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the night I imagined my Impending Death

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the night I imagined my Impending Death

Carolyn Lee

started with a jog, and if I were to be honest,
it was my first jog in a while,
so I didn't feel like I deserved to go to the gym,
where bodybuilders and leg-burners seemed to require
the job description of routine,
and where routine did not mean a while
or sporadically or just
to get a fresh breath of air.

The night I imagined my Impending Death
was when I dared to imagine God's creation:
the stars in the sky that seemed so clear,
so bold,
and so — without consent.

The night I imagined my Impending Death
was when a human closed the gap.
He meant no worries, and said "beautiful night, huh?"
I didn't give you permission to say that,
but I guess that's the beauty of the Land of the Free,
and I guess like my forefathers and their forefathers,
I'll blame my Asian upbringing
whose form of a serpent came in the string of words, *respect*.
My three-syllabled "yes, it is"
must have sounded more like the shotgun "it's-a-go!"
of a track & field conductor
because you closed the gap to too close,
which I never gave you permission to do.

People say stupid stuff like
"life's not fair," but it was definitely
not fair when I felt that sudden breeze.
Maybe, just maybe,
it was the breeze of a runner's high

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after running in a gym and stepping outside,
but I didn't deserve the gym,
so I didn't go to the gym,
so it must not have been that sort of breeze.

This breeze
cut sharp,
and you are to blame.

It was not fair that every step you came closer,
I had to think a jogged-step faster of where
I could run away from you.
It was not fair that you switched on a sort of
defensive primal instinct not even Darwin could explain.
It was not fair that your naive belief
to engage in a "what-a-beautiful-night-this-is!" conversation led me
to think of my Impending Death,
and it was most definitely not fair
that you made my heart race faster than any jog,
or any lovable boy.

The night I imagined my Impending Death
I staggered back home where I moved
from imagining to reality.
The ease of being a male whose only fear
is opening his mouth and saying simple stuff does not compare
to the fear felt under those night stars,
or when locked rooms are preferred over night jogs.

And if I finally dare to imagine back when,
I will only remember
the fear, not the stars.
you, not God.

and the relief of seeing your back.