

Requiem for Used Ignition Cap

J. Scott Brownlee

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J. Scott Brownlee is a founding member of The Localists, a literary collective based on place-based writing and cultural grounding, so it follows that he dedicated this debut collection to rural Llano, Texas, his home. He earned his MFA at NYU and currently works at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

IV. Indian Paintbrushes

*Our scent is sweet, but we will poison you.
Selenium-filled, we're metallic creatures.*

*You wouldn't think it at first glance. With our red
petals rising up from Texas dust you can't see*

*that beneath them we're pure parasite feasting
on spear grass roots. We require a host to turn*

*our bodies into what all beauty is at its source:
illusion. Call us greedy, the flawed fiends*

*we always have been, and forgive our natures.
We have wanted to bloom and bleed and be*

*honest guides here despite hundred-plus days
of heat where a nap beneath live oak shade*

*might just kill you. Here we have stolen
but also given. Here our bodies' rot blooms*

*other wildflowers. Here in this landscape
of the damned where drought plagues*

rattlesnakes, even, await your visit.

MATT SUTHERLAND (Winter 2016)

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