

San Pedro River Review

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Fallout

On the nether side of dust-crust
windowpanes and drawn curtains
I save up my sadness, stashed
like a serial hoarder between

shoulder blades, or deep in my chest
where my heart bleats its beats,
my courage squirreled under my mattress,
stockpiled alongside black-and-blue socks.

The future bends back toward
its own emptiness and I lean squint-eyed
into that darkness, balancing
this broken world like a wobbly plate

fumbled, dropped, making a mess of itself
while I huddle for cover like a 1950's
school kid under a wooden desk,
trying to convince myself this life
might still get up off its ass

if the fallout doesn't kill me—
the selfsame lie I have carried around
most of my life, a rumor of a rumor
I pass around like loaves of bread

at a soup kitchen, so many slices
but never enough to silence
the stomach-growl of *you just ain't
good enough and never will be*, reminding
me my days in this place are numbered

every breath a helium balloon blown
higgledy-piggledy along a fencerow,
skirting tangles of barbed-wire
but not the brittle|branches
of a shag-barked hickory—a grim reaper

practicing gallows humor,
its own self reaching upwards
for an *attagirl* towards a manic sky
laughing itself blue in the face.