

Sentries

Startled, I brake. Above barbed wire, black eyes
atop impossibly balletic necks

gaze through my windshield. I stare back.
Of course I've seen them before, inside the zoo,

extended branches to blueblack tongues
at feeding time. Yet here, crossroads, they guard

what? Enchanted realms where burning tigers roam
licking cream from meaty cones? Do elephants

ooh and aah at dolphins' liquid grace? Might giraffes
peruse perimeters of paradise, bemused by human cages

that lock from within?

Lego Day at the Children's Museum

One green, one orange, twin towers lean
precariously. Twin girls, brows blanched,

stack Legos above their heads. Watching, I wonder,
do they know?

Eleven years ago today,

*before you kids were born, airplanes tore
a blue September morning: the crash*

*and after. Flames bloomed from windows,
useless alarms cried on and on, and people*

tumbled to the ground.

To brace collapsing towers,
intrepid kids gather blocks, babbling

about joining forces. *No, children, go home.
Chicken Little was right: the sky has fallen.*

Project complete, the girls pose. Flash—
they're gone. The towers remain intact

until *crash* children shatter plastic stacks,
collect the pieces, begin to build.

Man Still Missing
For my grandmother

Late Tuesday evening, long day nearly gone,
she burns their dinner, waiting for her man.
No word. Unlike him. She falls in bed alone
and listens for burglars, thinks of his gun.
Restless, she moans in sleep, dreaming of fields
awash in blood. Her eyes open to cold

morning light. Still no word. The cold
envelops her. Where has he gone?
At work, his secretary fields
her call: says yesterday her man
left work early, retrieved his gun,
drove north to hunt, he said, alone.

The phone dies; left alone,
her skin burns hot, then cold.
She searches for his gun
under the bed. It's gone.
She panics. Is her man
lost, wandering the fields?

Police search fields,
paired and alone.
For days, hired men
traipse the hard cold.
Where has he gone?
Why take his gun?

Through gun-
less fields
she's gone,
heart lone-
ly, cold.
No man.

(stanza break)

Man,
gun.
Cold
fields—
alone.

Gone.

