

Land of Healing

POETRY

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Life Award

When Lemuel drives, the truck spits
gasoline along his fingers, the ethanol
onto his hair, and lets the snow
seep through the metal so he can catch
each snowflake on his tongue.

Let's not split hairs —
before Lemuel killed himself,
a storm blew through our neighborhood.
There are still prints of frostbite,
held like trophies despite daylight.

He is still there, beneath the bleachers,
beyond the sunset tourists don't cross,
body held together by icebergs,
his home scattered in Rorschach blots
of sun deprived bleach.

Before I left, I saw his parents, cataloguing
what was left of their son —
His skin — Neamen hide that it was,
but thinly weaved, modelled after group homes'
notorious blankets, set aside to shield the daylight.

His fingers — bottlenecked tips and all,
concise in their damnation, a weaving for each
hand.

His feet — their stepping stones to the sky,
his paperweight boots and coyote paw transplants,
left to quell his sister's disbelief.

Let's split hairs, horizontally, this time.
When he died, his body was wrapped with deerskin,
the muscle that sheared his father's mane cut away
and left in the space between his teeth,
and his hair torn at the root. ■