**Buck Moon, July 4th, 2020**

Addison Hoggard

 I have this worry: receding gums.

 That they will go, and keep going, until

 I am only a smile of stained teeth in this world.

Fireworks soon. Nothing grand. This is Millennium, after all.

This is where I am from. Five roads, four of which named for

ancestors, a dying relative on every block; fields of lush tobacco.

The children have shackled themselves in red, white, and blue

chains made from glow sticks. Stuck together in that way,

they wallow in the grass with the dogs, giddy in the dew.

 I have this worry: this place, its people.

 That they will leave me to dry like tobacco leaves;

 sweet-breathed and bundled, hung from a rafter.

Fireworks soon. Nothing grand. This is Millennium, after all.

But you are here, where I never imagined you could be. Between

the pine trees, atop the bones of me. Family goes sour,

goes to the bad, as my grandma says. Every time someone

calls you friend, every time someone says you are less to me

than what you are: cotton wrapped around me, my gauzy god.

 I have this worry: the fireworks.

 That they will strike the bloated moon,

 that it will crash into our wide-open mouths.

Fireworks shoot. Nothing grand. This is Millennium, after all.

My grandpa once told me sugar runs in the blood. I didn’t

understand at the time, but I have this worry that I do, now.

The buck moon is all the men talk about, as if the antlers are

theirs to claim. And they will claim them. The bucks will recede until

they are only hardened heads hung on the wall, their points tallied.

 I have this worry: being understood.

 That when I open my mouth, the bare teeth

 chatter in clicks and whistles, incomprehensible.

Fireworks done. Nothing grand. This is Millennium, after all.

I need to remember that. Not to expect much. Not to expect

that your hand held in mind will be understood by these people.

Because yes, there is hardness between us (the sprout of antler,

the white of fangs) but also softness (lotioned skin, trimmed

fingernails). When we rut, it feels like growth; violent, violet.

 I have this worry: receding gums.

 That every day I am less flesh and more bone.

 My remains will hardly fill a pants-pocket.

 Take them with you, far away from this place.

 Take the hard bits of me. Plant them in a field.

 See what grows; a smile of flowering tobacco?