Sitting Johnny
By: Susan Nyikos

Half of which he leaves behind in caramel fur
Balls on my futon he perfectly matches in hue
So he thinks he is invisible and when his owner

Finally picks him up I forgive the ambush of clawed swipes,
The tone-out-of-tone puke on the rug, the bathroom
Door pawed open while I sit on the toilet—

After five weeks of that I forgive all because now
Vacuuming makes sense again, though the Garfield
Dish, like a forsaken guitar, still sits under the kitchen cabinet.

Spring City Lament
By: Russ Beck

Soon after the town was placed on the National Historic Registry the canals that ran parallel to most streets in town were relocated underground for pressurized irrigation. Along the streams grew great cottonwoods. When we buried the water, the trees died. Their skeletons lined the streets of my childhood like stoic mourners and eventually were cut down and burned. The only place that the trees still grow is the cemetery. I imagine the roots of the trees digging deep like mirrored branches burrowing in the ground to embrace oolitic boulders, coffins and maybe even the corpses of those that knew the trees before they died. The cottonwoods seem to survive, not by water and sunlight, but by the memory of those who watched them grow. They pull some bodies closer to the surface while pushing others further down. Like any small town, my cemetery is haunted. I can feel my ancestors’ presence hovering only slightly below the fog of threads released from the cottonwoods in spring. Both sides of family are buried a few generations deep, time marked with varying levels of decay on their stones. Among my relatives is my brother who I never knew. All I hope for him is that his memory will be strong enough to hold up the trees. The trees that I love, in fact, more than I will ever love him. This is the Spring City that can’t be marketed. It can’t be reproduced on a canvas or poured in a glass or printed in a pamphlet. My parents have purchased plots for all of us in that same cemetery. We will all be buried there lifted and torn by those same trees, always looking up into the thin leafed canopy, next to the quarry and the lake that supported my town.

Helicon West invites you to share our open mic nights every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month, 7:00 PM at Citrus and Sage, 130 North 100 East, Logan, Utah.

Broadside Co-editors: Cynthia Harmon and JP Peterson
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