

Christmas Day and Everything Has Been

by Seth Pennington

opened. Canned biscuits: white slime
turned brown-bottomed and swallowed
down in gravy. Batteries charging
12 hours for 20 minutes of me
finally having a say where to drive
the car (never mind it's remote-controlled).
Cousin is in town from the country
where you have to drive 20 minutes
to find gas or groceries, where
there's no trampoline but a roof to jump
off into hay. Christmas Day and Cousin's
got money, that Christmas money he gets
from the other side of his family. Ma says:
*They just don't know what to get him
because they don't even know him.*
Cousin's got \$10 in his pocket and a \$50 check
folded crisp, his Nana's signature
blazing across it. We walk
Center Street, the only road painted with yellow
lines so you know how to get out. We walk
and town is dead. Tidal Wave Video closed.
Dairy Bar closed. No one
even cruising. At Walmart,
the only cars in the lot are for sale.
We're sweating it's so hot.
We've never seen snow, not
really. Ice comes. Fells trees on trailers.
Kills every one of us on bald tires
that made it through the hundreds of summer
without blowing out. Cousin thinks
it would be cool to slide into death that way.
He says, *Doesn't it sound easy?*
All the automatic doors are locked, carts
pushed in a row behind them
like a barricade. We say *we're too old
anyway* to ride the three-horse carousel,
but really it takes two quarters and
I was only quick enough to sneak
one out of Pa's sock drawer because
I was looking at the *Men's Health* again
that he keeps in there, at the kind of
abs grandma calls *clothes washers*,
at the kind of body I'd never seen
a man have, the kind of body, the opposite body

of what I'd seen a man is. We look through
the tinted storefront at the claw machine
Cousin has figured out—he calls himself The Master
because nine times out of ten, he's going to
win something soft and then give it away
to someone that wasn't there to see it
but nonetheless buys his brag.
I keep thumbing my quarter.
Cousin won't let go his paper money and his
hand is hot enough sweat makes his check run.
It's Christmas Day and with everything closed
it's like we're the only people in existence,
and all we feel about it is bored.