

Matthew Salyer

Idyll

Wallace Stevens Poetry Contest, 3rd Prize

Day burned like the prophet with Saul and his bitch,
transmuting night's air into the resinous smell
of grass, cropped, dry as lost hair, and bones that witches
could have used for effigies. This street may as well

be Endor. We were boys then, gone to vacant lots
on West Grove, stick-fighting, content and equable
duelists like the famous brave. Beyond our plot,
a pocked man painted a bodega front with the full

adrenal spectrum of a separate continent.
Ours was death's. The landlord of a woodframe house
came wearing a planter's hat and machete and rent
tall grass from the earth like a ragpicker. Roused

crackheads swayed like knotweed in the lost foundations,
dull, abdicating specters, drawn as guns.