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R.T. Castleberry

In the Way of Regret

A ceiling fan rustles this writing page
while I type my conditional response to
a cursory list of denials and demands.

Praying for a signal in the moonlight
I hear the owl's call, the wolf's,
the snap of a night hunter's rifle.

My wife sits at a table along the Costa Brava,
betting backgammon with the Barcelona crowd.
Her gowns and slippers shimmer like ocean jewels.

Suffering serves the Southern motherland.
The winter market discloses ram's horns and revolvers,
a blood moon threatens in a week.

Third Car from the Light

Inkblot ridge of rain clouds
mars a workman's afternoon,
teasing drizzle splashing
ladder's steps, a drying roof.
As gunmen pay their respects
to the country sheriff,
old black men at the market—
fifth of wine, 40 oz. in hand,
laugh and grin, lounge against
gas pumps, lean into
driver's side windows.
Old Lincolns, new Nissans
pause in the parking lot.
Four-way traffic drags through
construction warning,
bus stop campsites overflow.
Standing at streetside,
checking my jacket for
matches and spare magazines,
I wipe the Tecate can clean,
step into my car.
Heavy hauling Wednesday,
I'll follow highway 18-wheelers
to check the taquerias I manage
near the Navy yard.

No One's in Charge

Read about you
on the sacrifice altar,
singing, "Jesus Is Just Alright"
as temple tapestries fell in flames,
flag pagans raged in the streets.
Hoodie ninjas razed the monasteries,
screached when their martyrs succumbed
to chaos wounds, the lynching rope.
Hunted by riflemen-ministers,
maimed mothers, shreds of silken robes
turned to torches, stumbled

into road ditches, recycled cemeteries.
Strafing planes range
border mountains, border valleys,
narrow access to bullet-blasted bodies,
roll of ambulances sent to salvage
boots and jewelry, gasoline and gold teeth.
Ashen armies roam the riverbanks,
watchful but wondering at
mercy or necessity to train guns
on another sightless, gibbering mob.
You turn your head when
the production doesn't pave the way
to a one-song nightclub set,
a palace power romance.
"No one's in charge," is
your shuddering discovery
but a resort director and
a man changing bills
for coins and a boat ride.

R.T. Castleberry, a Pushcart nominee, has work in *Steam Ticket*, *Vita Brevis*, *As It Ought To Be*, *Trajectory*, *Silk Road*, *StepAway*, and elsewhere. He has also published work in Canada, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, France, New Zealand, Portugal, the Philippines, and Antarctica. His poetry has appeared in several anthologies, including *Travois – An Anthology of Texas Poetry*, *TimeSlice*, *Anthem: A Tribute to Leonard Cohen*, and *Level Land: Poetry For and About the 135 Corridor*.