

MANIFEST DESTINY.

Jesse Begay

1. The Long Walk.

Beneath the moccasins, we are calloused or bloody.
The droplets we leave behind stain the pews like acid,
and leave perfect circles through the cushions.

Tonight, twin biligaana devils will march through
our hogans, while their white-hot shoes leave glass footprints,
scoff at Father Sky's un-American blue, and tell us of their God.

Tomorrow, Kit Carson will scrape through
the carpet laid over his grave and offer knives and guns,
like these are gifts, as in *don't you wanna be like us?*

Today, Lamanite and Navajo dancers sell
camouflaged accents along the highway, and this is
a gift, as in *now we've made it*, as in, *Now things can begin*,
now that we're beyond the reservation border.

2. Kill the Indian.

For our anniversary,
my boyfriend presses his fingers to my neck
just to be sure I am still alive —
Keep the exonerating evidence around.

Those paper memorial flowers won't cut themselves.

My tourist traps are roadside crosses.
What else are they good for out here?

They mark the path of King Noah and his flaming hands,
through those flea-ridden bags of flesh
and their buckets of starved corpses.

Are these people, or are these dogs?

3. Save the Man.

The Celestial Kingdom awaits none of us.
Instead, it awaits our liaisons:
geometric blankets, turquoise belts,
and children wracked with homesickness.

In return, Christ sends beach sands as penance
for everything lost to the tribal police —
foot soldiers of the devil and their useless badges.

Apologies, Christ says,
for the mural of the generals
left outside your memorial, but...

Well. You'll understand when you're older.
I mean. You musn't forget your place.
Our dead are statues. Museums. Immortalized.
Your dead are only that — dead!

4. Scorched Earth.

All things denote there is a God,

Ours is second-hand —
a punisher first, a liar second,
an ego third, a father fourth,
and a man last.

God denotes there is a devil.
I'd know. I can still hear him —
the voice of my childhood summers,
how it howls like coyotes,
and nauseates like snakes.

God denotes there is a Devil,
So here is a parting gift:
A town without a place for our dead,
or even their murderers.