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Pa Jose's voice...

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Pa Jose's voice...

Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"Pa Jose's voice ran along the river-grained floor slats like wise currents. He had spoken to the slight-bodied youth statuted against the twilight blue window. His own antique shell balanced darkly in the doorframe he had hewn when his hands were the boy's age. They shook gently now, twisted around the evening gazette, as if suddened by some unhappy headline."

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Jose had spoken and was suddenly absent, drunk back into the liquid night of the upstairs farmhouse. The boy no longer felt his presence, who had softly as the maplewind clicked the wooden door behind him. And the music of family voices, the clank and rattle of afterdinner doing, was far away.

The rivers past his feet were dark now. Words flowed by one and two at a time, as if a boy's afternoon raft had broken apart in some rapids beyond the baseboard, beyond the bend of his thoughts. To live is to live for people. His brother's harmonica wafted in on the breath of clover from behind the barn. No, it was his sisters' singing on the porch of some neighbor. No, it was merely the wind's nightly sweeping.

Beacense to arrive at a chosen thing needs courage. Now Pa was dying. Since his birth Pa had been dying, giving chunks and slices of himself to anyone who needed. And everyone had needed. Hands had shown sweat, shone in the May sun when Phereson was buried. Everyone had missed Jose the morning of the funeral. Close friends should come, they said. Pa did what he believed, giving where he saw best. All day he spent plowing Phereson's east twenty, and did two men's work for a week. He was quiet about it, but took the stairs slow those nights. Dying.

Stars now, like higher fireflies among the shudder-winded leaves high about the house. The boy rose and gripped the middle sill. Stars were clean here. They garnished the swept width that was the land's sky, that stretched across the faces of the land's people. The city's stars came out with rats. Stuck above the huddle of brick and skin like separate, bitter needles. There was no sweep there, no wideness, but only sting and unbreathing narrowness. That land's people honsed eyes that slunk like rats, and stars there meant rape and roaches.

The sickness of decision paced his stomach. His father's words rattled behind his eyes. What we choose can't be what we've already got, since what we've already got there isn't much use or respect for. A man's gotta keep becoming a man.

The distant percussion of a train rushing through the lush summer darkness. The land knew him before he knew the land. Frost's poem became his, and he knew only of the land that needed but did not want him, his hands to soothe its ragged face. Everyone got bitterness in his chosen thing. He nodded his head past the room and the window, past the home and the harmonica, past the maples and the porch and the music of voices since birth. The man walked downstairs. Intensity settled on the forded wooden rivers.

ray pavelsky

thinking dreams dead
or damned to dark deception
i chanced upon
garden shapes and colors
where crystal glitter
dazzled my shattered dawn
with green serenity

Prescription

while resting my head
on a flower bed
a savage earthquake
sucked me in crushing care--
fully as i fell

For a

Myopic

til fading focused
on a singing eagle
sweeping down

Lover

brushing my face
it left a feather
that caught and carried me out
into the breeze-fresh sky
higher and higher and higher
resting me on a cloud
that reflects the steady gaze
of moon and sun and stars
and . . .

rick taddeo