

La Dispute, King Park

Another shooting on the southeast side.
This a drive-by, mid-day,
Outside of the bus stop, by Fuller and Franklin.
Or near there. Not far from the park.
About a block from where the other shooting was last month.
Or was it last week?

Shots were fired from an SUV heading northbound, Easttown,
The target a rival but they didn't hit the target this time.
They hit a kid we think had nothing to do with it.

And I travel backwards through time and space and
I disintegrate, become invisible.
I want to see it where I couldn't when it happened.
I want to see it all first hand this time.
I want to know what it felt like.

So I float behind police lines,
Reconstruct the scene in fragments of memories.
I want to know what his mother looked like up close,
I want to see her leaning over his body.
So I float there, transcend time. I want to capture it accurately.
I want to know what the color of the blood was
Spilling out from the tarp onto the concrete.
I want to write it all down so I can always remember.
If you could see it up close how could you ever forget
How senseless death, how precious life.
I want to be there when the bullet hit.

And the crowd poured out as the shots drowned into siren sounds,
out of their houses now and over front yards,
all the way up to the place where the police tape ran to mark the crime scene.
Everybody trying to catch a glimpse of what was happening,
Of what was going on between the ambulance and all the cop cars.
Everybody gossiping, "Whose kid got hit? Where'd it hit him? And who could've fired it?"
Everybody wondering, "How did it happen again? And is he dead? These children. Our kids."
Everybody wondering how far they were from where the victims lived.
And I visit them, their houses. Inside my dream I visit them.
My spirit, soaring high and high up over King Park,
Leaves the crime scene, travels further back
Till far before the shooting, through their windows, to their living rooms.
I see them younger this time, playing games and doing homework.
All these marks of youth soon transformed coldly into stone for fights and stupid feuds.
For ruins wrapped in gold. And cruelly I recall why I have come: To find a reason.
But there cannot be a reason,
Not for death, not like this. Not like this.

Three days later they made funeral plans. The family.
Three days later a mother had to bury her son.

Not far away the shooter holed up in a hotel
Near to the highway with a friend and the gun.
That same gun.
He'd fled immediately but was identified by witnesses,
His picture on TV.
Only 20 years old, they called him "Grandpa."
He was older than the others by a year, maybe two.

And he was safe for awhile until somebody saw him there
And notified the authorities who surrounded the hotel,
first arresting an accomplice while attempting to flee,
Then chasing him up the staircase to the floor where he'd stayed.
He closed the door hard behind him, locked himself in the room.

They could've kicked in the door but knew the gun was still with him,
One he'd already used and so they feared what he'd do.
I floated up through the window of a room to the West.
I hovered out to the hallway, tried to listen in.
I heard them trying to reason, get him to open the door.
His uncle begging and pleading, half-collapsed to the floor.
He preached of hope and forgiveness,
Said, "There is always a chance
To rectify what you've taken, make your peace in the world."
I thought to slip through the door, I could've entered the room,
I felt the burden of murder, it shook the earth to the core.
Felt like the world was collapsing. Then we heard him speak:
"Can I still get into heaven if I kill myself?
Can I still get into heaven if I kill myself?
Can I ever be forgiven cuz I killed that kid?
It was an accident I swear it wasn't meant for him!
And if I turn it on me, if I even it out,
Can I still get in or will they send me to hell?
Can I still get into heaven if I kill myself?"
I left the hotel behind, don't want to know how it ends.