

Walking Green

by Brian Michael Barbeito

1.

There is a crowd of people walking to a field and since there are over forty of them, the conversations become divided and then subdivided in accordance w/natural rhythms. I follow behind. It is a football game. Makeshift. Twenty aside roughly. Almost every throw will be what they call in real football, a Hail Mary pass. I stay on the perimeter. It is night, and the lights are off. Electrical lines above are snakes that stretch out forever. Only sparse light waves from the backs of houses. This light is like a weak handshake with no eye contact. Don't trust. Don't play. I am not crazy, I think. These people are crazy, I think. Someone arrives beside me and has a green glass 7-UP bottle. They put a small pebble inside it and shake it, a phoney post modern maraca, until a break makes a hole. A big game ensues. Someone becomes injured almost right away. In the middle of the next day, one of the adults says that a guy got something called a 'detached retina.'

2.

I see a poster at the pier of a young boy and the poster says, Have You Seen Ricky? Stay close, says mother. I ask why. She says, Someone took that boy, and they can't find him. A man, not the same man that took that boy, but another, perhaps just as bad, and that hides in regularity and does not look dangerous, says to me, Where is the one that you live in? And I have red flag, red flag, red flag, though I do not know that term then or call it such. I lie and say, I live in one over there, on the other side. He says, Actually I think I know that is not where you live. I think yours is right there. And he points accurately to where I live.

3.

The police have broken up everything before it got started. I had never seen a basement clear out that fast. Bodies scattering through exits I hadn't even noticed. The word came when the man was still half way down the street. One third of the people were regular, one

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third of the people were gang members, and one third could go either way in the coming summer. We walk and I am with Tracey. He got lucky tonight, she says, because they were going to initiate him. He has been avoiding it for weeks. Tracy is talking about my friend. She stops and takes the gum out of her mouth and looks upwards with an invitation.

4.

I walk out into the summer sun and that heats up the cars and the interiors much. People use deflectors to protect dashboards and towels adorn many seats. A tall man is there, and though he is illiterate he is the most intelligent one. He explains that some of the cars get a pass because the owners have not left valuables in plain view. Others are careless, he says, and leave all kinds of things just sitting there. Even when locked, I can quickly and quietly get out almost any shit, and from most models, as long as its not the trunk. Then he cautions, like an older brother, Always put your valuables in the trunk, because there are people like me around. Two other persons, men from another group that we do not know, are standing watch as a third man beats someone to near death. The man that is getting beaten has now fallen unconscious and the one killing him will not let go of jacket and of hair and bangs the head on the cement. The blood, true to its hue, waits red and glistening under the sun and upon the asphalt as long as it can before turning to something else. The homicidal one keeps talking about a woman, and how this is what you get for trying to talk to that woman.

5.

I tell the people around me that there is a bird that keeps coming past. It is dusk, and we are walking in a ravine. This is before the world has broken in and shown itself for the severely lacking thing it is. There is the bird again, I explain. Nobody sees it and we walk on. The ravine has a strange smell and I can't tell if it's a good or a bad smell. It is colder down there, even though it is otherwise a humid summer night. Sometimes the place gets flooded due to storms and that is when the water, a mischievous and adept child, climbs up the hills and steals a tree or two. There is the bird again, I say. I see it

dip and turn oddly. I like the creature and its game. It doesn't move quite like anything else I have seen. It moves 'wrongly' but it is good, I say. That is a bat, someone says. I look back and it is gone. I am not like the others. I am silent. I am learning that moments come and go quickly. I am not like the others. They are sure and steady and have a knowing laughter. I am not like the others. I wonder why they laugh and what they know. I am not like the others, but I go along anyhow. We walk over a small rope bridge. I wait for my bird but it does not return and the dusk is losing presence.

