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POETRY



Benjamín Naka-Hasebe Kingsley

SELLING CIGARS ON A CORAL GABLES CORNER 1987

Small lamb rack
 boy of my body
 Ma hung the color
 of that coneflower
 dress right
 off the scrag end of me

with her big paws
 grin-shined up the length
 of me scraped
 my baa baa black hair
 back into tail
 taut as a timpani

drum

*Now Grind it all the way
 to the bone says my mama*

say yes sir no sir mind
 your ma'ams ma'am mind
 your mammaries pitch

a sale like it's a pole
 like you got some slick
 bitch's lemonade stand
 squirt and competition in your eyes

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wring out your lips
shout your tongue stiff

says spin six tables shake
all comers bleat for bill
after bleating bill come
you prickled urchin
holler between pickings
pickle apart sweetbread streets
until the moon cries fat and then

say woman say man say sell
you this whole stock
 the whole reeking lot

slurp the marrow then strut
bang the stewpot now swag

teetotalers gonna totter
at your feet

 tell them you baa
for a dollar if they don't
want none crawl

across coffee dripped
sidewalks sashimi
your elbows and knees

 baa for a dollar if they
want some shuffle up
and stuff it raw meet deep
knock your elbows

notch your knees.

Now baa girl

Now sprint girl

sprint far away
now *grind*.

INTO THE RED DEVIL'S HORN

of a duct tape wrapped microphone
the lead singer unbuckles
his diaphragmic roar:

*All you Hot Topic tourists
need to shove the fuck out!*
Anticipation fishhooks our assholes,

the drummer windmilling both sticks
she puts her whole sole into
the double bass pedal & stutter test.

The jaw of the dancefloor unclenches—
soapstone griddle of ceiling's drip
& rattle, our knee after knee bent

back in longing for the two-step
snap & moan louder than our father's
whip—sound is a torrent.

Water over umbrella-blossomed faces. We
puncture seams in the canvas
of each other's torsoed clap

& spilling. Horizontal
across this venue's meridian, faster
than a birdfeeder cage aswirl,

storm-caught. We spin-kick, we thrash,
we do a move called *Eating
The Dead*, while flatbrim hats shouting

B R U T A L on their underbellies
litter our banging head's thwack & we're a grin.
Around every riff firing

brighter than the day
our Lemoyne Dairy Queen burned
up. We are long boned & steel rakes upended—

two-stepping over every tortured hour,
shedding the Saran Wrap around our mind's
buffet of waking remainders, we mosh

it all out becoming mountains of upside
down pelvic girdles,
collective, we are an excess

of thrown elbows & the tattoos
that tourniquet our forearms,
fists outstretched as if in want

for a blessing from the ram skull
anthem. We call it deathcore.
Grindcore. We thirst for the rot

of sampled screams. & soft mouths
spearing hard realities.
We think we are the ballad

of the loner. In this song
we are tapping the untapped.
With the last cymbal's crash

we think we will finally vocalize
desire: the howl
of microphone held too close

to speaker, reverb
finding its way toward
a measure of rest.

FOR A GOOD BOY WE'LL BREAK ALL THE RULES

Rule #3 "Start as Close to the Beginning as Possible"

1945. *We must make room*
for emptier bellies, says the emperor.
They were eaten, pelts
fashioned like rabbits
fur for warmth. Akita Inu,
the national dog of Japan,
culled six hounds from extinction,
when grandmother was just
a little shojo. She freed her first
boy(-she-will-not-name)
into strangling kudzu, but he came back
again & again. Until her father begged
their neighbor to shoot this good
boy, because they had no
bullets & the spine of a sword
inherited is for man's neck not animal
hide. Because the emperor
is the entire nation, even if
its people had become a nation of dogs.

Rule #4 "Be sentimental"

Our fairybook beast, true hunter of a father held
your fifty-five-pound corpse
aloft by a single fist. Your hind
legs limp & stretched, you hung
like so many suppered
rabbits I'd imagined he and his fathers
had fired on a spit. But you were more than
domesticated, you were domicile. Earlier,
I carried your heavy
death from the Honda Civic
to the vet's dim bier. I carried your heavy
death from the final window-rolled car ride,
& into the garage, where we wiped
shit from your fur & wrapped you
in your old blanket: like the only burrito
that can make a man cry.
I know only you would forgive
me lines like that in a poem sticking
out awkwardly—

my lower back throbbed uncontrollably
when I dug your grave,
but for the heart of our mother
I had to have a sharper spine.

Rule #1 "Tell, Don't Show"

On her phone, our mother still
watches videos of your pained
breathing to remind herself
why she finally agreed.
*There's a difference between telling
yourself the truth & showing
yourself the truth, she says.*

Rule #2 "Write What You Don't Know, Always in 2's & 4's"

I know the ending
is the most important part,
but I don't know why
I placed the gifted mold
of your velvet paw & metacarpal
in my basement desk drawer.
Beneath the ground, damp,
& out of sight, maybe I hoped
it would grow again,
unlike you, into something
less final. Like a seed.
I would embrace any Act III
rebirth cliché.
For you,
I'd break
all the rules:

For a Good Boy.