

Black asphalt unfolds,
crosswalk paints itself
gleaming white,
street lights line the street,
at the end,
a green man appears inside a crosswalk light as a father
and son walk up to the black asphalt.
Green man becomes flashing red hand with numbers beside it!
Father says, "Go, go, before it changes."
The boy runs like Usain Bolt Jr.
"15-14-13-12-11-10,
I made it, I'm the winner!"

As I turned around
you were walking the opposite,
Daddy. Daddy! Da-
You kept going,
leaving me
like a winner holding his hand out with ice cream melted all over it,
dessert, I saved for you.
You never threw the ball back,
raspy bedtime stories went silent,
my family tree grew with half its roots, branches pointing towards the
ground.
Who are you, papa?

I'm confused, trying to trace a father's face with one faded picture.
I'm ashamed, watching little guys play with Daddy's,
smiles glistening in joyous connection.
This lifetime picnic,
an envied triptych of father, son, and fun,
standing, head hanging by an oak tree,
wishing, Harry Houdini, please make my daddy appear,

I told everyone you'd be here.

I just want to know you, papa,
like I wanted your growl to rescue me from skinheads
pounding on the government given front door.
Brass knuckles, bats, and chains, meant to erase pride,
but like you,
I hid out,
not for a lifetime, but for an hour,
afraid,
ducking skull shattering pain,
begging for G.I. Joe's help,
but child support never came,
action heroes stayed on the shelf.

Now, I'm a stereotype,
a bitter bastard tap dancing to a dead beat,
you,
busy with a new family,
me,
wanting to hold your hand, but the five digits,
phantoms.
Seven digits I called,
blank,
imagine listening for a voice you can't remember.
You aren't the best.
The best picks up the phone and answers,
do you ever think of me?
Do you ever cry hindsight?
Do you ever wish you could hear me?
Do they even know about me?

Every day,
I stare at a face,
but I don't know who I look like.
Hatred covers self-confidence like a white sheet covering cold eyes.
I look at my wrist, knowing suicidal slits could end my worthlessness,
but the blades become dull every time,
skin too tough for you,
ice cream will never melt on my hand,
my children will always walk across crosswalks with me.

I look up,
wiping away childish tears.
I don't need you, papa,
I just wanna know
my story.

CROSSWALKS

E.R. SANCHEZ

E.R. Sanchez has been published in NoHo Arts District, L.A. Pierce College's anthology entitled Tertulia, Zouch Magazine, San Gabriel Valley Poetry Quarterly, Single Mother Magazine, and Mise En Poem. He is a National Poetry Slam veteran, ranked Top 15 from 2003 to 2005. He currently lives in Los Angeles and tweets from @ERSanchezPoet.

