Place of the Tiger

Mary Ann Farrell
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,
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.