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A Sky of Sugar Crystals

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A Sky of Sugar Crystals

Benjamin Mason

Look for him at the counter
Of that old diner on Higgins;
He's the boy with the sugar glass eyes
And an old paper tucked under his arm

It's nearly eleven, and he has waited
For four hours for the girl with a heart
Full of whipped cream vodka and
Cherries picked by a cold lake

He is crying. Can you taste the
Nectar—sweet agave—on his cheeks?
The radio buzzes, between stations, but
The fly's antennae are better-tuned.

A man in a red beret and suspenders
Sits down and orders an Americano.
"I came to sing happy birthday
To your crime, and offer some advice.

It was cold that night, so
You drank Fireball (to break the ice)
Until you fell through, but
You're no goddamned drunk

And you can't act like one.
Cream? Yes, I would love some."
The strawberry phosphate neon dimmed
And the boy's feet hit the glossy pavement,

Slapping toward the Orange Street
Bridge. His scar itched so
That he grit his teeth, but it was



Too cold to take it off.

His hands stretched and wrapped
Around the safety rail and he thought
Of jumping—only a short tumble through
The air—as he always did

But he heard the squeak of
Her wheelchair before he
Could get up the nerve to do it.
“Your neck is so red.

Have you been scratching?”
“Why this year when I’ve been
Waiting for so long?”
And she stood up and

Lurched toward him, one hand
On the railing and one hand
Held tight against her chest.
“I’ve been waiting, too.”

Legs still weakened, she collapsed
Into his arms and he held her
Like the nest holds a bird before flight
And guided her back to her seat.

As he pushed her along the river
He thought forgiveness a thing
So sweet when not uttered aloud
But rather left to meaningful glances.

So the boy and the girl walked
Together that night, and took their chances.