

Delores Gauntlett

BOY COUSIN

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Who loved at eight to canter 'round the yard
astride a molting broomstick

until he disappeared behind his parents' back
through the forbidden gate

to where the loosening zinc fence rattled
in the wind like an old fan,

his young horns bent
on the live current of the street.

Just kids. But their fierce bonding
and rude regard for The Law

fanned the risks they took

which fueled his young spirit

and ate up his appetite for school

like a great wind that drives a fire

through dry wood,

till he learned to bluff his way

through a world of tales, and swapped

Sunlight Street for the narrowing lane,

alive with ground lizards

variegated as croton

insinuating themselves through the loose dirt

to the gully bank where the daggers

of the cactuses' bristles shadowed the path.

One afternoon when he was ten, I found him

in the cellar uprooting the ratchet

he'd buried there. I saw the way he swung

the blade, in that world from which neither luck
nor prayer could pull him back.

Now he was one
of the children of Sisyphus.

And now, as when a stone is lifted
setting the ants scampering,

what claimed his imagination wrecked the street.

To defeat the godless foe, his parents moved,
leaving behind the house that soon could not be left

to anyone—no door anymore, no key—
and that was how I knew (before on thing

led to another) why they sent him to Bensonton
in the garden parish, to walk among the trees.

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