

TIMES I HAVE HID

by Michael Dean

this time, i am snow-swallowed
lights out before six.

sidewalk lamps
spilling out

half-flower, half-haze
in the midnight blink.

my flatcurled head rises
from the crumple of my bed

as i choose again to hide
in my pocket-sized life.

no! today, i will not reckon
with the rot wrought beyond these walls!

i will not barter with the devils
seeking to enter me like a window! no!

i will only feed on the silly!
rest my serious stew on the sill to stew!

let my eyes glaze against the rainbows
as a video fades into my feed

from a teacher whose coffee breath
could pull prayers from thin air.

lets work out what we saw:
a classroom, a blur of children

dancing & against a desk
sandstone fingers with bone-

white grip, fairy-wish
eyelashes & too-taut lips.

a wrinkled brow. bewilderment
scrawled with a scowl.

this is all we see
peaking above the desk

the rest is devoured:
my fawn-eyed face, black

brown hair sheared of its excess.
why did i hide

from them, children, nothing
yet weighing down their voice's

lift? the joy of their lips
squishing out boom bap beats

& gesticulating arms
with the concern of wind—

lets not dwell here! lets hide!
lets skim over the childhood yard!

thicket green, starlong
with cropped lawn & grass blades

brushing bare feet with sundew
like it's summer everywhere!

my spirits leap!
feet first over the soft-rotted fence

how the deer always did!
our lone tall tree where we

buried the fish while i
was still in school! the tire swing

we never used! hung
from the long branches

like mother deer limbs! cloven
tawny & delicate, lifting

their young above the stars!
their restless eyes, darting for danger!

always hiding from the nearest terror:
the murder mausoleum of the shoulder!

the open palm of a convenience store!
the gatling rotation of redblue light!

it moires on black-backed leaves
like a thankless rapture!

of course, your thankful rapture
is whitehot, like flash filament

swallowing a smouldered room, lyric:
the only witness moved to movement

me: the only one who chose
to hide! under the desk! under the rousing lyric!

rhythm arresting the walls!
my thistlebulb head still

while the other boys & girls
swayed like dandelions

in the touch-warm fields
of their black joy! like kids

doing just what they do—
reader, i have no explanation

for why i hid,
except for that i did.

this is the truth
i always seek to squash.

but maybe my solace
is not in certainty. maybe

its my own lyric
stirring in my belly?

do i use it?
is it enough

to even coax a flower
into flight?