A Howling Dust

Cormorant

The soil here is hard in summer
so I buried my father in a tomb of rocks,
a plot behind St. Catherines church
to lay rest the gilded dreams of pitiable men.With gold found to the North,
Quartzburg drove out its whores,
its foreigners and roughnecks.
They settled this camp.Pa left every day to mine.
Id follow him to the gulch,
my pan and shovel in hand,
a child devoted to riches.The Mexicans often staged
bull and bear fights near the bar.
They kept a boy entertained
when there were no hangings to enjoy.The Cantonese flooded the quarries,
working for less than the Whites.
My father would curse the Orientals,
yet came home reeking of opium.A group of my friends and I
left to explore the creek.
The Chinaman kneeled there,
gleaning for gold.
We mocked him, and pushed him,
I prodded him with my knife.
He gripped his revolver
and fired in the air.
The errant bullet
ricocheted off of a stone
and grazed my leg.
I ran back bawling
to the town.Mobs
surround
the crying Chinaman,
Father clutching the noose.Law
arrived.
The sheriff demanded
that he be jailed and properly tried.Gangs amassed
late at night
outside the jail.
Father led,
rope in hand,
prey in his cell.

Soothing lies.
Tempted with
tobacco leaves,
the Chinese
reached his arm
through the bars.The lynch mob swiftly grabbed
the gleaners exposed hand.
Father wrapped the collar
around his neck.
The horde yanked on the rope,
Chinaman dragged and choked,
his brains dashed upon the wall.Soon all the gold mines dried
but that blood never did.
Red still stains the jail cell wall.
Father was never tried,
none mourn a foreigner,
but I saw guilt in his eyes.
With all the riches spent,
the people left the town
yet I stayed to dwell here still.
When Father died of drink
I did not weep for him.
I pray the grave unburdens his sins.I pray that someone will remain to bury me.
I pray that someone will remain.

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