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Reincarnation

Soul pulls away from the body, blows that joint like a gambler
out of money, lets the bones make a skeleton of itself.
Cruising cross-town, the soul's got plans, got her own
game going. Not looking back, the eyes dry anyway,
muscles just a bird bleeding its wings off in a pocket.
Soul can't take it with her, not the memory of it
nor the taste of its potatoes fried up homestyle and salted.
Soul doesn't call herself dead but flown on and whimsical,
the trees' leaves like a thousand tongues saying that way,
girl. Going to the great light of death? Nah, light always
there like God despite the dark wars men make. Joyride
to the chop shop where the body's left for work. First,
soul going to get her hair conked and her back massaged.
Soul done gone looking for another body to love.

What Would Satan Do?

Blistered, beetled hands would clutch grocery lists and skirt hems,
crow strut walking roadside, certain of wingspan and tree;
a weakness for food from any clotted, open-eyed thing. Dilly-dally
& splinter. Scratching my head, then clean his nails with his teeth.
He'd have his gibberish memorized; calm as a priest, opening
his mouth to sing or let in all the liver he plans to eat.
His communion would still be my anxiety, a plate-full of powders
and herbs only he can mix – cook them, stir them, make them meat.
My steam whirling, I'd lower the sheet past my breasts and he'd fill me
with minerals, that shape-shifter. Mumble hail on my throat. Dust & echoes.
I'd be fooled by how he flies, how like a sparrow he seemed from far away.

Roxane Beth Johnson

Roxane Beth Johnson's first book of poetry, *Jubilee*, won the Philip Levine Award for Poetry and was published by Anhinga Press, 2006. Philip Levine was the judge. Her poems have appeared in or are forthcoming from: the *Pushcart Prize Anthology*, 2008, *Chelsea*, *ZYZZYVA*, *Sentence*, the *Bitter Oleander*, *Parthenon West Review*, *Black Arts Quarterly* and elsewhere.