



★ Tap Out

Edgar Kunz. Mariner, \$14.99 (112p) ISBN 978-1-328-51812-5

In his debut collection, Kunz crafts a poetics of disappointment and consolation: disillusionment with an alcoholic father, a marriage quickly entered into and dissolved, boyhood friends transformed into unrecognizable adults. In prose and free verse poems, Kunz paints a working-class world, “the failed industrial towns of New England,” where poverty is both literal and figurative. The speaker of these poems recalls his father, a man with “knuckles more scar than skin,” living in a van by the Connecticut River. The speaker reflects elsewhere on the embarrassment he felt signing up for food stamps as a child. The title poem is a battering ode to childhood backyard wrestling, the poet’s descriptive fluency juxtaposed with the absurd names of remembered moves: “We were vicious. Swollen cheekbones, bruised jaws./ Forearms chafed raw and weeping. The Boston/ Crab. The Texas Cloverleaf. The Cross-/ Face Chicken Wing.” Though the cities Kunz inhabits in these poems may have seen better days, he finds quiet moments of beauty in the surrounding natural world, “the dropseed prairies, the runoff ponds/ and feedcorn fields,” and even in the dilapidation itself, “the waste plant’s gold honeycomb towers, the faded terminals, dock cranes leaning out over the harbor like drunks.” Kunz’ poems are sparse and accessible, reminiscent of Hemingway in both content and

style, and feature an extraordinary new voice that draws its energy from an underrepresented perspective. (Mar.)