

## turnabout

*~for TJ, 1957 - 2008*

a high-yellow skinned man walks  
on the left side of the darkened street,  
shoulders hunched, a small black bag  
swings in his one hand . . .

the other fingers lint in his jacket pocket.  
crossing the bridge, four shadows frisk and bristle  
spreading before him like an ominous malaise.

hey old school—one lean shadow jabs,  
hardly old enough to shave

or to own his green swagger.  
what you got for me . . .

hey man, i ain't got nothin',  
old school replies, himself a faded shadow.

tired from his own steely escapades,  
he strides on, eyes darting between them.

i say, what you got in that bag—the young one retorts nervously  
eyes sunken, hollow like the pit in his belly egging him on

more edgy than before,  
the others spread around him like a bad poker hand.

one shade poised as if to swing on the ex-prize fighter  
already holding his weapons at bay.

nothin' man. i told you,  
i ain't got nothin' . . .

i only got clippers in here;  
i'm on my way to make some money . . .  
under the quick churn of his own heart,  
the coin is flipped back to him  
from his own bullied days  
marred by theft, knife-point brawls and nerves  
twisted high as a kite.