

1975

The City

Raymond R. Patterson

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The Father / Gayl Jones

This is my father—
an Indian of two Americas
and a black man from three continents
his wife carried me
strapped to her back
till the pack cut her shoulders
but their footprints were still kisses
and their love broke into my skin
and mine into theirs
infinite and palpable
and deeper than shadow—
this man with the high-crowned hat
and pants falling over his shoes
is my father—
an indian of two americas,
a black man
from three continents:
why then, if he is my father,
why then am I so afraid
to look at him—
and why then when he comes walking
toward me, wanting me to see him
do I turn my head away?—
only when he bumps into me
and his flesh cuts mine,
do we become bloods again.

The City / Raymond R. Patterson

where people who live alone
are murdered by a thief

where someone hears it done
falling off to sleep

to dream police who come
and find the body gone

where no one need know
no one