

Ju'Juan Day

splendid limewire

a black boy, who's the complete opposite of me
your reckless hands that got you into fights
and your constant trouble with the police
mother and i admired you

your muscles, we hungered
your deep voice, we thirsted
and even the way you walked, we dreamt
one whose hands are rough like sandpaper
body with deep scars and purple bruises, splendid.

i sat at the desk
and played music on limewire
music that hugged me
music that rose me from the dead
music that was music

sitting beside me, you said casually
"man all you do is listen to girls"
"listen to some rap, some boys"

i stared at your red irritated eyes
and analyzed your death sayings
noticing that your father
must have told you
the exact same thing

summertime on the southside of chicago

sitting down on the dusty brown steps of my back porch
long twisted hair, blue denim overalls with brown sandals
showing off my yellow-skinned toes on a wednesday
admiring the sun glistening on the boys with scars running
around playing basketball with an almost inflated ball

and the three girls playing with a long grey jump rope
it was once white
we heard scott joplin's the entertainer driving down the street
and of all us were running trying to capture the driver's attention

he parks and asks
"what do you want kid?"
hmmm can i get a fire cracker?
"one dollar."
shuffling through my deep pockets
with tons of lint to find 4 quarters
"alright kid, here you go."

walking back to the steps of my backyard
looking at the kids sitting down
eating their cones, pops, and whatnot
opening up my cold white wrapper
looking at the colors descending from red, white, and blue

i take a slow bite of the cherry flavor
not a single lick

grandma suddenly plays jay-z on the vintage speakers
in the kitchen right by the back door
it's a hard knock life for us
it's a hard knock life for us
instead of treated, we get tricked
instead of kisses, we get kicked
it's the hard knock life.



Ju'Juan Day was born and raised on the South Side of Chicago and is the eldest of six siblings. He recently earned a Master of Fine Arts degree in poetry from Columbia College Chicago and a Bachelor of Arts degree in journalism and media studies with a concentration in media studies from Roosevelt University. In 2018, he was published in *Reach the Remarkable Impact of Lincoln Park Zoo: The First 150 Years*. He currently resides in the Hyde Park neighborhood in Chicago.