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Sidewalk Superman

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Mossotti: Sidewalk Superman

SIDEWALK SUPERMAN Travis Mossotti

I.

Sitting together at the bar,
Tony held his beer bottle
up to the light as though
he were an anthropologist
brushing time and sand from
the unearthed chamber door
of another immaculate dead
king; he was out of work again
and eager to blame his rotten
luck on scumbags and scabs,
and when I suggested he look
for a different line or trade
he just turned back to his bottle,
and a comical amber rainbow
arced across his cheek.

II.

Somewhere in our past there
was a time when we'd gather
at the corner of an intersection
with bats and two-by-fours,
and pretend to beat the merciless
shit out of Tony, our one hero,
and he would writhe in his red cape
in the fetal position as though
each fake blow actually bruised
and bled him. Sooner or later

a passing driver would grow
bold enough to pull over—at this,
we'd scatter, leaving Tony like
a carnival ride on the fritz, and he'd
wait for the citizen to get close
before bouncing up and yelling
at the top of his busted lungs,
Never fear, Sidewalk Superman is here,
before sprinting off, the hero that
he was, into a darkened subdivision
as fast as his legs would carry.

III.

He guzzled the last of it,
hollered at the young blonde
bartender for another and
thanked me, before turning
back to his list of complaints,
which began with the asshole
shooting Eight-ball for dollar
bets who'd been sleeping
with his ex for months
and ended with a promise
to leave town by October.

IV.

If there's indeed a flowering hell
waiting at the end like a motel room
bed grown sour from the sweat
of a thousand drifters dreaming
up salvation, I think it's a place

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TRAVIS MOSSOTTI

we're meant to go and think
about the awful failures of our
virtue. To wake each morning
and stare from a balcony at the
burning edge of the Mississippi.
To watch it meander closer. To sit
and wait for it, the foundation gone,
the ground turning soft beneath us.

V.

I wanted to pity Tony
because pity
would've been cheap,
and it wouldn't have meant
that I had to step in heroically

and pay his tab at the end
of the night after the pool
balls had finally settled
into their pockets. I wanted
to leave him there, and move on.

Instead, I carried him back
to the car, dropped him off
at his apartment door,
and left him to figure out
which key would let him in.