

The World Stopped Cold

Christmas trees line the street, gray and brown, some tinsel hanging.
Nearly spring, these weathered trees spot each yard with garbage.
Just uncovered from hills of snow and ice, they were put out for trash
months ago. The storm just kept on coming. Even the fat raccoon who
lives in the drain across the street, was stuck. Closed in the sewer.
Now he's thin and scratchy like the trees. Disoriented, he saunters
to the front door, as if a postman or guest arriving. Just stands there.
Who would imagine Christmas and raccoons sitting together in verse?
But they surprise, come up from under all that was hidden, unfurled
like a dream. What we unearth at night when no one can see.
We wake stunned by our own front porch of memory. A full display
of discard. So rag-a-tag, in the wrong season. Festive trees with stars
and glimmer run over by winds and ice that took the rooftops down.
Maybe now we can uncover time, pick up what was left curbside.
Reconsider love, a job not taken, whatever else just slipped away.

Spooning Words

For Hedy Chang

Everyone saves the juice from the watermelon bowl for Mr. Chang. His daughter spoons the pulp, feeds him slowly as he once fed her. Words slipped and gone. He stares. A silence larger than night sky or tree line. But then a word. "However."

As if preparing a speech. "However." Quickly she finds her mother to hear him search out vowels. This one word, a bridge between *how* she will live without him and *ever*, as if forever. Vows color lines in her face. She talks. He watches.

Sips the silk watermelon juice, sweet remains of seed, water and friends who shared food. Each dip and hand, a harvest. She speaks fragments of their life together as if an alphabet. Hands in the air, fast flutter, like a dance of flying doves.

G is for garden, what we planted and pulled from; roots as long as hair, thick as dreams. P for piano. Chopin playing by sea cliffs. L is for leaving, don't ever consider. Mend the clock, turn back the hours. And C for tiger cat by the front tire, sleeping at dusk.

N is for now you lose words, your strong path of stones. O for owl, hooting message from the thick banyon. Oh bless the stars that cradle you. B for boy, the beach sand cupped in his fingers. He drops clumps of wet earth to make a castle whole. R, running back and forth.

Carrying the world. A gift of rock and imagination in his small hands. D for don't turn from us. However fearful you are of mice scattering beneath the planks. Leap over moons. Swing past Orion. The wood panels of our days make a home. Our stories and stones build

a shared language. We are losing breath now, together. Hands suddenly still, cupped in her lap. How he is quiet, for ever forgiving all she might have missed or lost in translation. He buries rocks and bright light in front of her. Sips juice from the spoon. *However how ever*

Trauma

She left her coat in the attic closet.
Never missed it, walking through the rain.
She left her kids in cracked thin hallways.
Murmuring, on and off the sidewalk's edge.

She left herself on porches. Walked through
screened windows like a dream or paper doll.
Hop scotch fabric, mauve and yellow ribbons.
A bottle of rum inside drooping pockets.

The face of presence, but not intact.
Not tactful. Fork, spoon, knife, cloth napkin
in the lap. Always a dog sitting under
the table. Always a wolf in the corner.

Hiding by the trees. She would have shot
him had she known. Leaving behind a trail
of clues. Breadcrumbs. Spit out normal.
Throw away kindness. Violets. Inviolable.

Words like paper clips. Alone, but possibly
connecting. Click clack. Sound of door knob,
vinyl purse. Zipper on linen skirt. Spinning
in loud thunder. Pinned under. Click clack.

Sensing Santa Fe

Red earth catches fire.
The land more heart than sky.

What comes back, soars.
What stays, loses way.

Blue prayers stripped.
The sky tries humming.

Sound itself becomes
a caw, a shrill, a trilling.

Skylarks tip and spin just above
beggars, dust thick in fortune.

They squat in town square,
collecting hope in tin jars.

Church bells peal at noon.
Wood doors closing fast and heavy.

Taste of nails, blood, rust.
The heart so low, the sky is kneeling.

The sky so low, the heart is healing.
Who would tell of bells and beggars?

One crow, two cottonwoods.
Everything full, everything empty.

What opens, gives and closes.
What closes, stems the seed.

The night and lark know simple.
Hands reach out; wings sweep away.

March Almanac

Pale green shudders
through nothing.

If the tree holds color
inward, before the season

lashes out, if the die
is cast before the day,

the bulb before the blessing,
what tent of light betrays

the bough? What shadow
covers dirt and bark?

Blue sky paints
a naked branch.

Flush of rolling mud
and seed. What fills

the space, becomes it.
Seeing past line and light.

Haze thick with dream
before the wake of bud.

Weight of worldly flutter
blows through still fields,

fallow and waiting. Whisper
and wind, shiver in color.

Day births a green trespass,
cutting each blade and reach.