

Back It Up

Not the same as backing car into the driveway.
Not “Yeah, come on back. Plenty room. Easy!”
Not “Thanks, saves walking all the way around.
Don’t know why we’re lugging it, maybe
store it in the garage, maybe sell it
at some garage sale. Not worth anything.”

What we remember’s not the same.

Moment when the sun went down
behind worn-down houses
we hustled home to put it in the notebook
so we’d not forget.

Moment when we wished we were
the orange-haired child screaming
every time his see-saw fell
faster than his breath.

Moment we backed up with words
and crisp camellia squeezed
in green mottled composition book.

Remembered now behind new labels.
Pain refiled as *love that hurt*
Edited to even better
love that hurt but not enough to stop.

Back up the moments.
Remember where you put them.

Alone

In that copse high on the hill, one maple
woke up this morning, looked around
and felt its sap slow to standstill.

All the other trees had fallen.
Cause unclear.
No sign of vandalism.

Instinctive, the maple
clenched its widespread roots,
felt plenty of earth, secure.

The wind swept harder, colder
likely that there was no buffer,
no family to ease the blow.

She tried to turn, to twist her trunk,
be sure none other stood.
She was alone.

Listen, she whispered,
I didn't hear them fall.
Perhaps I'll hear them cry.

Pain Refreshed

Holding the injured thumb aloft
--the memory long since healed and now invisible--
you told of lover
--long since gone and now invincible—
the grace with which he took apart
your seeping bandage, spread the wound
and smeared the ointment over all then
all while talking with your dining mate
expertly wrapped the thumb's full length
painlessly tight.

I watched your nakedness look back
across the years.

Bittersweet Ending

April night shade became darkness
a thin vine, spring green
crept behind your heel, turned
twice around your ankle, paused
then waved across slight space between us;

slid between my toes
glided over under over until
toes were bound. It
snaked up around my leg
and bound my knee;

with agile leap across s
bound yours to mine and started
up my thigh.

Vine wrapped faster, tighter thigh to thigh;
almost felled us as it spun
around no longer separate waists.

We gently pushed against
each other more to be free
than to be apart.

Once our arms, from wrists
past elbows, were of a bandage
we saw vine's blossom.:
five-point purple star orbiting
sun yellow stamen.

A moment's hesitation, vine's
flower now
a stark red berry.

Our four shoulders tightly sheathed,
we could not move.

You cherished freedom more,
you grasped the berry with your lips
sliced it between your teeth.
I saw you smile its sweetness
then remorse the bitter after.

A tear rolled down your cheek.
Our vine turned brown and fell away.

Give Me My Heart Back

She calls the nursing home her “missing home”;
spends days watching changes in the garden.
Hands hold doilies on arms of once his chair.
Sad eyes’ spear darts through stuck-shut window’s panes;
her pain known from the cherry tree’s first blooms.
Recalls love-walks under trees so deeper pink.
Sun gold nasturtiums surround the tree;
her mind knows now their then in flowers wild.

Her lips in silence curse her state, alone.
The mockingbird lights on the basin’s rim,
looks to her window, hops in the basin.
Dips its head, throws it back, flings water wide.
Looks into her eyes. She sees his *Join me*.
Her hands speak to the doilies: *Very soon*.