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Verde Vista

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VERDE VISTA

Alex Lemon

Waiting in line at the post office
In Thousand Oaks, California—

I'm tapped on the shoulder
& turn to see an old man

Milky-wayed with liver spots,
Skin hanging from his cheeks

Like pancake batter. *Those*
Real? He asks, pointing

At the tattoos covering my arms.
He smiles when I nod—says

You know, Hitler would have
Made a lamp out of you.

He did that you know? He
Laughs. I shake my head *yeah*

But as I start to speak, to tell him
About the one-of-a-kind baseball mitt

I played with in college—a real
Beauty & all of it sewn

From the saddle-soaped hides
Of big-mouthed elderly men,

How if I spit a bit of tobacco juice
Into the pocket, it was the kind

Of glove that wouldn't let me make
An error—the line pushes forward

& it's my turn, so I wish him a good
Day & drop my envelopes

On the counter, where a too-chipper
Man asks me if I would like to purchase

A coil of the brand-new American
Flag stamps. I buy the stamps. I say
Goodbye to the old man. The mall
I have to walk through to get outside

Is adorned with holiday decorations—
Trumpeting angels & walls netted

With Christmas lights. "Jingle Bells"
Plays from speakers hidden in giant

Snowflakes. In the parking lot
The gushing sprinklers flood

The concrete while a Latino
Prunes flowering azaleas & a pitbull

Begins gnawing himself apart
In my chest. I will wait for the old man

To come out, so, just as he starts up
His Cadillac, I can toss a shopping cart

Through the windshield. In a half hour
I count ten women leaving the mall

Who have obviously had plastic surgery—
Basketball-sized breasts, lips like bloated

Caterpillars, cheeks stretched taut, identical
Almond eyes & one banging body—model-shaped

& gorgeous with the head of a cadaver.
Who knows how many of the men that passed

Recently had their penises enlarged.
The old man's walker scrapes the pavement.

He stops at the curb, heavy-breathing & inside
Him, I imagine his heart dropping the white

Flag of surrender. That he is about to crumple
And the next thing I know, my piled hands

Will be compressing his sternum & his lips, tender
As the crust of a burnt loaf of bread, will open

Against mine & as the air I just breathed into him
Returns, the taste of mayonnaise & his aftershave

Fills my mouth, & I realize, that in the end, it will
All work out, brilliant with dirt & light. Cryogenics

& biogerontology & pregnant men & clones
Of our favorite Chihuahuas. & if the old man, still

Kicking around, vigorous with his fourth
Or fifth different baboon heart growling within

Him, wants to stay up a little longer to finish
The terrific book he's reading & tugs on

The beside lamp & is illuminated by the patchwork
Of colors that had, years before, covered

My body, well, I guess, that's fine with me, too.