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Ryder's Mom's Porch

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Ryder's Mom's Porch

This guy, with his hair all in twists, sweating them out on a hundred degree day, told my friend Ryder to give him a coke or he'd straight up kill him. She'd covered the porch with white and purple flowers in little green pots and plants with long skinny leaves that she somehow kept alive—even when it was a hundred degrees out. In the hospital, later that night, after Ryder was already dead, his mom told me she heard the guy with twists say: If it's not ice-fucking-cold, I'll kill you. Straight up. I didn't know the guy, Ryder didn't know the guy, and no one we knew knew him. Twists had been laying low in a house down the block. But we'd seen him strolling Benning Road like everyone shoulda known him and shoulda gotten out of his way. He was jumpy. Like the dog when the fireflies first come out. Ryder should have gone inside, locked the door and tossed a coke out the window. Hell, he shouldn't have been out on that porch at all. He could have gone inside to where his mom was cooking dinner. He could have gone to the fucking library, my house, the moon, anywhere. But Ryder said no. I bet he even made it salty and said, Hell no. One bullet hit Ryder in the stomach then bounced into his chest where it exploded and shredded his heart into hamburger meat. His mom ran out and this guy, this guy who was on the run and always ready for it to blow up, shot her in the arm. We didn't tell the police nothing because there wasn't nothing to say. How do you describe a ghost? Pretty sure I saw him the other day at the Metro station, but it was crowded and I didn't get a good look at him. It's not like he was going to go far, where could he go? No one flies south for the winter. He just crouched down lower and coiled himself into a crack in the pavement. Or, maybe that wasn't him I saw, it could have just been another guy with tensed-up shoulders and his hair in twists.

About Richard Santos

Richard Z Santos is currently enrolled in the MFA Fiction program at Texas State University. His work has appeared in Nimrod, Kill Author, Bartelby Snopes, The Smoking Poet and other fine publications.