

A Serial Killer's First Day in Medical School

by Ajay Vishwanathan

To rival the professor in his knowledge of various body parts
is impossible but as he watches him explain the anatomy
of a corpse lying cold, an island surrounded by a sea of curious
white,
Trey isn't looking to rival —
he might not know all their names now, but he bets the professor
hasn't chopped them like tiny cheese pieces, or thrown them
still shivering, on a grill backyard, letting them smoke and harden
till they felt like burnt rubber, the smell of which he loves.
He bets the professor can't stand brave
if the corpse leaked blood from its mouth,
tongue dangling, eyes not cold yet, life slow-oozing from its whites.
The body in the room is too cold for Trey, too preserved;
his dead people were warm people who had lived
a few moments ago, whose hearts terrified were pumping iron
like convulsive lashing of a drowning man.
The professor looks much like his sixteenth victim —
too clever, too calm, too condescending,
until he unclothed her in his garage and showed her
how neatly his knife glistened in moonlight.
Trey knew his life would return to the mundane
when he promised to be the good man his mother wanted him to be,
before she died in her water-filled bath tub, unable to rise
to the surface in time, trampled by his firm foot.
So standing with people some born twenty years before,
he tries to sand down the imperfections in the room,
in the young teacher whose age much lesser
than the number of nails he has driven into necks and spines.
He breathes slowly, his eyes flitting behind closed eyelids,

unable to deal with shriveling, boring sanity,
then he becomes a man with a helpless twitch
when the professor, his grating vantage,
wonders aloud, too loud, if he has stopped watching
because he has not seen bodies being slashed before.

