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The Squad Car

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The Squad Car

by Rynn Williams

A forty-nine Dodge with squishy balloon tires,
black and white and solid as a milking cow,
with an engine that tore the heart out of anyone
wrong-side-up this side of the line.

Saturdays, once around the loop—no candy
fingerprints, no scuffmarks, no giggling.
Battered-metal headset taped up in black,
the alien intellect of dials and knobs.

How the gears shifted—gently
easing
into full throttle, rousing like an animal
or maybe a ripe flower falling open, petals
dropping away one by one, revealing its crux.

He'd drive me careful past the bank,
the five-and-dime, speed up down the stretch
and back by the old road. Lulled and regular,
all the Saturday town-people standing

in their Saturday places, slightly in awe
on the far side of our glass.
I needed the safety of the car,
the way it circled the plaza like a planet

orbiting the sun, the continuity,
quick lemon-wax clean, rounded
chrome hubs and fenders a force field.
Something too, of the moon: light and dark.

And the word itself: squad. How it implied a unit,
a posse of two. Oh that coal blue uniform,
pressed till it shined, with the badge,
like the north star, there on his chest.

