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Blindspot

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BLINDSPOT

Let me put it this way, I grew up
integrated
 it was nothing progressive
just a condition
where wealthier Jews
 moved on
and poorer ones like us
stayed noticing.

 I played with kids on the street
 rangy unhomogenized kids
my parents called *schvartzes*, code word
for black: the old lady next door, the black “help”
something we had none of
 until I was grown
when one day each week my mother had Alice
who washed, ironed, cleaned and pilfered
liquor from our basement bar.

 I remember two black men battling on the stoop
 of my childhood Brooklyn house
grunting and lunging with sharp-bladed somethings
trailing blood and blue-uniformed cops who
dragged them away leaving
 stains my mother scrubbed out
with buckets of boiling water.

*

I already know you now.
You have nothing to do with headlines.
You have nothing to do with stoops
 or stains

or watered-down bottles of booze.
I already know you.

We sit face to face at YaYa Noodles.
You in youthful black male student identifiers
me in my un-hip jeans and good-intentioned enlightenment.
Between mouthfuls of fried rice and dumplings
we weave air into meaning the way humans would
 mindbugs spinning
 beyond our knowing
like colored dots of a pointillist painting
blended by the mind's eye
 white canvas unseeable
 between.