

Len Kuntz

Separation

But for the river
You have an arbitrary heart
Seedlings take no root in your eyes
Upon one stone and then the next
You walk on water until you've
Reached the other side of the shore
Your back to me as always
Crossing land now
Moving swift as a sparrow
Repurposed and finally free

Radicalized

There is a bonfire in your eyes
Barbwire for a brow
Spiked teeth
With blue-black saliva
Dripping off your chin
Anger and residue are your
Closest companions
Each day finds you hating more
Wanting nothing but destruction
I've seen what you're up to—
Pipes and pressure cooker bombs—
And so it's time I burned your room down
Take you hostage
Re-engineer the false poetry inside your head
Remind you that you were once
A wide-eyed boy
A pacifist to the core
My son
If only through genetics

Monkey Children

When they ran out of other names,
they called us that—monkey children--
because our lunch sacks held only bananas
what fell from the tree
bruised boomerang fruit
that we'd eat during recess in the far corner
of the gymnasium
But I had one pair of jeans with deep pockets
and being skinny I could slip between
the seams and store aisles
pinch chips and candy from rows
easily escaping each stocky clerk
In time classmates gathered round
wanting to see the loot
bartering for Mars and Snickers bars
And just like that my brother and I became boys
with real names
like anybody else

Moxie

Oh, I know what they say
That escape is futile and stupid
How the alleys will swallow you whole
Marauders lurking beneath the shadows
That it's best to stay put
Get a hot meal at least
Even if it's akin to prison food or poison
Still the fists keep coming
The belt and latch key strap
A chair leg once
And so uncover of the night
I make myself a slender shadow
And tip toe past the slumbering beast
Where outside nothing is daunting
The clouds like arms that want to hug
The stars grinning right at me

Pugilists

She came early,
a three pound, ten-ounce prize fighter.
My wife claimed our newborn looked like a tadpole,
a small loaf of damp bread.
When she said she was sorry,
I asked why.
"I don't know. It's just..."

Who's to say where women go?
Only she can know.
She said the shroud of post-partum
was like a mist of black gnats
always covering, trailing, smothering—
and I believed her.

Still the baby thrived and grew.
My wife got up from the matt,
threw punches of her own,
vicious jabs and uppercuts,
at last winning the bout.

How lucky am I then,
to live with two pugilists?

Len Kuntz is a writer from Washington State, an editor at the online magazine *Literary Orphans*, and the author of *I'm Not Supposed to Be Here and Neither Are You* out now from Unknown Press. You can also find him at lenkuntz.blogspot.com