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## Place of the Tiger

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## *Place Of The Tiger*

He stands outside the open door,  
shoulders as grand as those  
who cut the hot cane.  
Some pesticide has caused  
his smooth marble flesh to crack,  
giving him time away  
from the acres of rows,  
loose, cool time.  
Noon's blasting sun  
reflects off his upper arms  
without the aid of sweat.  
He darts into a bar,  
hearing about Guy's lottery.

How unbending, the powerful  
spine of the bars' flat roofs.  
They make the eye dive  
before muscular fronts  
of tan, reddish brown, and tan.  
The handprinted signs hide  
so well it is only in light's  
quickness that they can be read.  
Yet one hears no pant from them,  
does not feel the heart's scream  
from a chase. So sleepy now,  
it must be safe in the day:  
the years of brown skins, black skins  
here with their rented wants  
for a nickel bag, a black American woman,  
beer, the fast rush of money won.

Back outside, he leans against another wall,  
eyeing a black stick in the garbage  
dropped between two buildings.  
A clean shiny stick,  
he picks it up to clap his hand,  
swings its shine into high-polishing air.  
Just a man with a piece of wood,

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a man safe with his time who doesn't see  
the cop pull over and yank it away  
so quickly his *we don't want you*  
*to get into trouble* is already lost.

Two men ask, what's going on,  
*Koman-ou-ye*,  
but he cannot answer, still not believing  
the speed of it all,  
anger freely stinging his cheeks.  
Three men, four,  
and the pack around him gathers,  
ready to shoulder him as one of their own.