

Three Poems by Taylor Risinger
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A Walk in the City

Eighty degrees means men leaning out of car windows,
gnawing on your bare legs.

The ringing of wolf whistles, *slut*,
and *I bet you taste like heaven* biting at your ears.

And this is hell.

Carrying your body like a child's teddy bear
you aren't ready to part with.

Bearing your body because you haven't figured out
how to leave it at home.

After five blocks, you'll be apologizing
for your wrists, hips, and thighs.

You'll still be trying to lick
the last of your dignity
from their dripping
fingertips.

as clean as possible

come home to my best friend's vomit in my bedroom,
clean it up because it makes sense to.

edit a picture of you just to look at you, edit your picture to the point
where, when I find it later, I can't remember who it is.

listen to the president of the united states
declare the opioid crisis a national emergency,
like it hasn't been killing my friends and family
for years.

a yahoo article tells me that with 142 deaths a day,
it is equivalent to 9/11 happening every three weeks.
because we can only measure things in terms of
the worst thing that has ever happened ever,
but I'm crying because I can only measure things
in your names,
or the amount of unfinished apology letters
that selfishly sit with the lights on in my google drive.
like when you sit in your parked car for too long,
hoping you never have to go inside.

I can't tell if I feel worse about the ones who died
or the ones who didn't.
I just try to keep everything as clean as possible now.

Spare Change

Out on the corner
of 4th and Hal Greer,
every Friday morning,
two men in suits
hand out Jesus
like spare change.

God can pick you up!
I put out my hand.
Drag me out of this life.
Give me
dollar store forgiveness,
bottled holy water
passed around below the bridge
like Mad Dog.

Reborn
every week
When the needle hits my skin
and my new name
slips out of your lips.

The men in suits say
Good morning sir,
you have a minute for our Lord?
And just because they call me sir,
I take one of every pamphlet they have.

Biography: Taylor Risinger is a native of West Virginia, currently residing in the Buckhannon area, but he has lived throughout the state. He received his MFA from West Virginia Wesleyan College and holds a BA in English from Marshall University. He is pursuing teaching English at the college level and will be adjuncting at Davis & Elkins College this fall. In his spare time, he can be found reading or walking his dog, Stark.

"Spare Change" won first place in the poetry category of *The Vandalia's* 2021 Art & Literature Contest.