

**FIRST PLACE
POETRY CONTEST 2014**

**ALBERT CRUZ (1901-1974) AND *THE ROSE TATTOO*
By: Danielle Sellers**

From the porch of his shotgun house at 1300 Virginia,
my great-grandfather could catch glimpses
of the glamour of Hollywood,
the filming of *The Rose Tattoo* in Key West.

By 1955, he was an electrician on disability,
after the nearly fatal accident,
the clipping of a live wire, being blown back
off Mallory docks into the waves of the shipping channel.

After he was fished out, brought to,
he spent his days a short radius from the porch,
gossiping with other men out of work,
fussing at the heathen kids next door.

His view of the movie set mostly blocked
by a tangle of purple bougainvillea, he'd go down
in that slow, one-leg-longer-than-the-other gate of his,
to the corner of Georgia street for a better look.

Though I never saw him except in grainy home movies,
I see him now: a thin brown arm supporting
his lean body against the rough wood of an electric pole,
a lit Pall Mall in his hand, watching the action at Park grocery.

The quiet on the set a kind of haven from the usual
sirens and car horns, the dialogues one is expected to keep
on a small island, his fine wife's nagging, the synapses
in his brain like the split ends of live wires crackling.

Here, something so historic like a movie about love and despair
being filmed across the street from your own house
is an excuse to say, *I cannot do anything else but watch.*
bare witness, Dream. Escape from this body awhile.