

Hand-Me-Down Halloween

The year we moved off / the reservation /
a / white / boy up the street gave me a green trash bag
fat with corduroys, bright collared shirts

& a two-piece / Tonto / costume
turquoise thunderbird on the chest
shirt & pants

the color of my grandmother's skin / reddish brown /
my mother's skin / brown-redskin /
My mother's boyfriend laughed

said now I was a / fake / Indian
look-it her now yer / In-din / girl is a / fake / In-din
My first Halloween off / the reservation /

/ white / Jeremiah told all his / white / friends
that I was wearing his old costume
/ A hand-me-down? /

I looked at my hands
All them / whites / laughed at me
/ called me half-breed /

threw Tootsie Rolls at / the half-breed / me
Later / darker / in the night
at / white / Jeremiah's front door / *tricker treat* /

I made a / good / little Injun his father said
now don't you make a / good / little Injun
He gave me a Tootsie Roll

More night came / darker / darker /
Mothers gathered their / white / kids from the dark
My / dark / mother gathered / empty / cans

while I waited to gather my / white / kid
I waited to gather / white / Jeremiah
He was / the skeleton / walking past my house

a glowing skull and ribs
I ran & tackled his / white / bones / in the street
His candy spilled out / like a million pinto beans /

Asphalt tore my / brown-red-skin / knees
I hit him harder and harder / whiter / and harder
He cried for his momma

I put my fist-me-downs / again and again and down /
He cried / for that white / She came running
She swung me off him

dug nails into my wrist
pulled me to my front door
yelled at her / white / kid to go wait at home

go wait at home Jeremiah, Momma will take care of this
She was ready / to take care of this /
to pound on my door / but no *tricker treat* /

My door was already open
and before that white could speak or knock
/ or put her hands down on my door /

my mother told her to take her hands off of me
taker / fuck-king / hands off my girl
My mother stepped / or fell / toward that white /

I don't remember what happened next
I don't remember that / white / momma leaving
/ but I know she did /

My mother's boyfriend said
well / Kemosabe / you ruined your costume
wull / Ke-mo-sa-be / you fuckt up yer costume

My first Halloween
off / the reservation /
my mother said / maybe / next year

you can be a little Tinker Bell / or something /
now go git that / white / boy's can-dee
—iss-in the road

Why I Hate Raisins

*And is it only the mouth and belly which are
injured by hunger and thirst?*

Mencius

Love is a pound of sticky raisins
packed tight in black and white
government boxes the day we had no
groceries. I told my mom I was hungry.
She gave me the whole bright box.
USDA stamped like a fist on the side.
I ate them all in ten minutes. Ate
too many too fast. It wasn't long
before those old grapes set like black
clay at the bottom of my belly
making it ache and swell.

I complained, *I hate raisins.*
I just wanted a sandwich like other kids.
Well that's all we've got, my mom sighed.
And what other kids?
Everyone but me, I told her.
She said, *You mean the white kids.*
You want to be a white kid?
Well too bad 'cause you're my kid.
I cried, *At least the white kids get a sandwich.*
At least the white kids don't get the shits.

That's when she slapped me. Left me
holding my mouth and stomach—
devoured by shame.