

MATT DONOVAN

Shooting Justin Bieber & bin Laden in the Woods

It begins with rocks, leaves, hubcaps, a plastic bat

tucked up where the sky should be
before the world is set right with an *Oops!*

& in one blurring swerve everything turns

right side up as a kid from behind the camera
proclaims what will be unleashed, namely

a can of paintball whoop-ass aimed at pictures
of Bieber & bin Laden duct-taped to buckets.

Someone called Usuck had decided my son needed
to see what was about to go down. This was back when

we monitored his texts, thinking we could save him
from who-knows-what while also wondering if we needed

to protect the world from whatever he might hurl forth
from his phone, which most of the time was acronyms

traded in rapid-fire bursts mixed with that laughing-but-crying

emoji, the one with two enormous teardrops sprouting
like a pair of blue tusks from an eyes-scrunched-shut face.

There was no need to watch what Usuck sent
all the way through, but I wanted to see

what would happen at the end, which turned out to be
what was promised: the sound of shots

at first beginning like a steady beat before becoming
a drum roll for paint-splatter, *hell-yeahs*,

the smirk & glower on each face reduced to shreds,

two spinning buckets & then a kid running to see
close-up what he'd done. Usuck & panting, grinning kid,

there's a light snow coming down just now
& because the wide, blank face of our neighbor's house

is filled with the wavering light of whatever
they too have chosen to watch, I wouldn't mind asking you

about the pleasures of the trigger, about the sky

that once again doesn't cast down upon us
what we've shot & left behind—plywood, bottles,

what look like a rowing machine & anything else
roped to a low-hanging branch that stops rage

from becoming grief. Then again, what use

is the conceit of a conversation that will never take place
when there are so many other things now cued

& ready to play? Up next: *What happens*

to a Hand Grenade in a Microwave? Up next:
Watermelon vs. Artillery Shells. Up next:

Company Offers Reenactment of Bin Laden Raid,
where each night participants arrive

in Pakistan—played by an office building in Minneapolis—
where they storm rooms clutching guns,

weaving through metal chairs & self-defense dummies
before, without warning, they become

*as ready as they'll ever be. You'll need to take him out.
I don't want to write a letter to your parents.*

No one wants to write that letter. We'd all rather watch

someone barely trained burst through a door to find
the man who had been promised,

sitting on a mattress, wearing eye protection & a fake beard
resembling a fist of stiff wheat, raising a fake gun

slowly enough to be shot by military-grade simulation rounds
before slumping to the floor & trying his best

to still his breath. Mission as always accomplished.

Instead of this, I should be watching the snow
continue its slow work erasing our world,

or even a video I wish I could see that would be nothing

but a never-veering shot of the same man
bored in a costume turban, alone in a room

& thinking who-knows-what as he traces
the long loops of the stitching in a sky-blue quilt

& the door for once never opens. Up next:

Hendrix Makes His Guitar a Machine Gun just after
the rocket's red glare, when he gives up on melody

& wrenches his Woodstock solo into gunfire, explosions,
a long shriek of feedback followed by the opening notes

of “Taps.” Up next: *Is a Fish Tank Bulletproof?*
As always, the answer is *no*, this time

in the form of glinting water perched on a milk crate
that becomes the shattered thing

we knew it would be before it’s all restored—
slosh of water rushing backwards, broken glass

slipping into place—only to explode again
in slow-mo for our pleasure. If you watch

the mock-raid video all the way to the end,
someone asks bin Laden what it’s like to be shot

night after night & the guy says *warm*.