

Ross Gay is an African-American poet

Pulled Over in Short Hills, NJ, 8:00 AM

by Ross Gay

It's the shivering. When rage grows
hot as an army of red ants and forces
the mind to quiet the body, the quakes
emerge, sometimes just the knees,
but, at worst, through the hips, chest, neck
until, like a virus, slipping inside the lungs
and pulse, every ounce of strength tapped
to squeeze words from my taut lips,
his eyes scanning my car's insides, my eyes,
my license, and as I answer the questions
3, 4, 5 times, my jaw tight as a vice,
his hand massaging the gun butt, I
imagine things I don't want to
and inside beg this to end
before the shiver catches my
hands, and he sees,
and something happens.

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