

MARDI GRAS POEM

by Kelly Jones

I was late to work today because it was hard
to find an office-appropriate outfit that sparkled.

This is the first Mardi Gras I've missed in six years.

It is more difficult than I expected – the knowledge that
another world exists somewhere without me.

On my long lunch break I bought the ugliest King Cake
I'd ever seen for fifteen dollars.
I will share it with students tonight
at the literacy center
as we struggle through
another few pages of *The House on Mango Street*.

My students stumble on the figurative language,
they do not see how fear of white mice can equal
fear of men, or more specifically,
fear of one's father. I get it perhaps too well.

A few weeks ago I dreamed that my father was trying to kill me.
The apartment I share with my dog and husband
had blended into the house I grew up in
and in my dream I ran up stairs
that don't exist anymore and slammed my apartment door
as my father pulled a trigger a few times.
I fell in the hallway, and then woke up.

Today before returning to work
I read a few poems while sitting in my car,
listening to college radio play songs by James Booker.
The star-eyed piano king plays and sings
about the sunny side of the street
My wipers keep time and I read about an actress
who died in her car of gas inhalation – the ignition

still running – I think about today's indulgences,
and how they mean that tomorrow
we have to give something up.

Kelly Jones currently lives, writes, and works towards becoming a librarian in Greensboro, NC. In their spare time they embrace all things glittery, stress-bake, and attempt to keep the houseplants alive.