

POEM AGAINST THE POLICE

by R/B Mertz

The detective says the cops have to laugh to keep
from crying, but maybe they should be crying
& maybe they should just take the drugs & not the people
who ____ them but in America taking property isn't
as easy as taking people like we'd rather go to war
than learn to ride bicycles like it's easier to push Jeff's
humanity down into your stomach & tell a joke
than it is to let your own humanity pull up through you
like vomit does or like ____ does up through your guts
into your mouth, overflowing into tears or trembling,
but what if the all white cops arrived on the scene & fell
to their knees weeping, & tearing at their clothes
& tearing at their hair & what if the policeman picked up Jeff's
body & held him like a pieta, held him like a mother would
sobbing & breaking & what if the policemen let all the mothers
come up & placed Jeff's body into his mother's arms
& what if we could all run up & touch him:
what else would break, what else's soul would take wing
& rise up into everything like Jeff's did, like his ____r's voice
pleading into their concrete cop faces, screaming, "He's warm!
He's still warm! He's still alive!" & the cops just tell everyone to
"Get back, get back, get back," & "Stay back."

R/B Mertz is an Emerging Poet Laureate Finalist of Allegheny County, 2020-2021.

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