

The End of Fun and Games

by Kimberlee Smith

THE END OF FUN AND GAMES

This is not the moral decay
of *The Waste Land* by Eliot
or the rotten fuck off
of "Teenage Wasteland" by Townshend.
This is not poetic. Virtuositic. Cathartic.
It is the nightmare that follows
life to death in a town
where hope certifiably
expired on August 1, 1982.
So go on in, knowing
you are on the edge.
You will *not* make it home.
This is the end of fun and games.

Copper stars splattered across his cheeks
like water bombs exploding on pavement.
In thirty year old dreams I work to recall
How the event unfolded at all.
How do I remember his face so clearly?
As if I were standing
over his casket, still.
I was sixteen, he was seventeen.
This is no Taylor Swift love song.
These are the last warnings,
Never wander off in the dark.
Never hunt down some weed.
Never follow a hustler's lead.

His eyes were the color
of peppermint schnapps.
His pitch of fiery hair
combed smooth for Picture Day,
bangs slashed straight across
his unmapped forehead.
A procession of our somber youth—
stoned and stunned and
broken beyond repair—viewed
the boy carved of putty.
The mortician painted him
stuffed him, presented him
to us, the semi-living.

We traded dime bags for hallucinogenic
stamps for travel anywhere
to escape *that* fucking town.
Swaggered down railroad tracks
behind the candy factory
smelling of fuel and SweeTarts
one flat summer night, heat
strangling, soiling, rutting, joyous.
Searching for something, whatever, wherever.
Carving in and out of thickest air.

