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NORTH AMERICAN LANDSCAPES

The wilderness was untamed, yes,
but subject to the whims of Jimmy Rojo's
chainsaw. With it slung over shoulder
he trekked North Coast forests
to fell trees for his craft—
carving Big Foot likenesses into trunks
to sell at highway-side attractions.

He was my shaman. And I his savage.

We rode the backcountry landslides
of rural decay, cat-skilled, beneath the
lampshade of late April.
Spring degrees were finally afoot
enveloping winter woefulness complete.

In the pick-up's cab, shotgun, I
salted hardboiled eggs on the east side of acceptable.
And took a plum in hand.
Jimmy in sweatpants and old Air Force blazer,
shirtless beneath, scratched the ringworm on his chest.
The fungus now running on two months old.

Out the window, plots of land evergreen
belched in settlement. Bark, beetles and breeze.
This, while myriad wisps of uncloaked winds
accosted petals in no particular order.
Camped along Fauvist lines forever, the
forest veered along colors pre-disposed to
big sky sun sets with trees trimmed

in shining ringlets of cosmic viscosity.
God's Country.

Nightfall. Still driving. Closed eyes
and catatonia here I come.
Mine was a mindset of genteel collaborations
with subconscious recesses yet un-plumbed
and a lax policy toward personal hygiene.
The longitudinally canted terrain
scrubbed the softer sides of existence clean
anyway.

I tucked my legs beneath me on
the bench seat, a hamstring shy of the half lotus.
And clucked along unkempt reminiscences
of the Milkblotch Maiden. The Maiden
held my heart in cupped hands complete.
Had she poured the pulp over sand,
she would have had a lean love brew
in which to leave handprints.
I stuck adoration notices into her
envisioned figurine –
her breasts only slightly exaggerated.

Arrived. My revelry snapped by Jimmy's
volley of insults hurled against my ancestry.
This night, Jimmy was in search of
a pine tree, the needles of which appeared
tipped in phosphorescence whenever
the moon was tardy in its ascent,
or absent altogether. I'm speaking
of the white-needled pines of the Aleutian Lows
that glow in a lunar eclipse. Their beans of a
fungus-hue foretold collusions that alit in
condensation across my upper lip when
cooked just right. The sensation was a
drowsiness akin to the raspy going-ons
in my skull that allowed me to stave off

residual nightmares of a reincarnated state—
of an age when I was young and clean shaven
and Gothic architecture miraculously survived,
unscathed, the fire bombing of Köln.

To work. Jimmy ground blade against growth.
The blazer flung upon a bush. Bodied, now and again,
by wind. As I was apprenticed to the man,
I shouldered the carbine employed in the
intimidation of black bears and Forest Rangers.
We labored by industrial flashlight. Jimmy's
body wet with work. On his arms rode
raised scars as if stitched insects.
Long ago knives. Nails. Glass. One due to a
screwdriver-wielding barmaid. The Tahitian treat
tattooed on his left bicep (Jimmy the Gauguin man)
thereafter appeared to have undergone
a cesarean.

Toppled. Jimmy resting in harsh light.
He handed the chainsaw to me
to further trim the branches.
So that it resembled a monkey island tree, he said.
I got the chainsaw started only after realizing
the choke was off.
Gasoline seeped into the air. A near
flooding of the machine. Once it
gunned into rhythm, I made feigned
swings at Jimmy's braided beard.
My castigation was short lived
as we went to work securing the tree to the truck bed.

Back in the cab, bouncing along un-paved fire roads.
The forest bigger in the headlights. Radio on.
Jimmy and I singing Bowie lyrics that he misheard
and I was too tired to correct.