

You Can Remain Anonymous

by Bud Smith

from time to time
we descend the fire escape
declaring war on 173rd street

on Friday night
there was a wall of cops
on the corner
a girl, abducted
an unmarked van
gunpoint, ski masks,
children seeing it all
from the chain link
in the dog park

our problems:
the cornerstore is closed
we have to walk uphill to get beer
there's construction
they've torn up the road
I loop around forever
searching for a spot
"in the city it's not called a road"
"who fucking cares"
the subway will soon contain
all the hellstorms of Hell itself
and we will sweat
the fruit stands return

but nothing is ripe yet
I eat it anyway,
like a world destroyer
nothing sadder than a bland pear

Saturday, a squad car
drives all up and down the block
playing a loop
"If anyone has information
regarding an incident
involving a missing person
and a white unmarked van
driven away in the night
please contact the NYPD.
You can remain anonymous."

for lunch I make eggs
I make bacon
the toast is perfect
best toast I've ever toasted
we sit at the yellow table
slowly sipping hot coffee
eyeing each other up
all while the cop cars
slowly circle below
playing that announcement

she's afraid. I'm afraid.
it's like we will be dragged off
at any moment
by our hair, by our teeth
by the veins of our heart
however they'd figure out
how to do that
criminal masterminds

Monday, at her desk
her co-workers ask her about it
"the thing". It gets much coverage
all across the office.
by lunch, a girl has found some info
online that says: "over the weekend,
persons of interest came forward
and confessed to police
that they were involved in the "abduction"
on 173rd street. It seems
that a young man was picking up
his girlfriend for a SURPRISE BIRTHDAY PARTY
and startled her. She screamed.
She got in the van. They drove away.
To the party. Had cake. Had balloons.
That was it. Happy Birthday."

and I stand
at the window of my corner store
peering into the darkness
wondering
when we'll crashland into Heaven
and get our just rewards
for all of our uphill struggles
Never, probably.
I crunch into a hard nectarine.

