

Me and the Dowagers by the Five and Dime

by Brian Michael Barbeito

It's been twenty years since you left.

I should call it a day.

Even the Obeah woman said as much.

But I don't listen.

Instead I sit with old and proper ethnic widows in black,
waiting for your return.

One of them translates my story for the others...

A voice from the crowd says, *So young to die.*

No, I say, *she didn't die.*

Then why she left away?

I clear my throat and announce to the lot that,
She needed some time for herself.

This group from the old country,
made from a different mettle,

is puzzled at that one,

but they try to remain polite.

An operation! calls one of them,

victorious in the eyes for having found the answer,
and happy now,

because she is one who doesn't like me,

but would try and find a way,

if possible,

to like me a little bit.

No operation, I say.

One of them whispers to the group in hushed sorrowful ways,
the sound of death news or at the least a dire telegram...

The dowager group has become grave,

and they also stare away,

concentrating on the streets, the cars, the parks beyond.

It is middle class recoil,
a body language that says unless anyone objects;
we have resolved this one,
and are now ready for the next issue at hand.
I shall only get a brief mention by the minute taker of life's
meetings.
What's the problem? I ask the translator. *What did they say?*
Hesitancy and concern,
like a doctor delivering a difficult diagnosis.
The one told the others, said the translator,
that your beloved does not love you.

