

SAM ROBERTSON

CURMUDGEON

He takes umbrage: a skill developed long years. At first, other motivations had been as unclear as his own, but improved sense of rights meant expectations never met themselves in other people. That improved sense of each injustice on a large scale adds up and into faceless conspiracies. What happened by the swings and monkey bars repeats itself, the shock but not the grief, rather the way a missing baseball card will link itself to the dawning of a thief. That he is innocent rankles as well, caught between unable and wanting to enjoy the fruit that has so destroyed lives lived beyond his own. Perhaps laziness has a place in this, persistent hesitation, as though he could extrapolate his every consideration into a rationale for admonishment of himself and others. Alas, the deed once done absconds with itself. And this he knows at some level.

TERRACOTTA WARRIORS EXCAVATED

Terracotta warriors, each a distinct
mask, stand at attention. The lower lips
curb reflexively, expressing disdain
for those whose lives have not been spent in arts
of war. Their eyes squint at the same degree
of concentration, thinking of somewhere else:
sidelong teardrops, tadpoles swimming in themselves,
they wait in time to turn to something more.
Defenders of China's first emperor
have flat bridges and flaring, wimpled nostrils,
pencilled mustaches, brows like crescent moons,
and their skin stretches taught over cheekbones
like the work of too much plastic surgery.
Eight thousand faces were made from eight molds,
body parts assembled from several models
into an infinite array — a pinch of clay
here or there makes all the difference.
What could they think of this untold disturbance,
the camera flashes and Bermuda shorts?
Their allegiance to Qin Shi Huang
was never tested in this way before.