

for Keota

AT THE PINK TEACUP

Keota cuts sweet tea with talk
the room empty but for us the brother waiting and love songs

later he'll recall tanks from a stoop carve a sonnet
of the day no one was underground in New York

as if the sky needed holding up and everyone came out
to help he'll pay for our food and we'll stare

from the stoop as attachés commute past the swollen
garbage bags flowering in dusk but now he's talking about love

his tongue a knife he cools in free refills the menu says
we shouldn't get he's talking about what he wants

how he wishes it wouldn't burn his grandfather down
or that brothers would remember how fickle the Bible is

and the brother at The Pink Teacup is refilling our glasses he smiles
like it's the easiest thing in the world and the menu looks stupid

and petty later Keota will talk about gas masks and fruit stands
how all he could do was cuss the man who looked

like some glass-eyed insect buying apples *you're scaring*
the kids you fucking asshole and how scared he is

of what happens when everyone looks to the sky
for messages and keeps everything sweet

somewhere cold New York will offer us bouquets in black plastic
the menus will fold commuters will buy apples and forget their gas masks

in the closet right now Keota isn't talking about love the knife is in his hand
cutting salmon croquettes he doesn't want to burn his people down but later

he'll talk about Sikh women beaten in Harlem the bumper stickers
and flags flying past us as we watch brothers hoop in a cage before then

he'll talk about what brothers do once they find out he is full of sweet
tea and pink flesh the brothers full of sweat argue over fouls the cage fence

full of spectators like flies on the black garbage bags the fruit stands
full of apples some bruised as the Sikh women and New York

full of bumper stickers crawls back underground scrambles for its love songs
Bibles tanks gas masks Keota wishes people would remember how fickle the Flag is

and right now he is talking about love when the brother comes back
with the pitcher Keota is through later he will love the brothers he pays now

—Douglas Kearney