

Open-Casket

Jaylin Jones

Second Place—Poetry Competition

My sneakers scream as I smile, shooting up splintered
steps,
swinging the screen door open.

I look past the counter, straining the tips of my toes,
my ragged laces dirty and untied.

You spring from the couch quick but slide to the coun-
ter slowly,
grin spreading ‘cross your face as you send that old,
tired line my way.

*Looking sharp there, Boogie. I need me some new
threads like that.*

I laugh hard, knowing my shirt is stained
and scarred with sugar you gave me.

I outgrow that shirt soon.

And I see you and those crooked stairs less as I stretch,
getting longer, and apparently far sharper.

*Whew, you could cut somebody with that suit. Bet it’ll
drive the girls crazy about you.*

I laugh again then, trying to not notice how
you’re bent lower, carved thinner.

The last time I see you, my church shoes scuff smooth
carpet softly.

I make each step count, slow and steady.

I lay eyes on your lapel, collar crisp and cufflinks loose.

And silently I say

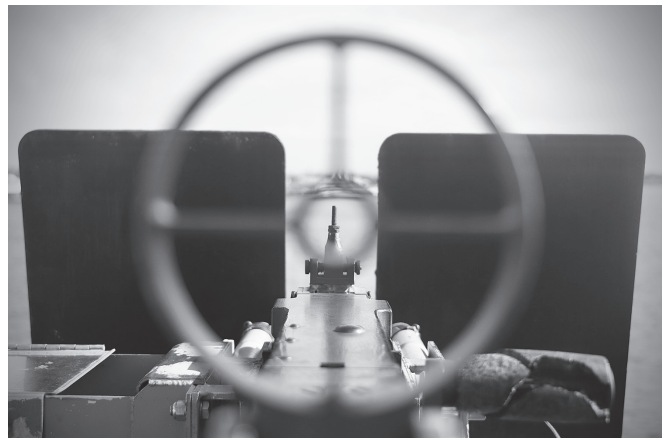
Looking sharp.



Fountain of Pearls

Amanda Zhou

Gouache



Bullseye

Michael Lu

Photograph