

## Red Bird

Snow swells over fence posts,  
drapes pine branches and softens  
the edge of an ax  
propped against a stump.

Once a plane crash survivor,  
arms folded, quietly told me  
how the engine died, the soft screams grew,  
and cups flew amid staccato cries of "no."

Then the memory falls away  
and a cardinal, red as blood,  
beats wings against the snow,  
lands on the stump.

I close my eyes but the rays  
come through my closed lids.  
Red wings sparkle in the sun.

I remember my old dog dying in my arms,  
unable to walk, folded legs limp in my lap.  
The needle glistened as the vet's eyes watered,  
I held my dog, stroked the warm ear.

Snow softens all it touches.

Numbing, hiding, icing over

the way I loved a man long ago.

Now days go by without thoughts of him,

yet shadows chase me when I see another man

with his hands: clean and strong.

I have felt life tingle inside me,

and then it bled away.

I cried, unable to stop the loss

of someone who never was.

The cardinal launches into the air,

his red heat burns brightly.

The survivor found herself

holding hands with strangers.

Everybody aboard touched:

lovers, strangers, children.

Eyes closed, fingers entwined,

ending life as they had begun it:

absorbing the warmth of another.

The red bird darts looking

for what it wants.

I stand in the snow while somewhere

smoking fragments burn my feet,

feathers touch me, wings graze me.

I wait for the blade

to cut me;

I wait to fall

into space.

## Moored

Every moored boat tugs at its tether,  
small waves disappear into larger ones.

The dock reaches out, but can't cross the sea.  
I stand on the shore and squint at impossible distance.

When I was a girl of fifteen,  
I tied our small sailboat to the dock.  
The boat's bright yellow reflected in the water,  
The rope was too short to secure  
both ends, so I left it:  
tethered at one end, loose at the other

The next morning, I arose to sun on my ceiling,  
a pattern of light, bouncing off the water  
beneath my bedroom window – squiggles and whorls  
played off the painted surface  
like soundless music.

Easy, the golden day ahead,  
I walked outside where I found  
the boat battered into splintered boards.  
A nighttime storm had set it into motion  
so it cracked itself in two.

Now I watch boats calm and controlled,  
and wonder about a rhythm so violent  
my very structure would come undone,  
shaking apart everything put so carefully into place,  
the wildness more powerful than the bond,  
the waves overwhelming the vessel.

Can I go back in time to my fifteen-year-old self?  
Secure the boat to resist the storm?  
Defy waves struggling to undo knots?  
Or do knots come undone  
as time nimbly unties us from what we love?  
Now, with decades behind me,  
I send a benediction to that sleeping girl,  
who cannot foresee what the night will bring.

## Happy Buddha

A stone Buddha in Provincetown

squats among singing lilies and gladiolus.

Their summer voices blare orange pastels

in loud speaker fashion.

Buddha, how do you resist the urge

to swing your plump hips to this sunny blast of colors?

Surely, you must rise from that lotus position

and belly dance among the cone flowers:

your lovely round tummy smoothly

undulating in the afternoon sun.

The roses twining the fence

beg you for a kiss.

Maybe a tango would do as you pull their

vines hither and yon.

And before you foxtrot back to your spot,

take me in your arms for a sexy waltz.

Look deeply into my eyes,

and I will sigh as you

pirouette into place,

already missing your strong arms.

