

Five Poems for Sixfold
Crash

He's been pounding the pedal and
commandeering the passing lane since sun-up,

the centerline stripe an all-consuming jolt
of visual amphetamine—

gulp, whip, whiz, gee, rush hour; speedometer
wheeling past ninety.

Roadbeds narrow, signposts blur . . .
throttled by a cluster of eighteen-wheelers,

his rig's diesel chokes to a rumble,
until a lull in traffic provides an opening.

Euphoric, he bellows:
“Nothing's going to stop us now!”

The road-dope he swallows is ineffective,
souring his stomach.

Just after dark, fighting fatigue,
he furiously palms his eyes,

then screams songs at the windshield,
while pounding the dashboard with a fist;

a visage of a rock and roller gone mad:
“Goodness, gracious, great balls of fire!”

Exhausted,
he knows he's got to shut it down.

Abruptly, he exits the freeway,
a blackened screech scores his departure.

Headed south on a northbound ramp,
rumble strips bounce truck and driver mean.

The lack of a centerline begs his attention,
where is he?

Blinded by a set of oncoming headlights,

he's about to . . .

After Being Busted for Shoplifting

Mom drops me at the curb,
pissed doesn't begin to
describe her agitation,
she points to the front door.

I square my shoulders,
march up the sidewalk,
climb the staircase, and
reach for the knob.

Inside, my stepdad's working
on his fingernails with a knife;
spring-loaded, pearl handled,
Miss Manners he's not.

I notice his glazed eyeballs
and hear him say: "If you fuck
up again, you'll end up a swirl
in the cesspool of life.

"No arms, no legs,
just a smear of tissue
twirling amid remnants
of other Happy Meals."

He's talkative only after
downing more drink than
a normal person should,
without tipping over.

He drains his bottle,
smacks his lips,
fixes me with a glare,
and flings the knife,

embedding its point
in the door jamb;
a punctuation mark
inches from my head.

The blade is for show,
his fist the blunt object

Five Poems for Sixfold

clubbing home whatever
point he's trying to make.

Special Needs

My blackened eye
and broken jaw will heal,
my stutter, probably not.

Mom's soon-to-be-ex is looking
at ten to twenty, with the
possibility of parole.

His lawyer put me on trial. *Me*,
the teenage punching bag,
the one in the way of:

his fist,
his drinking,
his uncontrolled fury.

School resumes after
Labor Day, counselors
label me special needs.

Rest assured,
my intellect is intact,
even though I'm about to be

deposited like an empty vessel in
a maze of compartmentalized slots,
suggestive of an old-time soda crate;

brimming with rheumy-eyed children,
fragile as gossamer threads of DNA,
unaware of individual plights.

My classmates are
a giggle of special Eds
and extra-special Wendys.

Officials label our lot
a case of empties,
not eligible

for a decent

Five Poems for Sixfold
return from the
district's resources.

4

Cowgirl Style

The last time I bulldogged a dusty wrangler,
I got accused of bailing out on that buckaroo.
I'll cop to riding hard and putting him up wet,
promising nothing more than a one-night stand.

Come sun-up, I loaded my horse and tack,
then split for the next go 'round in Reno.
In my haste, I left a set of spurs sitting
in that bronc buster's battered pickup.

He flashed a grin upon my return,
saying: "You just couldn't get enough,"
adding: "Lovers, like bareback riders,
are only as good as their mounts."

What a crock of cowpoke bull-crap—
I'd bedded yet another all-around jerk,
who figured the heft of his belt buckle
made him God's gift to women.

Spark!

Thousands of terrified faces haunt the places
I've called home; gutted brownstone walkups,
fire-prone high-rises, and boarded-up flats—
all damaged beyond habitation.

New York City landlords suffer a bad rap for
complaints associated with their investments,
while housing officials actively cite violations
regarding illegal rent increases.

Hundreds of property agents contracted me,
my business involved negating rent controls,
one 100 mm unfiltered cigarette got it done.
With repairs, real assets attained market rate.

Print journalists referred to me as the *Spark!*
I struck all five boroughs, even Coney Island.
My skillset cried legend; it seemed too easy,
until I got collared, cuffed, then stuffed.

Hundreds of jailhouse lawyers ply their craft,
in the chilly concrete confines of Rikers Island.
We all pled innocent, indignant, and indigent,
but were found guilty, adjudicated by our peers.

Public prosecutors persuaded me
to appear before a grand jury;
which led to a suspended sentence,
witness protection, and relocation.

Tens of thousands of trees turn to ash,
casting a pall over the Pacific Northwest.
I'm the newbie on a hotshot fire crew,
prescribed burns are still my specialty.

It's hard to obtain unfiltered smokes,
in this climate of political correctness.
A tightly rolled joint works well . . .
well enough to spark employment.

