

Mortality

Every thrown stone falls.
But there is a moment first
as it hangs in the air

that the blurred hand
that tossed it will not come again,
thinks the stone as it flies.

Halfway Down the Block, Your Father

Stops. *It's just congestion*, he says.

I have congestion, not naming it—

his lungs as gauzy as a party dress—

explaining instead how the medic

at the VA had told him his heart

was as strong as any fullback's.

We wait while he musters the air for

the next few steps, refusing the car,

with the stubbled pride of an old man

whose frayed shirt collar has been

turned by his dead wife, and, having

no third side, cannot be turned again.

Bravery Toasts

To hands that have closed around kisses
that might have been bees.

To hips that have ceded control to sex
that snow between parentheses.

To the boy who sees the girl in her tender bones
across the dance floor.

To his heart's small craft, rowing for the horizon
under a gathering sky.

To the motorist rushing towards the heap that
may be a child, as the grass explodes.

To the widow who swore she would
never buy another canary

yet holds its yellow flutter on her finger.

It

Not-its cross in the air like twilight bats. The slowest counts to ten, her face hidden in her hands. And what when she finishes? Will she part the azaleas one by one, finding only pink wilted trumpets there? Will she crawl under the house, where wasps lie hatching in their paper tunnels? Will she cast door-shaped light into the tool shed? Will she persist until she stalks the cherry bush as her friend holds her breath? Will she lift a step to find her webby sister? Will she creep around the woodpile to spot her brother, curled behind precarious logs? Or will she instead go to her room under the eaves? Does she know what she has? Does she know she can make them hide forever?

Of Dust on a White Counter

Ava discovers she won't be a kindergartener again.
She collapses to the floor, her head in her hands.

The walker on the beach forgets which way between houses lies home.

The eyes belong to space
but touch is time's, an index finger gathering gray along its length.