

“Below Surface”

The place where the poem read *mankind*,
or should, subconscious supposed,
instead of the *humankind*
given.

Realized I was skimming.
My baser thoughts held as
well as ice under water.
How cold thoughts persist in otherwise

warm waters, undetermined.

“Hungry”

Trash can
Stacks of snack wrappers
To Pier o’er man-made waterfall

Festering yellow-jacks
Head of the path

A Dad fills up his maw

Thin, puckered
fish lips

Des-pret

“See how she thrashes?”

Eyes obviously dead

Hungry little guppie
Tssk
big!”

Tssk
She was this

“What do we do?”: Son

“Not enough for showing off
pick Let’s hold out for a better catch and

I’m Full, no mood to

Use her as bait!”

“Mid Fall”

She wakes up mornings on her way to the floor,
having kicked herself right
out of bed.

She thinks on the floor about last night, the time
it'll take to make things right
after what she said.

Unsure if her alarm's yet gone, or if she's overslept,
she's afraid to look for the time,
and doesn't.

“Him”

Before he goes for groceries down the street
before we go to sleep
I beg of him a kiss
and study his face
before he hangs up, I say

I love you.

Before all Hell breaking loose, I will
plug my ears and hear him say it, too
close my eyes and see him
before I need to remember, I grab
onto something worth remembering.

“The Olive Branch”

The dove I sent must reach McFaul
while it sails over mountains unnamed,
creeping things of the earth aboard. It brings you news of land

where Oak, Sycamore, Maple, Dog Wood, and Willow
wait for you. Mulberry and Paw Paw do not bear
Olive ideals. They bear fruit we can feel.

Hills of stone under our feet named Tradition for Cherokee
that kept them, like Table Rock.
Trees growing in crevices on the precipice “from nothing”

have deepest roots. We’ve carved our names,
trail-markers, along the forest *y’all*
called Back Yard.

These dreamy scenes of green miss you,
who taught the hills, stay against storms,
taught the trees, stay stubborn with your seeds, ‘til the ground is warm,

taught the mountains, stay patient your cow tail
with the nesting wrens.
The bow in the sky is loosely tied;

there’s water flooding in.
Shade trees make homey their hammock bosoms where we write, swing,
and sing our prayers for your safe landing.

for Sophie