

Smokey

the most dangerous men
in my neighborhood
only listened to love songs

to reach those notes
a musicologist told me
a man essentially cuts

his own throat. some nights
even now, i'll hear a falsetto
and think i should run

LA Police Chief Daryl Gates Dead at 83

We were the finest.

DARYL GATES

So the parents blamed the children,
and the children marched barefoot
through the alleys, spray-painting
their age. And the preacher introduced
the word lascivious and accused
the congregation of not tithing
when the daughter died.
And the deacon board smoked.
And the economists saluted Reagan.
And the police called it an economy of dust.
Our meteorologist predicted
a low-pressure system in the abdomen.
And the junkies swore perfume rung the air.
The grocer had his union; the butcher couldn't
outrun his quarter of spoiled blood.
And the girls wore extra rings
and caked their skin with Vaseline.
And the men slept the afternoon,
growing childishly morose as they dreamed.
And I think I thought we'd burn then,
when the refinery blew, and rust began
to bleed through the whitewashed fence,
when the lawns were done, and the schoolyard
darkened, and the side streets began to split.

What Spells Trouble

you have since swallowed
so much blood, the sailboats
rap violently about the docks,
and how heavy the gulls' wings
have grown, how sour, sourly
beloved, and what shall we then
call it, this consternation, a blue
funk, some pestilence, which hangs
or blooms or paints itself silently
within the many courtyards
of the body, or across that high
court of the skull, what looms
like another steamrolled peony,
or some pink paper moon.

Crips & Bloods

On occasion, an incident, although the boys always peppered the raw meat, and knotted a wrung beach towel to toughen the jaws. And they marched them chained around the block, stumbling as if locked in some distended and unbroken descent. Of course, you would come across one lowing beneath a shade tree, too weak to turn its huge head; unearthly thing, more muscle, more a fluid bone, an organ composed of mouth, of torso, impervious to pity, even with the gadflies lacing and unlacing its wounds. And every other year, the toddler who lives without fear who dies gulping the terrible rose-soaked air.

Delfonic

Trace the line & move until the ocean turns you,
or when the northern hills begin to burn, or a squad car
herds you back to the neighborhood you clearly belong.
Once, rolling down the window, I felt the Santa Anas
pulling against my chest, and naturally, I imagined a jailbreak
of buffalo in a nearby valley, a rustle of names flooding my breath.
I could go the whole day in silence, wanting nothing. I could
sit for hours on a curb and listen to the tires tear at the asphalt,
or carry a woman's footsteps down an empty corridor,
& not think of loneliness. I guess I can't help but stare.
In the rooms men pay to enter, the bass drum & vernacular
alone are fantasy enough. So when the girl leans at the table,
& offers a dance, you say: you are pearl & metal-flake,
my love. You say: your eyes are gold-leaf & reflection.