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*Dwayne Martine*

BORDERTOWN

*(After a photograph of a Navajo man frozen in a puddle by Mark Gaede)*

In the photograph,  
discretion gathers  
in the corners lost,  
broken winged,  
embarrassed  
the wilt light  
can only capture  
the surface

and not the human  
infinite  
caught frozen,  
stilled  
below.  
The clarity  
of the ice is  
its own miracle.

The hands reach out  
eternally  
for that last drink  
or another sandwich

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DWAYNE MARTINE is a Jicarilla Apache/Navajo poet from Gallup, New Mexico. He is Naashashi clan born for the Todik'ozhi Clan and has an AB in English from Stanford University.

or a hand up out of night,  
to grasp, to squeeze tight  
all that's left  
unheld.

Perhaps the photographer  
received a call  
from the policeman  
who found the man  
and rushed out  
from his hotel bed  
and caught  
what he thought

was just the right light.  
He stood back,  
taking all the time  
he needed to compose,  
set the tripod,  
adjust the focus,  
perfect the shot,  
thinking to himself,

*He's not going anywhere.*  
Pleased this  
was one subject  
who did not require  
the bribe of a pint  
of *Garden Deluxe*  
or an empty agreement  
that he "was going to be

famous."  
There is no name  
in the caption,  
only an insinuation  
he lived  
before the ice,  
that he was related  
to someone, that he

came from somewhere.  
Turn away from  
the open eyed body  
beneath the surface,  
don't look anymore  
at yet another *glaani*  
who is not going home  
again. Forget.

Let the ice that stills him frost,  
spread from the frame,  
grow its crystals  
around each of us  
until we're looking out  
at the dawn,  
until we're always  
reaching.

\* *glaani*: "street drunk"

## SOVEREIGNTY

“Ya’ateeh abini,” he yelled.

And the crowd of shiny faces surged forward,  
a singular purpose of yelling and dark eyes  
he could feel burn through him  
until something deep inside  
caught spark, grew and  
needed their gaze to breathe, flame.

He waved, nodded and smiled the smile  
of those bright white, Chiclet teeth  
that had become his hallmark,  
so shiny they reflected nothing  
but themselves,  
not even the rapt stares

that took him all in,  
that looked to him for aid, reason,  
for his words to have meaning  
beyond that small Shiprock Fair stage.  
He looked out at their eager faces  
and told them the story they needed

to hear and he needed to tell  
for the thing within him to blaze  
to life and maybe it was  
that fire that dried the doubt  
like harvested corn in the sun,  
or maybe it was their stares

he gathered around and to him  
like a circle of arrowheads  
aligned outward  
that made him think to himself:  
*If the bilágaana can do it,  
why can't I?*

And when he finished his speech,  
something about an end to misery,  
a continuation of traditions,  
he walked among them, his people, with ease.  
As clouds rumbled to the west  
and the dark Chuskas darkened further,

a certain peace haloed from him  
and out into the damp cedar filled air.  
Then as he and his wife left the stage  
and their full length, perfectly matched  
mink coats dragged in the mud,  
he turned one last time and smiled.

## PARSING

The thought  
was of a spider weaving

intricacy into intricacy,  
a lace code,

a raised leg joining  
catch to catch,

terminal to terminus,  
the noctilucent filaments

that spark,  
crackle from

the black screen,  
a concatenation proper

for an all too breakable  
cypher. Understanding.

Each silken length  
held with the delicacy

of an old woman  
holding a noose

or, hand over hand, a line  
straight up out of night,

building a capture  
for each word here.

## THOUGHT KNIFE

The pollen of my mind  
gathers on the floor in a heap,

Thrush yellow, it glows  
with unknowing.

I question meaning making  
yet still use language

To do so, engendering doubt  
is the same as fomenting belief

when the characters you use  
are still the same alphabet.

Take this: an *other* under-  
standing and make a fever,

a weakening pulse, or a  
white knot on reason's x-ray.

Béesh Nitsikeesi = *Thinking  
metal, Thought Knife, the Metal*

*That Thinks*, Navajo for  
“computer,” that from which to

excise English. Use the idea  
itself to cut around the mass,

remove the uncontrollably  
expanding whiteness.

Thinking metal, Thought  
Knife, Béesh Nitsikeesi.



## ANTHROPOLOGY I

Reality bends to desire,  
becomes infinite  
and malleable  
at the recognition  
of mutual  
hungers.

As all likeness is heat  
and its mirage,  
your hand on my thigh,  
your gaze slow  
upon my dark  
ever-changing body.

And when you lay your breath  
on my neck and let  
the delicate unspoken  
between men  
smolder into yet another fire,  
you tell me who I am.

Because I do not know  
without you  
seeing me, touching me,  
cataloguing each  
of my animal longings  
in the folds of your body.

But this isn't about measure,  
or even love,  
simply heat,  
and the long pause  
between coveted and coveter,  
seer and seen.

Yet who is watching who  
when it's my reflection I see  
in your blue eyes  
and where do I go  
when you look  
away?

## ANTHROPOLOGY II

What you watch you change,  
and you've watched me into air,  
my presence only  
in the rain, the darkening sky,  
lightning flash, then  
in a black whirlwind rising.

(Moved things in my apartment.)

You found with me all you needed  
to be a better stalker,  
my breath, my wetness,  
witnesses to your growing fever,  
as you became what there was to push  
against: stone, republic, man.

(A stolen necklace returned in its box in my dresser.)

You found my breath in the grind  
of sand along your surface,  
in the razor slash of 100  
mile per hour wind across  
the different tearing scenes  
of your body, in this interplay

(My sleeping picture posted everywhere.)

Of hot and cold fronts, wet  
and dry pressures, solar winds  
and dark energies,  
chaos' endless engine  
spinning creation and destruction,  
male and female, watcher and watched.

## ANTHROPOLOGY III

Sight is not vision. It is the red shadow and not the shadow's maker, the outline of the form and not the form itself. Think beyond

to see what isn't there, past the eye's point perspective end of the brain's upside down, void filled-in visual. Follow the line, the

procession of raised dots on the page to the white edge's negative, which is this world and its one billion things breaking open.

Close your eyes and see me there holding no sign, pointing nowhere and meaning: All This is Yours. Read me for what isn't here.

My abscesses, hungers, unnamed desires, spaces emptied only to have the exact form of their absence discovered, felt, written.