

Atlanta, Georgia

Decrepit Dreams by Qui-Shawn Tien Tran

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It's a beautiful day in Atlanta, Georgia
You make plans for dinner with your partner,
drinks and movie at the theatre
And everything's okay when you
stroll to the local spa on the corner

You're getting fixed up.
nails, and hair at a space
where you're not a foreigner
the place is brick and mortar,
Fellow Asian women sit on chairs, gossiping

About the latest drama
About their daughters
About their grandchildren becoming doctors

You lay back in your chair, hair iron getting warmer,
You curl up in silence as the doorbell rings,
welcoming a new customer

screams . . .

murmurs . . .

A young man walks in limping, harboring hostility
"Stop torturing me, you make me sin with my
sexual fantasies"

horror...

torture...

He grazes a neck with his jet black pistol

**"You're all nasty and contaminated, no wonder we
locked you up after Pearl Harbor"**

He cracks a glance to your corner

The metal seems to suffocate you and

You think about your partner

You think about your parents, their blue collar jobs for the
sake of your future

You start to feel smaller

You think you can stop him

You think you're a martyr

You think of deterrents

You think of diversions but

Before you speak words,

Blood spills over your momma's pearls

A woman limps over her chair, looking into another world.

You saw the first of his slaughters,

You want to fight back, but he's stronger

You read the news about the hate crimes

You wish you had armor, a weapon to fight back

You always thought your safe place would be fine

He crosses your path

You reach for his gun but his reaction is too fast.

You stare the barrel of a Glock,
Time is a complete stop.

You see a spark

You hope it's god commending you
for standing up to this armed outlaw

The next moment,
You're shot.

You're dead

Or at least you're dying

You're on the ground where your blood turns to gel

You feel your body tranquilizing

You want to brace yourself to save the next victim

Your chemicals are out of control,

Every vessel, filled with adrenaline,

Yet drained of soul

Your final moments,

on the floor

of a place

you once found comfort in

There will be no more saving grace

In your pretty black dress,
your momma's pearls.

You take shallow breaths
but
there's a lasso around your neck
before you know it

You're dead
You're gone

Because of someone's "bad day" you endure the
pain of their problems
Because of someone's hate you're the
next asian victim in the newspaper columns

I often thought, *think* about what it's like to be a martyr.
If I was murdered would it matter?
If you were murdered would it matter?
If your family, friend, coworker, was slaughtered by a
shooter would it matter?

Before you dismiss a hate crime,
Know that it's a small step from a hate crime
to being dehumanized, objectified, disenfranchised
to being a token or prize to be hunted all because you

caught
someone's

eye

A hate crime should never, ever be legitimized

Yet it was.

And yes, a gun can kill,
Erupt louder than a drum
But the only thing heard
across the world is the *human tongue*

So may mine speak until my kingdom come



Qui-Shawn Jerns