

Solenoid

BRIAN DAVID CRAWFORD

The residual heat that summer night
was the sort that would make you forget
to talk about the weather at all
and look long down the curve

of gravel restless in its bed of soft
asphalt in the starlight, shrill crickets
singing everywhere, none half so loud
as the one that got separated from the pack

calling out from somewhere
in the utility room, maybe behind
the washing machine – stubborn
having our whole house hear

the night cry of being left behind.
My father left the house and so did I.
We passed orange rectangles in houses
at the bluing end of things

beneath the canopy, pin oaks
and black birches linking hands
on the American lawn. People
were comfortable on that street

shifting to the gutter when headlights
swept up the hill. One man stood
with his head in the mouth of a pickup.
A tool dropped clanging on cement.

Someone smoked. Another wiped
his hand with a rag. Everything
was cast in silhouette except
for the white-hot caged light

at the end of an extension cord
that lit up the space by the engine.
Two men stood by as my father
brought me over to look in.

Could be the solenoid, he said.
I knew enough not to speak
but just to be in the company of neighbors
from the other end of our street.

As we both walked home
past mailboxes on four-by-fours
the late hour revealing itself at last
he asked me if I knew he could speak car.

My father wanted me to know
there was another world
he had driven from
to get to this one.

About the author

Brian David Crawford is an educator and a poet originally from Richmond, Virginia, currently based in Berlin. He teaches contemporary American poetry at the Georg August Universität in the American Studies department. His poetry has recently received support from the Seamus Heaney Poetry Centre in Belfast.