Wax Museum

Brett Leslie

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a heavy flock of sparrows pilot down from a blue winter’s sky, past a grove of oak trees, plowing an unsuspecting jogger’s forehead. rendering it the texture of interstate rumble strips.

lonely. sitting on an aluminum Technicolor webbed lawn chair perched on my porch, and smoking a cigarette,
I watch minimal traffic race down the street.

yesterday’s newspaper lies unread in a trash bin hanging from a light post. cloud decks stretch low overhead, and the brick paved road is neglected. colored rusty red.

my reflection projects on dusty glass windows of vacant buildings. i’m living in a ghost town. a market where smiles have turned sour. a college town tucked quietly on the banks of the Tennessee River, living in past glories of number one hits like: *When a Man Loves a Woman, Respect, and I Swear.*

it’s written on the faces of wandering vets. the agony of mental and physical defeat engraved on the deep crevices
lining the forehead and faded tattoos dotting the arms. it rings with voices strained from years of cigarette and whiskey abuse, and sings echoes of dice thrown against cardboard.

d this town frozen in time is a wax museum, slightly more overwhelming than the Cook’s Natural Science Museum and bronze statues of W.C. Handy with a disproportioned softball head, decaying in the courtyard outside the post office.

maybe The Black Keys recording their album *Brothers* in Muscle Shoals will resurrect this town, but it’s doubtful, because UNA’s University Program Council deemed them too obscure.

the weather forecast calls for heavy alcohol, a chance of forgotten recycling, and re-heated McDonald’s fries.