whip up gas pumpers
and County roadcrew supervisors enough
to grab a young black buck
a couple of times a year
and watch him jerk and twist until he stops
under this goddamned oak tree.

My vomit's over there.
Daddy told his dogshit buddies,
"It's her first time. That's why she threw up."

He didn't mention catching Tom and me
down by Thompson's Creek.
Tom's body was beautiful.
It made mine beautiful.

Daddy said I'd learn a lesson.

Maybe tonight, maybe next week,
maybe only in my waking dreams,
I'll teach another lesson-
how twine,
looped around a fat white neck,
pulled tight,
makes the dogshit eyes
of dogshit fathers bulge
and open out of dead drunk sleep.

