

James Croal Jackson

Memory Outshines the Moment

Childhood's supposed to be a little blurry,
but phones are testing the shores of Moore's law.
Kid, you're gonna know every gory detail growing up:

the green facepaint. The goalposts at night. The peach wall
(since painted cerulean) the pool cue leaned against. You will
still smell the fragrance of fall in retail. The beehive lights

spattered against the backdrop of capitalism. Somehow you
still found a way to toss boomerang smiles, to pose
at Macy's amongst the mannequins, limbless and featureless.

Melted Plastic

I made a mistake— chopping
onions and mushrooms
in the house
we both live I wanted to
cook us a meal
to forgive a prior mistake
though you say that's not
how it works. Nothing
works since the new year
when I blacked out
and fell for another
in front of you
and everyone else
so we both rode
home crying in
subzero darkness
and snow and we

haven't stopped since.
It's the coldest week
in Ohio in years
and today we want
to stay in. We can't
think of anything
else. Which is why
I didn't notice
the plastic spatula drop
into the stovetop flame
and melt into an air
of a future cancer
how I only noticed
from the toxic smell
burning my nose
and though I cleaned
up the black scraps
with Goo Gone,
heat, and spoonscrapes,
the smell lingers
in every plastic product
(the new shower liner,
the Ziploc bags to carry)
every time we step
onto the white
tiles of our kitchen

St. Patrick's Day, 2019

Though morning hovers with gorgeous
gray clouds, it is under thirty degrees
in Pittsburgh. The neighbors are shouting,

which fills me with an insatiable need
to party— though I know I would be
miserable in afternoon haze, drunken

lumbering through the cold rest of day.
I am awaiting a visit from my friends,
Wayne and Jess— I have been drinking

less, but I know— after the parade— we will
go for green beers at a bar, people dressed
in green around us, shouting, as we down

our glasses with a little shame, as we
pour the wealthy a little more green.

Milgate Mornings

I spend these days walking
down the slope of an ice

rimmed hill. My hardcover
library books are overdue.

I want to mingle in a throb
of strangers again. No, I

recede, always, into self
importance, in static butter

flies, that near silent energy
buzzing from TV. Whatever

enters a room must be
semantics, a language for

longing I pry with my fingers.
Winter's the season. Remnants

of lovers. Ice in morning light
refracting through isolated

windows. Even my street
does not know my name.

Saying Hello at Kafe Kerouac

in the midst of split
caffeine
tremors & vertigo
earth I
plopped
into sinkhole

a heap of turtle
shell floor tiles
you reached
for my hand
inside
was a walnut
butter brownie

Broken A/C

on the highway heading home
memorial day weekend sweat

takes my shirt off lets the sun
roast me through open window

wind fanning *I'm so hot* I say
to each friend passing before a

calm stretch I slow down horses
merge into my lane in a white

trailer *why the long faces* oh
they are way hotter than me

Stock-Tank Pool

You scared the shit out of me– I am
creeping on influencers. They buy
stock-tank pools and place it in front
of suburban blue skies of suburbs.
There, the saturated grass. Watch
the rubber ducky floating in the face-
book blue water, preternaturally still.

Filling

How long
to tolerate pain?

Many weeks
this cavity, severe,

this hole
turned wolf on me—

no more arguing
when they say *go!*

Problem is,
my philosophy's

the way
the flag blows—

west to California,
no, east, no, Midwest

now. Transplant
for a transplant,

my flag flies stink
-bug, flatland,

swamp.

About the Poet

James Croal Jackson is a Filipino-American poet who works in film production. He has two chapbooks, *Our Past Leaves* (Kelsay Books, 2021) and *The Frayed Edge of Memory* (Writing Knights Press, 2017). He edits The Mantle Poetry from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. (jamescroaljackson.com)